

INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND FEMINISM

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INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND FEMINISM

Politics, Activism, Culture

Edited by Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf,
Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman

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20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in Canada on FSC-certified ancient-forest-free paper
(100% post-consumer recycled) that is processed chlorine- and acid-free.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Indigenous women and feminism : politics, activism, culture /
edited by Cheryl Suzack ... [et al.].

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7748-1807-0

1. Indigenous women – Political activity. 2. Indigenous women – Social conditions.
3. Feminism. 4. Feminism and the arts. I. Suzack, Cheryl

HQ1155.I64 2010

305.48'8

C2010-902167-3

Canada

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund), the Canada Council for the Arts, and the British Columbia Arts Council.

This book has been published with the help of a grant from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, through the Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme, using funds provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

Printed and bound in Canada by Friesens

Set in Futura Condensed and Warnock Pro by Artegraphica Design Co. Ltd.

Copy editor: Lesley Erickson

Proofreader: Deborah Kerr

Indexer: Heather Ebbs

UBC Press

The University of British Columbia

2029 West Mall

Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2

www.ubcpress.ca

Contents

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Acknowledgments / ix

Indigenous Feminism: Theorizing the Issues / 1
Shari M. Huhndorf and Cheryl Suzack

Part 1: Politics

- 1** From the Tundra to the Boardroom to Everywhere in Between: Politics and the Changing Roles of Inuit Women in the Arctic / 21
Minnie Grey
- 2** Native Women and Leadership: An Ethics of Culture and Relationship / 29
Rebecca Tsosie
- 3** “But we are your mothers, you are our sons”: Gender, Sovereignty, and the Nation in Early Cherokee Women’s Writing / 43
Laura E. Donaldson

- 4** Indigenous Feminism: The Project / 56
Patricia Penn Hilden and Leece M. Lee

Part 2: Activism

- 5** Affirmations of an Indigenous Feminist / 81
Kim Anderson
- 6** Indigenous Women and Feminism on the Cusp of
Contact / 92
Jean Barman
- 7** Reaching Toward a Red-Black Coalitional Feminism:
Anna Julia Cooper's "Woman versus the Indian" / 109
Teresa Zackodnik
- 8** Emotion before the Law / 126
Cheryl Suzack
- 9** Beyond Feminism: Indigenous Ainu Women and
Narratives of Empowerment in Japan / 152
ann-elise lewallen

Part 3: Culture

- 10** Indigenous Feminism, Performance, and the Politics
of Memory in the Plays of Monique Mojica / 181
Shari M. Huhndorf
- 11** "Memory Alive": An Inquiry into the Uses of Memory
by Marilyn Dumont, Jeannette Armstrong, Louise Halfe,
and Joy Harjo / 199
Jeanne Perreault
- 12** To Spirit Walk the Letter and the Law: Gender, Race,
and Representational Violence in Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne
Johnson's *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* / 218
Julia Emberley

- 13** Painting the Archive: The Art of Jane Ash Poitras / 239
Pamela McCallum
- 14** “Our Lives Will Be Different Now”: The Indigenous
Feminist Performances of Spiderwoman Theater / 258
Katherine Young Evans
- 15** Bordering on Feminism: Space, Solidarity, and
Transnationalism in Rebecca Belmore’s *Vigil* / 278
Elizabeth Kalbfleisch
- 16** Location, Dislocation, Relocation: Shooting Back with
Cameras / 298
Patricia Demers
- © UBC Press
List of Contributors / 315
Index / 319

Sample Chapter

Acknowledgments

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We are grateful to the many individuals and institutions that in various ways supported this project. We thank several individuals for productive conversations that enhanced our thinking about the challenges and possibilities of Indigenous feminism: Ellen Arnold, Virginia Carney, Janice Gould, Patricia Penn Hilden, Janet McAdams, Danika Medak-Saltzman, and Dory Nason. We are also greatly indebted to a number of people who supported this project at key moments in its development: Kris Calhoun, Patricia Demers, Len Findlay, Gary Kelly, Andrea Ruskin, and Norman Shaw. The idea for this book emerged from the “Indigenous Women and Feminism Conference,” which received generous institutional support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Alberta ACADRE Network, and from numerous units at the University of Alberta: the Office of the Vice-President (Research); the Faculty of Arts; the Office of Human Rights’ Employment Equity Discretionary Fund; the Women Writing Reading Program; the Canada Research Chair, Department of English and Film Studies; the School of Native Studies; and the Departments of English and Film Studies, Political Science, Sociology, and Women’s Studies.

At UBC Press, we are grateful to Jean Wilson for comments on an early version of the book and for soliciting it for publication. We thank Darcy Cullen and Ann Macklem for valuable support at key stages and for guiding the project through the acquisitions process. We are also indebted to the Aid to Scholarly Publications Programme for its support of this publication project.

Three essays in this volume have appeared in different forms elsewhere: Shari M. Huhndorf's "Indigenous Feminism, Performance, and the Politics of Memory in the Plays of Monique Mojica" is drawn from *Mapping the Americas: The Transnational Politics of Contemporary Native Culture* (Cornell University Press, 2009); Jeanne Perreault's "Memory Alive': An Inquiry into the Uses of Memory by Marilyn Dumont, Jeannette Armstrong, Louise Halfe, and Joy Harjo" appeared in Renee Hulan, ed., *Native North America: Critical and Cultural Perspectives* (ECW, 1999); and an earlier version of Julia Emberley's "To Spirit Walk the Letter and the Law" was published in *Defamiliarizing the Aboriginal: Cultural Practices and Decolonization in Canada* (University of Toronto Press, 2007). We thank the publishers for permission to reprint them here.

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Indigenous Feminism

Theorizing the Issues

SHARI M. HUHNDORF AND CHERYL SUZACK

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Since the 1970s, Indigenous politics have increasingly encompassed issues that cut across boundaries of nation, language, and culture. As these shifts have facilitated critical engagement with women's shared experience of the collusions between colonialism and patriarchy, they have laid the foundation for the conceptualization of Indigenous feminist cultural and political practices, practices in which this volume participates. For Indigenous women, colonization has involved their removal from positions of power, the replacement of traditional gender roles with Western patriarchal practices, the exertion of colonial control over Indigenous communities through the management of women's bodies, and sexual violence. As gender has begun to reshape Indigenous politics, the growing legal recognition in settler-colony countries of the rights of Indigenous peoples to cultural and political autonomy has brought to the fore questions about Indigenous women's access to civil rights and sovereignty claims. Since the late 1980s and 1990s, developments in feminist theory and practice have enabled scholars to recognize how nationality, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity inform axes of gender differentiation. Despite these interventions and the urgency of gender analysis specific to Indigenous communities, Indigenous women and feminist issues remain underexamined in contemporary feminist theory. Although presumed to fall within normative definitions of women of colour and postcolonial feminism, Indigenous feminism remains an important site

of gender struggle that engages the crucial issues of cultural identity, nationalism, and decolonization particular to Indigenous contexts. An emerging generation of scholars and writers has only begun to analyze the unique political and social positions of Indigenous women, at times from a feminist perspective. Yet Indigenous feminism to date has generated little published scholarship.¹ This volume adds to the small but growing body of work on this critical topic. Together, the essays that follow address a range of issues central to emerging Indigenous feminist inquiry.

Despite the critical importance of gender in Indigenous contexts, the process of conceptualizing theories and practices of Indigenous feminism remains controversial for a number of reasons. As other women of colour, both scholars and activists, have long contended, feminism as a political movement and academic practice originated as a means to address the social problems of the white middle classes. To a certain extent, feminism, especially in academia, remains white-centred, despite the active involvement of women of colour in the second- and third-wave feminist movements. For Indigenous women, the marginalization of their issues is compounded by the fact that a critical component of colonialism throughout the Americas involved the imposition of Western gender roles and patriarchal social structures. Those who struggle for gender equality are often seen, sometimes erroneously, as opposing traditional Indigenous practices and forms of social organization. Thus, Indigenous feminism frequently elicits accusations that it fractures communities and undermines more pressing struggles for Indigenous autonomy. Consequently, feminist research and politics often appear to be irrelevant to the concerns of Indigenous communities and may even seem to be implicated in ongoing colonial practices.

The need to address the urgent social, economic, and political problems confronting Indigenous women remains critical, however. These problems stem from ongoing colonial practices of the dominant culture and, at times, from the internal dynamics of Indigenous communities. We propose Indigenous feminism as a rubric under which political and social organizing can and should take place. Yet a single, normative definition of Indigenous feminism remains impossible because Indigenous women's circumstances vary enormously throughout colonizing societies, where patriarchy dominates, and in Indigenous communities with distinct histories and cultural traditions. Differences among Indigenous communities have always impeded collective political action, but this is perhaps especially true in the post-1960s era, during which the political autonomy and cultural

distinctiveness of individual communities have been emphasized.² This emphasis on nationalism has devalued issues of gender, and one of the most pressing challenges for Indigenous feminism today is to find a basis for collective political action and engagement in broader anti-colonial struggles that also addresses the particularities of Indigenous women's social positions. Although Indigenous women do not share a single culture, they do have a common colonial history, and our conception of Indigenous feminism centres on the fact that the imposition of patriarchy has transformed Indigenous societies by diminishing Indigenous women's power, status, and material circumstances.

Indigenous feminist analysis and activism must aim to understand the changing situations, the commonalities, and the specificities of Indigenous women across time and place; it must seek ultimately to attain social justice not only along gender lines but also along those of race, class, and sexuality.³ Social justice, in our view, can be attained only through specific attention to gender and must be considered as an integral part of, rather than a subsidiary to, struggles for national liberation. The individual essays that follow address the specificities of Indigenous women's situations; taken together, however, they uncover commonalities that unite Indigenous women across cultural and national boundaries and create the possibility of collective feminist political action. At the same time, Indigenous traditions and social organizations, as Emma LaRocque warns, must not be exempt from critical scrutiny and the struggle for social justice. Although traditions "help us retain our identities as Aboriginal people," she writes, "as women we must be circumspect in our recall of tradition. We must ask ourselves whether and to what extent tradition is liberating to us as women."⁴ Indeed, Fay Blaney observes, "patriarchy is so ingrained in our communities that it is now seen as a 'traditional trait,'" and a key goal of Indigenous feminism must therefore be "to make visible the 'internal oppression' against women within our communities" as well as in the dominant society.⁵ While most of the essays in this collection address the material or ideological dimensions of Indigenous women's lives in the post-contact era, they also attend to the gendered dimensions of cultural traditions that remain central in contemporary communities.

This volume takes up the challenge of conceptualizing Indigenous feminist theories and practices. Rather than representing a unified vision of Indigenous feminism, the essays engage with questions that limn emerging Indigenous feminist inquiry. Our title, *Indigenous Women and Feminism*,

acknowledges the fraught historical relationship between Indigenous women and mainstream feminism as it opens discussion about the ways Indigenous women can construct a theory and practice specific to their interests. The essays thus cohere around a series of interrelated questions: What are the stakes and controversies in conceptualizing Indigenous feminism? How do feminist endeavours relate to Indigenous politics centred on land and sovereignty? Is it possible to recover the obscured historical presence and agency of Indigenous women, and if so, how might we go about the task? What lessons does the past carry for contemporary situations? How do Indigenous women confront ongoing violence and social and political marginalization?

Our hope is that this volume will at once contribute to these discussions and debates and underscore the critical importance of emerging Indigenous feminist endeavours. The idea for this volume arose from the conference “Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture” held at the University of Alberta in 2005. The conference was the first large-scale event to bring together scholars, activists, and community members to conceptualize an Indigenous feminist theory and political practice. The immense interest the conference garnered expressed the timeliness of questions surrounding Indigenous feminism in academic, activist, and community circles. Drawing several hundred participants from the United States, Canada, Latin America, Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, and other locations throughout the world, the conference demonstrated the urgency of conceptualizing an Indigenous feminist project that crosses national and disciplinary boundaries as well as those between academia and the broader community.

Both the conference and this volume arose from collaborations among Indigenous and non-Indigenous women (two of us are Indigenous, two are not) who speak from different intellectual trajectories and personal histories but are drawn together by our commitment to Indigenous feminist issues. Our choice to proceed collaboratively reflects our shared conviction that although Indigenous women must shape Indigenous feminism, Indigenous feminism – as a political strategy and project – also requires the alliances that are built through the engagement, contributions, and support of Indigenous men and non-Indigenous men and women.

Histories of Indigenous Feminism

Although Indigenous feminism is a nascent field of scholarly inquiry, it has arisen from histories of women’s activism and culture that have aimed to

combat gender discrimination, secure social justice for Indigenous women, and counter their social erasure and marginalization – endeavours that fall arguably under the rubric of feminism, despite Indigenous women’s fraught relationship with the term and with mainstream feminist movements. Indigenous women’s activism has taken shape around a series of issues related to social transformations that have resulted from colonial policies. While women’s traditional roles in Indigenous communities vary widely, colonization has reordered gender relations to subordinate women, regardless of their pre-contact status. In the early colonial period, political and economic relationships between settlers and Indigenous communities favoured Indigenous men, betraying the colonizers’ unwillingness or inability to recognize women’s authority and disturbing established social patterns within these communities (see, for example, Rebecca Tsosie’s contribution to this volume). Beginning in the nineteenth century, residential school policies eroded women’s status further by imposing patriarchal gender roles as part of the assimilation process.

In Canada, the 1876 Indian Act redefined Indigenous identity in ways that disenfranchised and dispossessed large numbers of women, and the 1887 General Allotment Act in the United States broke up reservation lands into privately held property that was held disproportionately by men. The sexualization of Indigenous women, which Jean Barman in this volume identifies as an integral part of colonization, worsened the effects of governmental policies and left women particularly vulnerable to violence. This problem endures in the present: recent Amnesty International reports have exposed that Status Indian women in Canada are up to five times more likely than other women to die of violence, and their counterparts in the United States are 2.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be raped.⁶ While the reports show that problems in the legal system and the ability of perpetrators to evade justice have contributed to this violence, they also point to women’s economic, political, and social marginalization, which has been shaped by government policies, as a key source of vulnerability. The systematic disempowerment of Indigenous women, in all of its dimensions, has provided grounds for women’s activism in recent decades.

Although women have always played key but often overlooked roles in Indigenous political campaigns, their activism gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s and began to focus more heavily on issues of gender. Legal claims and social movements have provided necessary tools for protest and empowerment. In Canada, in particular, the legislative dominance of the Indian Act, with its explicitly gendered provisions, mobilized Indigenous

women to seek legal remedies for inequalities to achieve the “most basic incidents of citizenship: equal status and membership within Aboriginal communities, equal entitlement to share in matrimonial property, and equal participation in Aboriginal governance.”⁷ The gains for Aboriginal women through the courts, however, have been double-edged.⁸ As Sharon McIvor explains, “the use of the courts to advance women’s collective and individual rights has pitted these women not only against Canadian and Aboriginal patriarchy, but also against other women in the Aboriginal community who do not share their view of women’s equality.”⁹ An additional tension has emerged from the limited goals that Aboriginal women are permitted to claim for themselves. Verna Kirkness describes this limitation as discrimination-within-discrimination, whereby “the adoption of sex equality guarantees in any form at all helps make even more invisible the sex equality of women in traditional Native culture.”¹⁰ These challenges have generated the formulation of new terminological, activist, and political strategies premised on the broadly defined goal of gender justice for women. The strategies include using the courts and the media as tools of protest, articulating a collective identity that takes account of gender, and connecting struggles for gender justice to broader Indigenous quests for self-determination.¹¹ Indian Act and band membership provisions and matrimonial property rights remain vital issues around which Aboriginal women in Canada continue to organize.¹² A crucial underlying concern, as Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson explain, is that these struggles should not be “reduced to ‘women’s issues’ by the formal male leadership, and then presented as a wholesale threat to sovereignty.”¹³ Marie Anna Jaimes Guerrero also notes the oppositional logic between Indigenous feminism and struggles for sovereignty and asserts that “any feminism that does not address land rights, sovereignty, and the state’s systematic erasure of the cultural practices of native peoples, or that defines native women’s participation in these struggles as non-feminist, is limited in vision and exclusionary in practice.”¹⁴ These issues of political representation and limited choice mark an important tension around which Indigenous women organize transnationally (see also Shari Huhndorf’s contribution to this volume). Human rights activist Elsie B. Redbird argues, for example, that “stereotyping, misconceptions and abuse of Indian women come from the fact that they were not allowed to speak for themselves, express their own identities or participate in the development of policies which affected them.” For these reasons, as Redbird states, “If the erosion of sovereignty comes from disempowering women, its renewed strength will come from re-empowering them.”¹⁵

Despite the breadth of their issues, movements for gender justice have, however, developed differently around the world.¹⁶ In Canada, major national organizations have furthered women's struggles to achieve political and social justice.¹⁷ The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) was founded in 1974 in response to gender inequalities in the Indian Act, particularly women's status. It has since expanded its mission to exert an influence on all legislation that affects Indian women, provide leadership and educational opportunities, expose and combat sexual violence, ensure representation in the justice system, and address a host of other issues, including those with an international dimension. Whereas the NWAC serves primarily First Nations and Métis women, Pauktuutit formed in 1984 to represent Inuit women in Canada. It identifies sexual violence among its most important priorities.¹⁸ Although national organizations are better known, most social organizing around Indigenous women's issues has appeared in local contexts. The Aboriginal Women's Action Network of Vancouver (AWAN), British Columbia, for example, engages the myriad social, political, and legislative challenges confronting Indigenous women. By doing so, it has increased awareness and understanding of Indigenous feminism.¹⁹ The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women, founded by current president Muriel Stanley Venne, one of Canada's most respected activists, has also been instrumental in bringing women together to discuss their concerns through local organizing. Like the NWAC and the AWAN, the institute has a broad political mandate to change stereotypical attitudes in Canadian society toward Aboriginal women, address issues at all levels of government that impact women, and serve as an advocate for the human rights and dignity of Aboriginal women.²⁰

Gender has been less central in social movements in the United States, where nationalist endeavours remain dominant and have a complicated relationship with feminism. Women of All Red Nations (WARN) organized in 1974 as an extension of the American Indian Movement (AIM) to address issues that have special relevance to women – health, education, and violence – within the context of broader campaigns for political sovereignty, land rights, and environmental justice. In its early years, the group exposed the forced sterilization of Indigenous women in the 1970s by the Indian Health Service, and it published a study about the dangers to women of radiation contamination on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Some of the women affiliated with WARN went on in 1985 to found the Indigenous Women's Network (IWN), which defines itself as “a global movement that achieves sustainable change for our communities” by supporting women's

leadership and perpetuating traditional knowledge.²¹ Winona LaDuke, perhaps the best-known Indigenous woman activist in the United States, has participated in both organizations, and much of her current work addresses land recovery and environmental justice issues, often with a particular focus on women.

Although these examples point to continuities of interest between women's and Indigenous organizations, the two political projects have come into conflict as women's organizations have identified examples of patriarchy in Indigenous communities, their political organizations, and the dominant society. In both contexts, women confront sobering rates of domestic and sexual violence along with political under-representation and social marginalization, and their efforts to address these inequalities frequently elicit accusations of divisiveness. These tensions came to the fore in the court case *Native Women's Association of Canada v. Canada* (1994), in which the NWAC argued that the groups that had participated in the Charlottetown Accord had primarily represented men and that the government was required to provide equal representation for women.²² The Supreme Court of Canada ultimately decided against the NWAC. These conflicts, complicated by the fraught relationship between Indigenous and mainstream feminism, have created a predicament for Indigenous women, who are frequently pressed to oppose feminist and Indigenous political commitments. This dual marginalization underlies recent scholarly arguments for making space for Indigenous feminism: the particular forms of racist and sexist oppression brought to bear on Indigenous women, as Joyce Green insists, necessitate that Indigenous feminism be considered a valid and necessary political stance.²³

Among the most promising reconciliations of feminist concerns with those of broader Indigenous struggles for autonomy is the political project of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), which emerged in 1994 in the Chiapas region of Mexico. Its Women's Revolutionary Law enumerates the rights of Indigenous women, including political leadership and participation, freedom from violence, reproductive choice, health care and education, and fair wages. Extending beyond mere rhetoric, this declaration paralleled the material restructuring of women's places within and outside the home, including the sharing of domestic labour and significant political participation within the Zapatista movement. In this context, writes one observer, "indigenous women have maintained a double militancy, linking their gender-specific struggles to struggles for the autonomy of indigenous communities." This double militancy allows "us to speak of the

emergence of a new indigenous feminism."²⁴ Also significant in this regard is the transnational Indigenous movement, which began in the 1980s and brought to the fore issues that extend beyond the tribal.²⁵ Women's organizing in particular has gained significant momentum in this new constellation of relationships,²⁶ and this development suggests the possibilities that transnationalism is creating for Indigenous feminism.

Indigenous women's cultural production has also played a key but neglected role in the development of feminism. While activism aims to accomplish material social change, culture fosters critical consciousness by attending to the meanings of history and social relationships and imagining political possibilities. Unsurprisingly, then, Indigenous women's literature, art, film, and performance often addresses the same issues that preoccupy activists. Colonial transformations of Indigenous communities, the meanings of traditions, and contemporary social issues such as sexual violence are frequent themes of women writers and artists. In addition, culture has gained particular importance as it has confronted the silencing, marginalization, and invisibility of Indigenous women in patriarchal narratives and social practices.²⁷ As they scrutinize the effects of colonialism and patriarchy, writers and artists render Indigenous women visible by shifting their voices and cultural authority to the foreground and by reimagining their roles within and outside Indigenous communities. One purpose of this book is to consider how culture complements and extends Indigenous women's activism and political work; it seeks to draw out connections that have received little attention in the scholarship on Indigenous feminism.

Although Indigenous women struggle for parity in activist groups and politics, in the realm of culture they have managed to forge a significant presence in recent decades. Yet, even in the cultural realm, they receive less critical consideration than their male counterparts. Although several Indigenous women artists and intellectuals attained early prominence,²⁸ women writers in particular did not gain widespread attention until the 1970s and 1980s, decades when women's activism around issues of gender emerged. Paula Gunn Allen, Jeannette Armstrong, Louise Erdrich, Joy Harjo, Linda Hogan, Wendy Rose, and Leslie Marmon Silko are among the many American and Canadian Indigenous women who began to publish in this era, often to widespread acclaim, and Erdrich is today usually cited as the bestselling and Silko as the most widely read of all Indigenous authors in Canada and the United States. In many ways, the work of these writers complemented Indigenous activism of the period. For example, Armstrong's novel *Slash* (1985) – the first novel by an Indian woman in Canada

– scrutinizes the effects of the residential school system and racism in the dominant society on its protagonist, Tommy Kelasket. As the novel progresses, Tommy, renamed Slash, develops a critical consciousness that leads him to participate in a protest movement reminiscent of AIM and to become an Indigenous rights activist. In a parallel project, Silko's *Ceremony* (1977) tells the story of the reintegration of its protagonist, Tayo, into Laguna Pueblo after the church, mission schools, and his service as a soldier during the Second World War had severed his social and cultural connections to his community. This narrative of individual and communal identity reconstruction in the wake of colonialism, along with the novel's valorization of cultural traditions, linked directly with the goals of Indigenous activism during the Red Power era.

These path-breaking novels centred, however, on the stories of male protagonists, and along with the majority of Indigenous texts of this period, they mirrored in troubling ways the social marginalization and invisibility of Indigenous women. This circumstance began to change in the 1980s as Indigenous women writers and intellectuals increasingly asked and sought answers to questions about gender. Paula Gunn Allen's *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986) represents an early attempt to expose the patriarchal dimensions of colonization and to retrieve what she called "gynocratic" Indigenous traditions as a basis for contemporary feminist practice. Women writers also began to revise the gendered paradigms of Indigenous literature. Most famously, Erdrich's stories almost invariably focus on women and place them at the centre of Indigenous communities; in the process, the stories often engage with issues of gender exploitation. The same can be said of Hogan's work, Silko's recent novels, and the writing of a newer generation of authors such as Janet Campbell Hale, LeAnne Howe, Heid Erdrich, Lee Maracle, and Winona LaDuke. Indigenous women, some of whom identify as feminists, have also made significant forays into cultural realms that remain more resiliently male. These include filmmakers Alanis Obomsawin, Sandra Osawa, and Christine Welsh; dramatists and performers such as Monique Mojica, Marie Clements, and the members of the Spiderwoman Theater; and artists Shelley Niro and Rebecca Belmore.

Despite the significant accomplishments of these writers and artists and the attention they have drawn to Indigenous women, they nevertheless have had to contend with scholarly narratives that privilege men's work and deflect attention away from issues of gender. Some critics, however, have begun to pay particular attention to the work of Indigenous women, at times

from a feminist perspective. Others have made crucial contributions to this endeavour by publishing anthologies of Indigenous women's writing that present alternative genealogies of cultural and intellectual history to male-centred narratives and raise questions pertinent to Indigenous feminism.²⁹

Indigenous Feminist Practices

This volume takes up these issues – politics, activism, and culture – as they bear on Indigenous women. Not only do we see these topics as essential interrelated components of Indigenous feminism as it now exists, we also seek to initiate conversations across disciplinary, national, academic, and activist lines. The breadth of this project also reflects the nature of Indigenous feminist endeavours over time. Although the focus is on Canada and the United States, some of the chapters explore other Indigenous contexts, and the volume as a whole, we believe, has implications for Indigenous feminist efforts around the globe. The contributors do not seek to create a singular or unified definition of Indigenous feminism but rather to explore the myriad, sometimes conflicting questions that result from Indigenous feminist inquiry.

“Politics,” the first section of the volume, begins with Minnie Grey's examination of the relevance of feminism to cultural traditions and to her own involvement in Inuit politics. Her chapter was initially delivered as a keynote address at the “Indigenous Women and Feminism” conference. Rebecca Tsosie, in another keynote speech, broadens the questions raised by Grey about the interconnections of feminism and politics by analyzing women's leadership in contemporary society. Laura Donaldson brings a historical perspective to these issues by considering gender and tribal politics in early Cherokee writing, particularly the work of Nancy Ward. Drawing inspiration from the writings of Laura Cornelius Kellogg, an influential but largely forgotten activist and intellectual, Patricia Penn Hilden and Leece Lee define the project of Indigenous feminism as they scrutinize the place of academe in the creation and maintenance of racial and gender inequalities.

In the essay that opens the section “Activism,” Kim Anderson argues for the centrality of feminism in Indigenous communities and women's organizations. Jean Barman's chapter extends this argument by contending that Indigenous women's behaviours at the time of contact are consistent with feminist principles and practices. Interrogating the work of the African American feminist writer Anna Julia Cooper, Teresa Zackodnik considers feminism as a basis for coalitions between Indigenous and African American

women. In her chapter, Cheryl Suzack argues that Yvelaine Moses' bids to have her band membership reinstated reveal how the law has reinscribed Indigenous women's subjectivities and feelings in colonial terms. In turn, Ann-Elise Lewallen examines how Ainu women's activism in regard to traditional culture and natural resources constitutes a feminist practice distinct from feminism in the dominant Japanese community.

"Culture," the final section of this volume, begins with Shari Huhndorf's examination of scholarly debates about Indigenous feminism and the ways that women dramatists, including Monique Mojica, define an Indigenous feminist project. Jeanne Perreault analyzes the significance of memory in the poetry of Indigenous women writers Marilyn Dumont, Joy Harjo, Louise Halfe, and Jeannette Armstrong. Julia Emberley's essay considers how Rudy Wiebe and Yvonne Johnson's *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman* addresses issues of colonial violence and the problems that Indigenous peoples confront in the justice system. Pamela McCallum argues that the work of visual artist Jane Ash Poitras reclaims cultural memory as it scrutinizes colonial and patriarchal representations of gender and community in Indigenous contexts. Katherine Evans traces the work of the Spiderwoman Theater, the first Indigenous feminist drama group, and suggests that the theatre has used performance to revitalize contemporary Indigenous communities. Elizabeth Kalbfleisch examines the significance of space, place, and borders in Rebecca Belmore's *Vigil*, a performance in protest of the murder of Indigenous women in Vancouver. The volume concludes with Patricia Demers' analysis of what indigeneity and feminism means in the work of Indigenous women filmmakers.

The diversity of the topics and issues explored in this book demonstrates the range of questions through which Indigenous feminist inquiry can be taken up. Any attempt to reduce this book to a work of cultural feminism will miss the mark.³⁰ Nevertheless, any attempt to construct a theoretical framework to study Indigenous feminism must also address the following questions: What term – *Indigenous* or *feminism* – should take precedence? Can feminism inhabit discourses that marginalize the question of gender?³¹ How can the debates and conflicts surrounding Indigenous feminism allow the movement to advance as other women of colour feminisms have done? How can Indigenous feminism resist assimilation to either male or mainstream feminist norms? By what power structures do Indigenous women's feminist positions become visible, and by what alliances can these power structures be changed?³² Ultimately, we hope that, as Indigenous feminist

practices are built through the work of this anthology, these questions will be taken up together rather than separately to develop Indigenous women and feminism as a field of study.³³

NOTES

- 1 Thus far, only two books focus explicitly on Indigenous feminism in Canadian contexts: Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood, 2007), and Grace Ouellette, *The Fourth World: An Indigenous Perspective on Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Activism* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2002). On the US context, see the "Native Feminisms without Apology" forum in *American Quarterly* 60, 2 (June 2008). A number of relevant articles are also cited in this Introduction.
- 2 In the American Indian Movement in the late 1960s and 1970s, for example, pan-tribal alliances proved fragile, as Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford Lytle explain, because of conflicts between traditional people, who "preached the doctrine of tribal integrity," and urban Indians, who created community identities and common political cause by foregoing tribal differences. See *The Nations Within: The Past and Future of American Indian Sovereignty* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 236.
- 3 We are influenced by Ipshita Chanda's contention that third world feminism must aim primarily to achieve collective rather than individual rights and that this endeavour necessarily involves preserving historical and cultural specificity while also finding bases for collective political action. See "Feminist Theory in Perspective," in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, eds., *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 486-507.
- 4 Emma LaRocque, "The Colonization of a Native Woman Scholar," in Christine Miller and Patricia Marie Chuchryk, eds., *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom, and Strength* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996), 14.
- 5 Fay Blaney, "Aboriginal Women's Action Network," in Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence, eds., *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003), 158.
- 6 See Amnesty International, *Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women from Violence* (New York: Amnesty International, 2007), and *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada* (New York: Amnesty International, 2004).
- 7 Sharon McIvor, "Aboriginal Women Unmasked: Using Equality Litigation to Advance Women's Rights," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 16, 1 (2004): 108. The political status of Indigenous women is both fraught and complex due in part to legislative policies that contributed to their historical erasure through imposed status categories. Scholar Jo-Anne Fiske explains some of the terminology that has followed from these changes to the Indian Act, terminology that conflates the political with gender identity in key ways, thus challenging the straightforward assertion of any rubric through which to organize socially and politically. See "Political Status of Native Indian Women: Contradictory Implications of Canadian State Policy,"

American Indian Culture and Research Journal 19, 2 (1995): 1-30. As Fiske explains, the Indian Act is “administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [DINAC] and exercises exclusive power (allocated to the Canadian Parliament by the Constitution Act, 1867) to determine who shall be recognized as Indian, the criteria by which this status shall be accorded or lost, and the conditions under which said Indians must live in order to benefit from special treatment in federal law.” Fiske notes that “from 1876 onwards, the terms *legal*, *registered*, and *status* have been used interchangeably to denote Indians recognized by the federal government and regulated by the Indian Act” (5).

Distinctions between First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are equally complex. For a record of this evolving terminology, see Indian and Northern Affairs Canada’s website at <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/tln-eng.asp>.

- 8 One of the most contentious pieces of legislation affecting Aboriginal women, section 12(1)(b) of the Indian Act, removed Indian status from Indian women who married Non-Status Indians or non-Indians. See Green, “Sexual,” and Weaver, “First Nations Women and Government Policy, 1970-92: Discrimination and Conflict,” in Sandra Burt, Lorraine Code, and Lindsay Dorney, eds., *Changing Patterns: Women in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993), 92-150. Although 1985 amendments to the Act repealed this and other sections, discrimination against Aboriginal women has not been remedied. As Val Napoleon has argued, discrimination has simply been delayed a generation and borne instead by the children and grandchildren of these women. See “Extinction by Number: Colonialism Made Easy,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 16, 1 (2001): 113-45.
- 9 McIvor, “Aboriginal Women Unmasked,” 109.
- 10 Verna Kirkness, “Emerging Native Woman,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 2, 2 (1987-88): 413.
- 11 McIvor, “Aboriginal Women Unmasked,” 133; Myrna Cunningham, “Indigenous Women’s Visions of an Inclusive Feminism,” *Development* 49, 1 (2006): 56; Val Napoleon, “Aboriginal Self-Determination: Individual Self and Collective Selves,” *Atlantis* 29, 2 (2005): 14.
- 12 These issues have attracted a great deal of attention. For an analysis of the intersection between law, social policy, and gender identity, see Joyce Green, “Sexual Equality and Indian Government: An Analysis of Bill C-31 Amendments to the Indian Act,” *Native Studies Review* 1, 2 (1985): 81-95; Delia Opekokew, “Self-Identification and Cultural Preservation: A Commentary on Recent Indian Act Amendments,” *Canadian Native Law Reporter* 2 (1986): 1-25; Sally Weaver, “First Nations Women and Government Policy, 1970-92: Discrimination and Conflict”; Val Napoleon, “Extinction by Number”; Joanne Barker, “Gender, Sovereignty, and the Discourse of Rights in Native Women’s Activism,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 7, 1 (2006): 127-61; and Mary Ellen Turpel, “Home/Land,” *Canadian Journal of Family Law* 10, 1 (1991): 17-40. For a comparative analysis of the regulation of Aboriginal identity in Canada and the United States, see Bonita Lawrence, “Gender, Race, and the Regulation of Native Identity in Canada and the United States: An Overview,” *Hypatia* 18, 2 (2003): 3-31. Lawrence raises the crucial point that “we need to dare to

- look in different ways at Native identity” (23). Val Napoleon also supports this argument in “Aboriginal Self-Determination,” 10. In this article, she proposes an activity-based citizenry model as an alternative to basing membership on the Indian Act.
- 13 Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson, “Indigenous Women: The State of Our Nations,” *Atlantis* 29, 2 (2005): 3.
 - 14 Marie Anna Jaimes Guerrero, “Civil Rights versus Sovereignty: Native American Women in Life and Land Struggles,” in M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, eds., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 101.
 - 15 Elsie B. Redbird, “Honoring Native Women: The Backbone of Native Sovereignty,” in Kayleen M. Hazlehurst, ed., *Popular Justice and Community Regeneration: Pathways of Indigenous Reform* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 135-36. Andrea Smith makes a similar point when she states that “gender justice is often articulated as being a separate issue from issues of survival for indigenous peoples.” See “Native American Feminism, Sovereignty, and Social Change,” *Feminist Studies* 31, 1 (2005): 121.
 - 16 The term *gender justice* is used widely to mark a key differential positioning between Indigenous women and men. Deborah Bird Rose describes the differential double bind as the “encounter between Indigenous knowledge systems which include boundaries of exclusion and silence and the colonising demand for information ... that entraps women and men differently.” See “Land Rights and Deep Colonising: The Erasure of Women,” *Aboriginal Law Bulletin* 3, 85 (1996): 6. See Rose and Hannah McGlade, “Aboriginal Women and the Commonwealth Government’s Response to *Mabo* – An International Human Rights Perspective,” in Peggy Brock, ed., *Words and Silences: Aboriginal Women, Politics and Land* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin Academic, 2001), 139-56, especially 141, for more extensive discussions of this problematic in the Australian context. See also Anveshi Law Committee, “Is Gender Justice Only a Legal Issue? Political Stakes in UCC Debate,” *Economic and Political Weekly* (March 1997): 453-58.
 - 17 For a history of Indigenous women’s organizing in Canada, see also Joyce Green, “Balancing Strategies: Aboriginal Women and Constitutional Rights in Canada,” Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood, 2007), 140-59.
 - 18 A brief account of the NWAC’s history and descriptions of its ongoing activities may be found on its website. See also Pauktuutit’s website.
 - 19 Blaney, “Aboriginal Women’s Action Network,” 157.
 - 20 See the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women’s website for a complete list of its objectives.
 - 21 See the IWN’s website. For a fuller history of Indigenous women’s organizations and their objectives in the United States, see M. Annette Jaimes and Theresa Halsey, “American Indian Women: At the Center of Indigenous Resistance in North America,” in M. Annette Jaimes, ed., *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 311-44, and Donna Hightower, “American Indian Women’s Activism in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Indybay*, 21 March 2006, <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2006/03/21/18095451.php>.

- 22 Sharon McIvor explains that the Charlottetown Accord was a constitutional reform agreement that included negotiations among the federal, provincial, and territorial governments and representatives from the AFN (Assembly of First Nations), the NCC (Native Council of Canada), the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, and the MNC (Métis National Council). See McIvor, "Aboriginal Women Unmasked," 126.
- 23 Joyce Green, "Indigenous Feminism: From Symposium to Book," in Joyce Green, ed., *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood, 2007), 14.
- 24 R. Aida Hernández Castillo, "Zapatismo and the Emergence of Indigenous Feminism," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 35, 6 (2002): 42.
- 25 Ronald Niezen, *The Origins of Indigenism: Human Rights and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
- 26 Guillermo Delgado-P., "The Makings of a Transnational Movement," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 35, 6 (2002): 38.
- 27 Rayna Green shows the pervasively gendered representation of Indian women in colonial texts that fashioned the virgin-whore paradox to transform Old World images into New World terms that symbolically justify conquest. See "The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture," *Massachusetts Review* 16, 4 (1975): 698-714. Green's work contests what Jo Carrillo describes as myths America, myths that rely on fictional and symbolic perceptions of Indigenous women rather than the material realities. See "Tribal Governance/Gender," in Jo Carrillo, ed., *Readings in American Indian Law: Recalling the Rhythm of Survival* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 208.
- 28 The best-known examples of early writers and performers are E. Pauline Johnson in Canada and Zitkala-Ša (Gertrude Bonnin) and Ella Deloria in the United States. Indigenous women also gained prominence in traditional cultural practices. See, for example, Karen Kilcup's edited collection, *Native American Women's Writing, c. 1800-1924: An Anthology* (Cambridge, MA/Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2000).
- 29 See Paula Gunn Allen, *Spiderwoman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989); Anderson and Lawrence, *Strong Women Stories*; Joy Harjo and Gloria Bird, eds., *Reinventing the Enemy's Language: Contemporary Native American Women's Writings of North America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); Kilcup, *Native American Women's Writing 1800-1924*; and Jeanne Perreault and Sylvia Vance, eds., *Writing the Circle: Native Women of Western Canada* (Edmonton: NeWest, 1990).
- 30 See Nancy Fraser's use of the term *cultural feminism* and her critique of feminist cultural politics as being too focused on struggles for identity and recognition, struggles that Fraser argues have subordinated the social to the cultural and the politics of redistribution to recognition. It is the representation of these struggles as "cultural" that we object to. We note that decolonization as an objective does not appear in Fraser's assessments of feminist cultural politics. And concepts such as participatory parity and public reason (see p. 32), which are applied to progressive forms of recognition for collectivities such as Indigenous women, do not adequately conceptualize what Indigenous feminist inquiry proposes to achieve. These problems draw attention to forms of culturalism *within* the dominant feminist movement that remain to be addressed and that impede strategic alliances and political affiliations among

- feminists. See Nancy Fraser, "Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: A Two-Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice," *Studies in Social Justice* 1, 1 (2007): 23-35.
- 31 See Sara Ahmed's analysis of this question in "Beyond Humanism and Postmodernism: Theorizing a Feminist Practice," *Hypatia* 11, 2 (2006): 71-93. Whereas Ahmed answers this question with an emphatic no, we prompt further discussion by asking whether it might be construed differently by and for Indigenous feminist politics.
- 32 Other topics have been suggested by the anonymous readers of this volume, and we thank them for sharing their astute insights. These subjects include Indigenous women and environmental activism, Indigenous women's writing and the formation of ethics, and storywork as a form of gender empowerment.
- 33 Some of this work is already under way. For an excellent analysis of how Indigenous women's activism is reshaping traditional definitions of state-based diplomacy to enact intersectionality as a diplomatic strategy through which Indigenous women can "represent themselves on their own terms," see Laura Parisi and Jeff Corntassel, "In Pursuit of Self-Determination: Indigenous Women's Challenges to Traditional Diplomatic Spaces," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 13, 3 (2007): 83.

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Sample Chapter