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Red Intersectionality and Violence-informed Witnessing Praxis with Indigenous Girls

Natalie Clark

Abstract

In this article I will centre the historic and ongoing resistance of Indigenous girls to violence through colonial policies and practices. I challenge conventional intersectionality scholarship by foregrounding anti-colonialism and Indigenous sovereignty/nationhood. Using examples from my own work, I illustrate the manifestation of colonial power and persistent resistance in the lives of Indigenous girls. Through these stories, I will discuss the everyday practices of witnessing and resisting the discourses of risk. Red intersectionality will be offered as one way forward in relation to my ongoing work on violence.

Keywords

colonialism, girls' groups, resistance, trauma, wellness

My body has melted.
Ice cracking from
oppression,
revealing bone and
sinew.

My language is screaming
inside my flesh,
buried under your schools,
Your words,
Your wounds,
Left
Me
Here.

Emerging.
I drape myself in orange.
I tattoo freedom on my body.
I pierce remembering on my face.

You will never enter me again.
I have marked my territory this time.

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You are not welcome.

Oppression melted,
Reveals
stone,
sinew,
bone.

Souls syrup on my tongue

I know
my map
my
body

Do you?

I wrote this poem in my journal shortly after I left the small town in which I grew up and moved to Vancouver. This poem speaks to the legacy of colonization, the absence of consent, and the violations of Indigenous girls' lands and bodies, but also names and evokes the power of resistance and survivance in the face of abuse, violence, and the absence of consent. My work with Indigenous girls is rooted in my more than 20 years of front-line work as an activist, auntie, sister, violence counselor, community-based researcher, and group facilitator, and finally my own journey of identity as an Indigenous woman and mother.

This is a give-away paper.
I offer it as a prayer, as a give-away poem.
There is no Ceremony for Completing an Academic Paper.
Post-colonial, anti-colonial, decolonizing,
All words that swim around inside my head
While poems offer islands of refuge
from this academic space I now traverse
Inspired by the poetry of Chrystos
I ask; "How can I make an offering for this paper"?
It forms in strange corners and spaces of my mind
As I move between the library taking books out on theory,
And dance with my children at the pow wow
Where I am reminded of older unrecorded ways
Writing with my children all around
Ancient truth-tellers, momma you are not on holidays
Calling me on the work, the work that is all around us
All around me.

This article will move between the poetic and the theoretical, rooted in the recognition that theory emerges from this place and the Indigenous girls and Indigenous women artists and writers are bringing life and form to theory every day. In this switching from first to third person, from poetic to aca-

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demic, and from personal to political analysis I am following the inspiration of Gloria Anzaldúa's writing style that brings to life the very theory she speaks of in that "this … product [of writing] seems an assemblage, a montage, a beaded work with several motifs and with a central core, now appearing, now disappearing in a crazy dance" (1981: 89). Thus the writing and the structure of this article itself is an act of resistance, but also of relationship. Further, I would argue that Indigenous intersectionality as a theory invites and even calls for a new way of writing that has been ignored largely in current intersectional scholarship. Carol Lee Sanchez, Laguna/Sioux, says that she

> writes as a way of connecting to her people… . What she does is … knit the old ways to the new circumstances in such a way that the fundamental worldview of the tribe will not be distorted or destroyed. In her task she uses every resource of her present existence: technology and myth, politics and motherhood, ritual balance and clearsighted utterance, ironic comments and historical perspective (quoted in Charnley 1990: 19).

Indigenous scholars no longer willing to leave spirit at the door have reminded us to situate ourselves in our writing, to start from our intentions, to answer the question: Who are you and why do you care? (Wilson 2008; Meyer 2008). In this article I draw on work previously published[1] as part of my accountability to the stories I have heard and witnessed in my work with Indigenous girls, and the spaces and sites of truth-telling in which my writing is mobilized including the political, the theoretical, and the personal.

Bakhtin writes that

> a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve (1981: 2631).

Thus, if context is primary, then the words we use to describe our methodologies must flow from the ontologies and languages from which they are born. In this article I strive to include elements of this by including my own journal entries, poetry, and practice-knowledge alongside my learning from knowledge keepers and Elders on the land.

Red Intersectionality and Indigenous Feminism

"This is not anything new. For centuries it has been so." These words from Indigenous queer activist Beth Brant about collecting the writings of Indigenous women into a collection indicate that she sought to include the

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unheard voices of Indigenous women. Her voice echoes into me now. *We are not victims.* We are organizers. We are freedom fighters. We are feminists. We are healers. This is not anything new, for centuries it has been so" (1994: 11 emphasis in original). From the words of Sioux activist Zitkala-Sa (1901) over a century ago, through to the voices of my friends and sisters and the Indigenous feminist activists writing and speaking out today this knowledge of the interlocking arteries of colonialism has always been part of our truth-telling (de Finney 2010; Hunt 2014; Simpson 2011). Long before the writings of the early African American women activists who were part of the Combahee Collective in 1977 or Kimberle Crenshaw, the critical race scholar who coined the term intersectionality in 1989, early Indigenous activists such as Zitkala-Sa and Winnemucca (1883) were central to fighting the issues of violence on the land and on the body as they witnessed it at the turn of the century. Zitkala-Sa[2] was instrumental in collecting the testimonies of three Indigenous girls violated by the imposition of capitalism through oil and mining in the tribal lands. I would argue that prior to the legal precedent of Kimberle Crenshaw, Zitkala-Sa put together the legal argument of gender, race, and age in her essay "Regardless of Sex or Age" (1924) in which she describes how "greed for the girl's lands and rich oil property actuated the grafters and made them like beasts surrounding their prey" (quoted in Nason 2010: 52). Zitkala-Sa and other Indigenous feminists remind us again and again in their writing that violence has always been gendered, aged, and linked to access to land.

The understanding of the concept of intersectionality, as Mohawk activist Jessica Danforth (2011) has identified, is not new to our communities. Indigenous communities prior to colonization had multiple categories of gender, holistic understandings and approaches to health, and many had strong matrilineal traditions and complex systems of governance, systems of treaty, and peacemaking processes (Hunt 2013). Patricia Monture-Angus puts it thus: "[T]o artificially separate my gender (or any other part of my being) from my race and culture forces me to deny the way I experience the world" (1995: 198). This is echoed by Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson who argues that "we have to understand people within the multiplicity of frames that shape their lives—everyday frames of experience that they choose, that they inherit, that are imposed on them and that may be transformed, disintegrated, forgotten or ritualized" (2003: 41).

Indigenous ontology is inherently intersectional and complex in its challenging of the notions of time, age, space, and relationship. Prior to colonization in many Indigenous communities, identity existed in a "space, time

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and place continuum" (Jojola 2003: 95). This complexity, or holism inherent in Indigenous communities was and continues to be the focus of colonial violence through policies inflicted on the land and on the body; colonial processes were not only gendered, they also attacked the other intersectional ways of being within Indigenous communities, including the complimentary roles of women and also the sacredness of Two-Spirit Indigenous peoples (Driskill 2010) as well as the roles of children and youth within the community (Winnemucca 1883).

In order to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous girls and women, it is crucial to center the knowledge of Indigenous girls and affected Indigenous communities and to support Indigenous researchers and policy processes grounded in Indigenous epistemologies. This article challenges conventional intersectionality and trauma scholarship by foregrounding Indigenous girls' resistance, Indigenous sovereignty/nationhood, and anticolonialism. At the same time, discussions of colonialism must not grow so abstract that they overshadow individual Indigenous girls' interpersonal experiences of violence and the particular forms of gendered colonialism operating within Canadian society and within Indigenous communities and our everyday practices of witnessing and receiving these disclosures. I therefore argue for an Indigenous Intersectionality framework, what I call Red^3 Intersectionality—inherently activist, responsive to local and global colonization forces, and theorized for the emergent "multifarious, polyvocal" (Grande 2004: 2) indigenous identity with the clear goal of sovereignty. I draw here on the work of Grande's "Red Pedagogy" (2004: 2) and Lester-Irabinna Rigney's indigenist pedagogy "whose goals are to serve and inform Indigenous struggle for self-determination" (1999: 119). Rigney (1999), Grande (2004, 2008a), and Smith (1999) advocate for methodologies that are rooted in Indigenous sovereignty and grounded in Indigenous ontology and epistemologies and, most importantly, are committed to work that is anticolonial, activist, and focused on the goals of transformation, Indigenous sovereignty, and liberation.

In my own research and writing in this area with my friend and Indigenous activist and scholar Sarah Hunt (2011), I have joined the voices of other Indigenous scholars (de Finney 2010; Kenny 2006) in calling for a more complex understanding of policy and programming as it affects Indigenous girls. Carolyn Kenny describes the impact of what she calls the "double bind" (2006: 552) in the lives of Indigenous women and girls of being silenced in key decision and policies that have an impact on their lives while, at the same time, their participation is essential to social change, leadership, and healing in their communities.

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Theoretically, Red intersectionality provides the tools to theorize not only the past but the current forces of colonialism as found within reserve politics, lateral violence, and identity politics. Red intersectionality recognizes the importance of local and traditional tribal/nation teachings, and the inter-generational connection between the past and the present, while also recognizing the emergent diversity of Indigenous girlhood and the geographic movement off and on reserve, and the construction of Indigenous girls through the Indian Act. A Red intersectional perspective of Indigenous girls and violence does not center the colonizer, nor replicate the erasure of Two-Spirit and trans peoples in our communities, but, instead, as I have already mentioned, attends to the many intersecting factors including gender, sexuality, and a commitment to activism and Indigenous sovereignty. It helps us to understand and address violence against Indigenous girls since it foregrounds context, which in Canada's case has to include gendered forms of colonialism, and the dispossession of Indigenous lands.

Furthermore, any social justice action or outcomes must be situated within a framework that holds onto tradition and intergenerational knowledge while making meaning of modern Indigenous struggles. Finally, it needs to flow from and be of service to Indigenous epistemology and worldview that recognizes the relationships between humans and all of nature as equal and important sources of knowing.

The work of activists like Jessica Danforth, Sarah Hunt, Leanne Simpson and many more, together with my own work with Indigenous girls' groups and that of Indigenous writers and artists is essential in its providing of examples of developing programs that resist colonial images of Indigenous women and girls, as well as offering strategies and solutions rooted in the community and in tradition, while recognizing the complexity and diversity of these communities.

Shock and Awe: Trauma as the New Colonial Frontier for Indigenous girls

As I have argued elsewhere (Clark 2016), the current focus on trauma and trauma-informed practice continues the colonial reach and the entrenchment of Western European medical model approaches and colonizing health services that continue to perpetuate narratives of risk located within Indigenous girls and their families and communities. Community-based approaches, such as models of Indigenous girls' groups and the reinstatement of cere-

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monies, are important since they provide spaces in which girls can be seen in the circle, and because they allow us to understand their experiences of violence, as well as naming and situating their resistance to such experiences. Applying a Red intersectional analysis to trauma and girls requires us to consider how the so-called trauma industry has continued a colonial legacy of labeling and pathologizing Indigenous girls that manages their behavior through criminalization, medication, and talk therapy programs which ultimately serve "to reinforce a sense of powerlessness and undermine women's ability to resist" (Nadeau and Young 2006: 89).

A Case Study

Here I offer a case study from my journal that is comprised of elements of Indigenous girls' lives that I have witnessed and written about elsewhere (Clark, 2013, 2016).

> A 14-year-old Indigenous girl living on a small reserve discloses sexual abuse at the hands of a male foster parent. She walks into a girls' group and asks if she can make an announcement and then she proceeds to tell the other girls that she has been sexually abused since the age of eight and that she is no longer going to take it; she is not remaining silent any longer.
>
> Weeks go by and she has not been interviewed by police, nor has the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) removed her from the home, in spite of the fact that her family will not believe her. She is no longer attending school and has been referred to mental health services. In a meeting with MCFD her disclosure is questioned as a story created to help her leave her home. Instead of focusing on the disclosure, the authorities see her actions as the result of her 'being a lesbian' and it is suggested that she is 'using drugs.' Her mental health is also questioned. These details are provided as evidence of her lack of credibility and her motivation.
>
> Together the other facilitator and I support this young woman in calling a meeting, during which she, together with us as supports, presents a different picture of herself. She is articulate, strong, and clear about the abuse and about her right to live in a safe home and attend school where she chooses. She gets her day in court and the judge marvels at her strengths and her ability to represent herself and her needs. She becomes a leader in the new girls' group that she is attending, speaking up and naming her feelings, and her challenges. She writes a support letter about the need for Indigenous girls' groups and presents the model at a School District board meeting.

A Red Intersectional Analysis would begin by asking some of these questions:

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What are the intersecting axes of social location, power, and resistance in the life of this girl? How are these health needs framed or pathologized in the current health system?

How are her experience and her coping framed by the current mental health, criminal justice, and child welfare system policies and programs? How is she resisting this?

What are the daily lived experiences of violence that she is resisting? What strengths and resistance can you identify in her story? If we situate the girl and the present policy within the context of colonialism, poverty, racism, and discrimination among others, how is this policy, in reference to her, shaped by mainstream institutions and ideas of health that exclude cultural, gendered, and spatial experiences of young women's health and wellness and the intersection of these in girls' lives? Does this policy support through referral and advocacy the use of local resources, capacity and strengths?

This case study and many others like it can provide examples of the ways in which mental health policy intersects with other policy to create harm, but also provides an example of how Indigenous girls are currently resisting, negotiating, and challenging this construction.

Resistance Practices

> Resistance is a woman
> whose land is all on fire
> perseverance and determination
> are her daughters… (Fife 1989:19).

Understanding the complacency of society is important to understanding the failure to act in the case of violence against Indigenous girls and women. Indigenous women and girls have always resisted the construction of themselves within policy and media, and, as demonstrated in the case study example, this resistance is an important place to begin to understand the way forward. Storytelling and other forms of creative writing have always been a political act and have provided an important way for Indigenous women to resist and replace the colonial images, and to challenge the complacency (Armstrong 1990; Brant 1994). These word warriors, as they have come to be known, like Lee Maracle in *Bobbi Lee: Indian Rebel* ([1975] 1990) and Maria Campbell in *Halfbreed* (1973) were writing, remembering and re-telling complex stories of Indigenous women and girls that reflected a holistic perspective and understanding. By the 1980s writers like Jeanette

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Armstrong (1988), Joy Harjo (1981), Gloria Anzaldúa (1981), Chrystos (1988) and others were writing and resisting the construction of Indigenous women from within both Western feminism and their own communities. Indigenous writer Jo-Ann Episkenew has identified the key role of Indigenous literature and writing in speaking back to and critiquing the policies of the government of Canada and also the key role of writing since our "stories are a type of medicine" (2010: 2) in healing our communities.

The listeners or receivers of the stories of young women are essential partners in their resistance. I believe that Indigenous girls' stories, writing, and poetry are medicines, and are also acts of resistance against the colonial and academic presentation of Indigenous girls. I know that many of the young women with whom I work write poetry, songs, short stories, plays, and yet these narratives that are not saturated in notions of their being at risk are not published nor are they part of the discourse about Indigenous girls. In the words of Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Storytelling, oral histories, the perspectives of Elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful. But the point about the stories is not that they simply tell a story, or tell a story simply. These new stories contribute to a collective story in which every indigenous person has a place" (1999: 144). The work of Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) and Leanne Simpson (2011) are powerful examples of the pedagogy of storywork and the relevance of storytelling in our communities today.

As Eve Tuck (2009) has noted, we need to suspend the ongoing creation of Western stories of damage and harm. Otherwise the statistics become toxic narratives of identity that are not situated within lives of resistance and strength, nor placed in historical and changing place and time. Madeline Dion Stout, in her powerful memoir of residential school, describes how her parents' resilience is working through her now, and how even her triggers give her life. "Their resilience became mine. It had come from their mothers and fathers and now must spill over to my grandchildren and their grandchildren" (2008: 179). It is vitally important in our listening and our witnessing that we do not continue to create narratives of risk and harm separated from the stories of strength, resiliency and survivance.

Towards Witnessing Spaces

It is common for many adolescent survivors of violence to have experienced violence as children or witnessed violence towards their mother or other

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adults in their lives and to have had a bad and/or racist experience with police, the justice system, and other systems with which they have interacted. Thus it is very important for us consider the spaces in which and between which Indigenous girls move, in particular their homes, schools and the venues of community programs where they report violence. We must be aware, in particular, of the spaces and the web of relationships within these spaces in which Indigenous girls choose to share their stories of violence. In my practice experience the spaces in which girls share their stories of violence and of resistance and strength are often those that center our own processes of law and witnessing, such as in Indigenous girls' groups.

Transformation through Resistance Spaces: Indigenous Girls' Groups

During my 17 years in Vancouver, I created and facilitated girls' groups for girls who had experienced violence; many of these girls were Indigenous and were from communities across British Columbia and the rest of Canada. When I returned to Secwepemc territory I had a kitchen table conversation with my mother-in-law, Donna Jules, a Secwepmec woman and a strong role model in the community. We were discussing Indigenous girls who are strong, resilient young women in spite of the violence, abuse, and ongoing colonial legacy that surrounds them. Together we questioned what made the difference in the girls who managed to navigate the "colonialscape" (Hunt 2014:1) of adolescence and those who struggled. We both identified that in the health of the girls we knew the key role was played by their connection to culture and language and identity, as well as by their strong female role models, including Elders.

Through a violence-informed and Red intersectional approach, the groups that my sisters and colleagues, alongside our Elders and knowledge keepers, have developed provide the girls with the opportunity to explore their experiences of abuse, sexual exploitation, negative body image, and violence as well as their strengths and daily lived realities in a safe and non-threatening environment (Clark and Hunt 2011; Gadsby et al. 2006).

A violence-informed and Red intersectional girls' group locates the source of girls' challenges within structural and systemic problems such as racism, poverty, sexism, and the intersections of these in their lives. Key violence-informed practices that inform my work include truth-telling and the conscious use of self; safety and containment; naming and noting; and fostering healthy resistance strategies and activism (Clark 2012). The health of Indigenous girls must be accounted for in models based in Indigenous

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traditions and belief systems and local knowledge in order to incorporate spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical health in any programming. Rather than promoting any one model with a fixed concept of Indigeneity, gender roles, sexuality or other aspects of identity, programs such as Indigenous girls' groups are able to respond to the unique needs and experiences of local girls and provide the support for their healthy development.

Towards Witnessing Practices

> As witness, we have a role that is not to take up the voice or story of that which we have witnessed, nor to change the story, but to ensure the truths of the acts can be comprehended, honored and validated (Hunt 2014: 38).

In my work I view Indigenous girls' groups as forms of ceremonial spaces for supporting and witnessing girls through the transitions into adulthood. "If the circle is that piece of ceremony we can reclaim until the other ways of witnessing violence are returned or remembered or rehonored then that's maybe why in itself it's been of value" (Clark cited in Hunt 2014: 40). In our Indigenous family and community contexts we weave and tell stories of violence, resistance, and healing. We are telling in order not only to share about the violence, but also to change it. It is vitally important that we see and honor Indigenous girls as truth-tellers and activists. Similarly, Taylor et al. describe the ethics of witnessing with Rwandan survivor communities and the power of relational and intimate spaces of witnessing within family and community where testimony is woven into every day alongside laughter and food and is part of building an intergenerational collective knowledge. Taylor et al. call for attending to the context of relationships and spaces involved in listening, and caution against seeing the women as "victims telling their stories of survival but rather as educators, theorists, analysts, and social change agents who overtly demand accountability, responsibility, and responsiveness" (2015:97).

Indigenous feminist Dian Million states,

> Our voices rock the boat and perhaps the world. They are dangerous. All of this becomes important to our emerging conversation on Indigenous feminisms, on our ability *to speak to ourselves, to inform ourselves* and our generations, to counter and intervene in a constantly morphing colonial system. To 'decolonize' means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times (2009:55, emphasis added).

The young woman who disclosed her sexual abuse in the girls' group I was facilitating was not only speaking to other Indigenous young women, or, as

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Million (2009) describes it, speaking to ourselves in order to inform ourselves as a form of Indigenous storytelling, she was also engaging in this truth-telling in an intimate relational space of Indigenous witnessing. This young woman and the circle of girls and women who received her story were all engaged in an intimate act of decolonizing, both through theorizing about violence and the forms that it takes, and through the telling in certain spaces and relationships, such as these Indigenous girls' groups that facilitate and allow for relational witnessing and accountability.

My current work and activism is in providing training and support to Indigenous girls and the women and youth workers who work with them on the front lines in our communities. Through webinars and community facilitator trainings such as that provided for the Ask Auntie program in British Columbia, I have always asserted that we must remember that the sexual abuse/assault disclosure is embedded within a web of strengths, intergenerational resiliency, resistance, and everyday survivance. In addition, we receive stories every day of cumulative experiences of exclusion, victimization, intimidation, and injustice including everyday acts of racism by people and institutions. Thus we already have a witnessing disclosure practice. The following questions reflect my support of Indigenous women on the frontlines in our communities who are facilitating girls' groups out of the band offices or community centers. How can we/I create spaces of relative safety (physical, mental, emotional, and cultural)? How can we/I center Indigenous laws and the voices of Indigenous girls in these spaces? In what ways can we/I attend to the spaces and the relationships involved in the act of listening and witnessing? How do we/I currently receive and witness disclosures from Indigenous girls of the everyday acts of violence, racism, and genocide they experience in places from people, policies, and practices? How can I be a good witness to violence and/or abuse? How can we comprehend, honor and validate the stories we receive from girls? How can we walk beside Indigenous girls and those we work with after a disclosure? What are the key areas in this Indigenous girl's life where we can support, and name, and build strength? How can I honor the strength in sharing or in not sharing another's story? What are the daily experiences that girls are resisting? What stories am I not hearing? What strengths and resistance can we identify in their stories? How do we name and frame coping as a healthy resistance strategy and support girls' movement toward healthy resistance while honoring their current strategies? What areas of support will I need—supervision, consultation, and/or training?

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Grounding in our Own Experience.

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde 1988:132). A first step in Witnessing Practice is to begin with ourselves, with our bodies and with our relationships to the lands, and the Nation where we are located. I speak of communities of caring as part of the political work of survival.

As part of my work supporting Indigenous women who work with girls in our communities I ask women to consider some questions. What is my own story of resistance? Who has been the witness to my stories, to my truth-telling, to my disclosures? What did I need? What have been my ways of resisting across the lifespan, and in different roles and relationships? What is ethical witnessing? Since there are witnesses to violence and abuse who do nothing to intervene, how do we not replicate this harm in our work with girls? How do we not create more harm through enacting colonial processes of reporting? What is it to move towards embodied relational and reflexive listening/witnessing? How are the stories of girls affecting my body and my knowing? What is my own embodied experience of witnessing testimony in my family, community, and culture? What practices and processes will support collectives of caring in the work we do with children, youth, and families/communities who have experienced trauma/violence? Who are my support systems? Who do I turn to? Do I belong to a community of caring?

From the work of Robinson and Ward (1991), we know that assisting girls to cultivate healthy resistance strategies and to develop an "oppositional gaze" (hooks, 1992:115) is crucial; we need, in other words, to offer them support them to resist stereotypes and to replace these with strong and affirming messages and images of themselves This includes naming and challenging negative cultural messages and abuse of power in society. Sharing our own stories and strategies for coping with sexual harassment, racism or other abuses of power is an important practice of truth-telling.

A specific strategy for those of us in the circle with Indigenous girls is what we call truth-telling, or directly naming and challenging negative cultural messages, in particular those that Indigenous girls face every day. In my experience in girls' groups, girls would ask the racist questions they heard every day in their relationships with non-Indigenous girls and in spaces all around them. Truth-telling involved introducing girls in person to Secwepemc lawyer Katrina Harry and her work (2009) on the Indian Act and its impact on Indigenous women, as well as Indigenous youth activists like Jessica Danforth who created the Native Youth Sexual Health Network.[4]

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I have brought books to girls' groups to provide examples of girls and women resisting violence and speaking up about oppression and trauma, as well as speakers. Girls are hungry for these stories. I realize that they need to hear from other girls like themselves and from Indigenous women and role models who have resisted and continue to resist violence and abuse and, ultimately, colonization. The girls want to hear about the specific strategies that these women used, whether they were political, legal, artistic, or therapeutic.

I also encourage women to share their own strategies for resisting violence and oppression and to tell stories that provide the girls with understanding, tools, and strategies for coping with daily challenges. As group facilitators and sisters, aunties, mothers, and grandmothers we will be challenged to share aspects of our own lives and struggles. Articulating these experiences can be difficult since we have often been socialized to be silent about these issues. Central to this practice is the importance of reflexivity, what I call grounding in our own experience, in order to consider the intersections of power and privilege within our lives. The girls with whom I have worked often ask who I am and why I care. We must be ready to answer these questions. As Beth Brant writes, "And the core, the pivot is love … . We made the fires. We are the fire tenders. We are the ones who do not allow anyone to speak for us *but* us" (1994: 459, emphasis in original).

Conclusion

We need programs that provide spaces in which Indigenous girls can address their intersecting and emergent health needs without furthering the discourse and construction of Indigenous girls and women as being at-risk, or further criminalizing and medicalizing our children and our communities. Programs such as the Indigenous girls' groups in the Secwepemc Nation and the Ask Auntie program throughout Indigenous communities in British Columbia resist medical and individual definitions of trauma and violence, and use, instead, an Indigenous holistic, or Red intersectional framework that assists girls in understanding and locating their coping as the response to larger structural and systemic forces including racism, poverty, sexism, colonialism, and a culture of trauma. Ultimately, the resistance of Indigenous girls and women to policies that are not reflecting their realities has been historic and ongoing. Coming back to the poem with which I began this article, I believe that knowing your map, your body, and tracing not only the histories of violation on the land and body, but also raising up the resist-

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ance and centering the strengths and activism of Indigenous girls within our policies and programs is essential. It is important in our work with Indigenous girls that we are grounded in our own teachings, stories, and identity. Through considering our own roots and cultural heritage, we are in a stronger place to share this with the young women with whom we work. I do this work for the future generations and the hope that my daughter, my sons, and my nieces and nephews will know themselves as strong Indigenous males and females. In the words of one of the girls participating in a group, whom I will call Laura, "In girls' group they showed me how to be a better person… I have learned to respect others as well as myself … I have also kind of learned about [how] you should never pretend to be someone you're not just to fit in. Being who you are is simply the most greatest thing ever."

My own scholarship and activism are rooted in healing from and resistance to colonial violence and trauma at the level of policy, as well as at the individual level of the body. I offer my basket, together with its intentions around resistance to violence and activism. I will end with a poem I wrote.

Awoke from a dream
a word whispering
whispering
over and over again in my head
Entomology
Entomology
I awaken, enact modern poetry in motion
google search engine
Wikipedia,
That shit is Greek!
Breaking into parts, segmented, cut into parts,
Severed
as in insects
I will not be severed. I cannot be fragmented.
Manulani writes of the hologram,
Indigenous knowledge cannot be divided, each piece contains the whole
Like a dream, grasping one piece is a connection to a greater story
My grandmother reaching forward and backwards for me now
She will not be divided, nor will I.

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and personal analyses, encouraged by Manulani Meyer to "see [one's] work as a *taonga* (sacred object) for [one's] family, [one's] community, [one's] people—because it is" (2008: 219). Her work is informed and mobilized through her interconnected identities as a solo parent of three Secwepemc children, part of the Secwepemc community, and her metis ancestry.

Notes

1. In previous work I have explored policy analysis (Clark 2013) and Trauma Theory more fully (Clark 2016).
2. Although I knew the work of Zitkala-Sa and Winnemuca, I am indebted to Nason (2010) for drawing to my attention the three cases describing Zitkala-Sa's activism.
3. I take up the concept of Red as a political space that includes specific Nations but also recognizes the larger global Indigenous struggle as defined by Sande Grande's Red Pedagogy (2004) and Dory Nason's Red Feminism (2010).
4. Jessica Danforth is the Executive Director of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network. See www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com

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