

Refusal to forgive: Indigenous women's love and rage

Rachel Flowers

University of British Columbia

Abstract

This paper is concerned with the rising tendency to describe Indigenous women's resistance to colonization and modes of solidarity with settler society in terms of love. This propensity ultimately suppresses the voices and struggles of Indigenous women and denies not only the validity of other decolonial emotional responses such as sadness, resentment, or anger, but also their transformative potential. This paper seeks to gender resentment and *ressentiment* to demonstrate that both are appropriate and critical responses to ongoing colonial violence and dispossession.

Keywords: *anger; anticolonialism; love; resentment; solidarity*

Introduction

“Being at the Idle No More drum dance in Yellowknife this past week was moving in many ways. It was led, in part, by strong young Indigenous women who have moved in their own decolonization journeys from frustrated anger to empowered loving action.”

Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox (*The Winter We Danced*)

In this paper I offer an anticolonial approach to the maintenance of alterity in light of settler solidarity with Indigenous resistance, as I come to understand it as a *hwulmuhw slheni*¹ from Leey'qsun Nation.² I propose that some modes of solidarity are misrecognitions of settler allyship; settlers do not necessarily need to be “allies” to be good relations. Primarily, I consider acts of settler solidarity with Indigenous women's direct action and in relation to missing and murdered Indigenous women in this discussion. In particular, I am concerned with the effects of the increasingly common tendency to conflate Indigenous women's resistance with love. While I do not reject love, I question the discursive separation of love from anger and the triumphalist narrative of love. Finally, I hope to reclaim space for Indigenous women's rage, orienting it around a refusal to forgive, as informing an anticolonial approach to disrupting forms of violence and domination that reify settler colonialism. Refusal is a political practice that operates in opposition to statist forms of recognition, but also in conflicts over interpretation (Simpson, 2014). Refusal is simultaneously a negation of access to information and resources, as well as an affirmation of sovereignties.

Settler (mis)recognition

In this section I consider the problematics in conceptualizations of allyship, as well as notions of co-existence, by those purporting to act in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, followed by an analysis of the settler desire for recognition by the colonized. First, I will briefly unpack my understanding of the settler. It is a critical term that denaturalizes and politicizes the presence of non-Indigenous people on Indigenous lands, but also can disrupt the comfort of non-Indigenous people by bringing ongoing colonial power relations into their consciousness. Often, the term settler is used without a critical understanding of its meaning and the relationships embedded within it, rendering it an empty signifier. For example, this occurs when non-Indigenous people self-identify as settler but mean it synonymously with non-Indigenous. The main problem, then, is the reduction of a set of privileges and practices to fit within a binary of Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities rather than thinking through the term ‘settler’ as a set of responsibilities and action. Instead of a term that describes an individual based on what they are not (Indigenous), to my mind, ‘settler’ is a position of privilege and enjoyment of standing. Indeed, ‘settler’ is a

¹ Hul'qumi'num' meaning “a woman of the land” or “Indigenous woman”.

² Leey'qsun is a Coast Salish First Nation from Valdez Island, British Columbia.

relational term that signifies the settler's relationship to colonialism. The Hul'qumi'num' word for settlers is hwulunitum, which means the hungry people. It explicitly refers to the fact that settlers were not from the land and did not know how or where to get food, but also to the greed of settlers to accumulate resources, land, people, and wealth. The category of settler is both a structural location and a product of social relations that produce privilege. The challenge, therefore, should be the subversion of that standing by refusing what settlers are, to allow new subjectivities to emerge. In response to Kant's "What is Enlightenment?" Foucault (1982) considers how we might imagine the future: "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we *could be* to get rid of this kind of political 'double blind,' which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures" (p. 336). As Indigenous peoples increasingly take up the politics of refusal (Simpson, 2014), the settler too must demonstrate a willingness to be refused. Settler privilege is the basis for injustice and oppression of Indigenous peoples, the privilege of the settler is predicated on the unfreedom of the colonized (Tully, 2000). The labor of settlers should be to imagine alternative ways to be in relation with Indigenous peoples. Perhaps a process of rupture and conflict might generate settler political identities anew? Settler colonialism is invested in gaining certainty to lands and resources and will achieve access through the dispossession of Indigenous peoples, violently or legislatively, a process that begins with the body, specifically the bodies of Indigenous women. Dispossession is the removal of bodies from the land, but also the disappearance of Indigenous peoples as free peoples. The process of colonization is intimately linked to patriarchy and capital; these are the primary obstacles to even beginning to imagine the co-existence of settlers with Indigenous peoples. How might such a gulf be bridged and solidarity created?

In both Indigenous studies and direct action there is momentum to turn away from settler institutions and re-center Indigenous law thereby opening a space to transform Indigenous-settler relations. Moreover, Indigenous peoples are increasingly calling for solidarity from settlers to stand with us at a wide range of demonstrations in a shared anti-colonial resistance, particularly in ongoing advocacy for missing and murdered Indigenous women.³ Theorists of Indigenous resurgence have clearly articulated that settlers have an opportunity to listen, learn, and act in relation to colonial difference along side assertions of Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013; Coulthard, 2013; Simpson, 2008; 2011). Moreover, Indigenous feminist theories, "offer new and reclaimed ways of thinking through not only how settler colonialism has impacted Indigenous and settler communities, but also how feminist theories can imagine and realize different modes of nationalism and alliances in the future" (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013, p. 9). There has and continues to be space offered by Indigenous peoples for settlers to align themselves with our struggles to support the transformation of the colonial relationship and constructing alternatives to it, or put differently, to move forward in a shared

³ I acknowledge concerns that the word "missing" inappropriately diminishes the active role of the perpetrators in disappearing women and could become a trope that disparages the violence experienced by Indigenous women. See Margot Leigh Butler (2003); Amber Dean (2009).

future. The emphasis from Indigenous peoples on *sharing* and *co-existing* is essential to our ontologies and governance systems since these concepts are predicated on interrelatedness, and therefore, create a constellation of responsibilities to both the human and non-human world.

There is an invitation to reimagine the future in common terms, “when we do not presume that [settler colonial states] should or will always continue to exist, we create the space to reflect on what might be more just forms of governance, not only for Native peoples, but for the rest of the world” (Smith, 2005, p. 311). Leanne Simpson (2014) strikingly explains how one person is capable of “propelling us to rebel against the permanence of settler colonial reality and not just ‘dream alternative realities’ but to create them, on the ground in the physical world, in spite of being occupied. If we accept colonial permanence, then our rebellion can only take place within settler colonial thought and reality; we become too willing to sacrifice the context that creates and produces cultural workers like Kwezens” (p. 8).

Settler activists also deploy concerns over a common or shared future but do so problematically. Certainly, solidarity with Others is important and Indigenous peoples have no desire to build a future that is still grounded on a colonial relationship, but there is always a risk of having our messages co-opted, difference erased, and the presumption that the colonized want or are willing to share *our* futures. After all, what affords settlers privilege is the ability to implicitly set the terms of what a shared future is, without realizing they are asymmetrically dictating the terms of this discussion. Also, in moments of solidarity settlers frequently seek to utilize and deploy their privilege in ways that support Indigenous peoples’ resistance. In this, settlers often end up disregarding the privilege of being able to choose when to support decolonial struggles, which only upholds the settler position of privilege. In this way, our Indigenous sites of resistance also become sites where our domination is sustained rather than interrupted. Settler responses to calls for solidarity ought to oppose rather than perpetuate structures of domination and the settler position of privilege, recognizing that those calls offer opportunities and preconditions for ethical engagement based on respect, while keeping in mind that solidarity is not a temporal event but a “long-term commitment to structural change” (Arvin, Tuck & Morrill, 2013, p. 19). After all, solidarity means de-centering ourselves, in order to engage productively in the unknown and ‘in-between’ spaces of resistance, and confronting the impulse to claim to know or have authority over a struggle.

A recent example of these tensions is the demonstration against Kinder Morgan that took place on Burnaby Mountain in 2014. The Tsleil-Waututh and Skwxwu7mesh Nations sought to interrupt and stop survey and drilling work for a proposed pipeline expansion through their ancestral, unceded, and occupied lands. As an uninvited visitor on these lands, I had an obligation to go and support the people. During the protest, the amount of support from settlers was overwhelming. Their intentions, however, as I came to understand them, were to prevent the destruction of a Conservation Area and confront corporate greed, rather than to oppose the infringement of Indigenous sovereignties. Eventually, as tensions rose, the police set up a perimeter wherein no citizens were to enter without penalty of arrest. In turn, being arrested became the objective of settlers and allies, many choosing to defy the court injunction and be

arrested in the name of the environment. Even children crossed the line. Rather than securing bodies at the front line of an Indigenous-led protest, settlers chose to glorify arrests (and their arrests dominated headlines); their rebellion did not transform the context. Once removed, while some faced charges of civil contempt, the majority of those arrested faced no criminal charges and were released in a timely fashion. The inherent contradictions in this was lost on many who failed to connect their actions to the politics on the ground: that bodies are needed at a blockade to make it effective, but also, that in the city of Vancouver, Indigenous peoples are frequently arrested, brutalized, or killed at the hands of police and do not have the privilege of willfully walking into an arrest with full knowledge that their lives will not be threatened.⁴

Irlbacher-Fox (2012) makes an important contribution to guide how we might think through settler solidarity. She writes, “Co-existence through co-resistance is the responsibility of all settlers, and we achieve it in part by making change in our own systems and among other settlers, taking our cue from Indigenous action and direction”. She asserts that co-existence means co-resistance, which productively identifies the role of the settlers in dismantling their own systems of exploitation and extraction. This relationship requires the settler to refuse “to collaborate in maintaining injustice as the basis of the relationship between the state and Indigenous peoples” (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014, p. 156). However, there is, to my mind, an insidious move in this that disavows the settler by focusing on individual actions, falsely separating them from the state and suggesting that settler subjectivity is not co-constituted through the colonial state. The state is invested in the production of colonized subjects to replicate its governance. Indeed, settler subjectivity itself directly and covertly engages with and mimics colonial institutional structures. Unjust forms of state-sanctioned violence are mechanisms that are put into operation designed to “ensure its own preservation” by reproducing power relations of domination (Foucault, 1982, p. 336). In thinking through these relations it is crucial to interrogate the relationship between power and political will and how it functions in creating new forms of subjectivity. A settler political will should be willful, that is, willing to disobey a general will and always working toward an alternative future. Revolution is only possible when subjects violate the directives of commanding bodies, a willing willfulness to create the world anew by opposing the old orders (Foucault, 1982, p. 336). The will to change is simultaneously a negation and an affirmation. It is, as Foucault (1982) writes, “through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us” that new forms of subjectivity emerge (p. 336). The political will of decolonization refuses to reproduce the present and affirms alternative futures.

An approach to Indigenous and settler relations that emphasizes relations of power implicitly points to a decolonial future; when “faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up” (Foucault, 1982, p. 340). This involves, “taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point... to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application

⁴ For a recent demonstration against police brutality in Vancouver, see <http://vancouver.mediacoop.ca/photo/standing-united-against-police-abuse/18375>

and the methods used”; and thus, “analyz[e] power relations through the antagonism of strategies” (Foucault, 1982, p. 329). Indigenous peoples’ voices must be the breath of our struggle to end suffering, and our actions must direct its movement. As Irlbacher-Fox contends, settlers can make changes in their systems, and their cue should be taken from Indigenous action. However, at some point, settlers will need to figure out where to stand without Indigenous peoples marking an ‘X’ on the ground for them and pointing out clear and plain injustice. As Lee Maracle (1996) writes, “That white people are unable to make revolution without our assistance - to turn around the society they created - does not negate the necessity and inevitability of turning it around” (p. 109). Shared practice in anticolonial resistance does not require the disappearance of difference, nor should co-resistance foreclose alterity and oblige co-existence. This foregrounding of co-existence as a goal of resistance is particularly concerning given the popular notion of co-existence for settler society is incommensurable with that of Indigenous peoples (Asch, 2014, pp. 105-106). While sites of domination and resistance are distinct, they are also connected; it is often the case that the site of co-resistance is where domination is put into practice and violence is forced into the mind and onto the body of the colonized. In this way, it is crucial that settlers find a place to stand in resistance that does not take up spaces for and appropriate the labor of Indigenous peoples (in particular, Indigenous women). This point is of increasing concern in the rise of public and academic discourse about missing and murdered Indigenous women that was originally led by the voices of the families of missing and murdered women, as well as Indigenous activists in the communities. As awareness about missing and murdered women grows and many people speak up, in doing so we must be attentive not to silence the voices of the families of these women.

In our struggles of freedom it is essential that we maintain a treaty-like relationship wherein Indigenous peoples and settlers are linked together but neither interferes in the matters of the other. When the state interferes in our business, then it is the obligation of settler subjects to oppose the misconduct of their government. Not for *our* benefit, but because that is what it means to live lawfully in a treaty relationship. In this way, settlers are not obliged to “co-resist” with Indigenous peoples, but rather, to uphold the integrity of a nation-to-nation relationship. Until the settler can imagine alternatives to relations of domination-subordination framed as “co-existence”, put those changes into practice and sustain them, Indigenous peoples need not entertain their fantasies or sympathies. Are settlers willing to relinquish their privilege? Certainly some settlers oppose their own government and its colonial policy because they can recognize it as such. The politics of recognition is predominantly attentive to the desire of the master (colonizer) to gain recognition as an essential “being-for-itself” but is only recognized by the dependent and unessential consciousness of the slave (colonized), which isn’t really recognition at all (Coulthard, 2014). As Coulthard (2014) notes, in settler colonial contexts such as Canada, the state (master) does not need or desire the recognition of the colonized (slave) but rather our lands, resources, and labor (p. 39). How does this understanding of the politics of recognition shift if we conceive of settlers as colonial subjects who do desire recognition by the colonized? Recognizing the desire for settler ‘co-existence’, settler decolonization is itself a self-interested

process in the desire for recognition by the colonized. The colonizer must maintain his or her position of power and obtaining recognition from the colonized is one move to innocence, among many (Tuck & Yang, 2012), to position the settler at the heart of decolonization movements.

In the city, in the classroom, or at a protest, there is always a settler seeking my recognition. She wants me to recognize that she is distanced from the others. She is innocent. Through her look, the Other wants me to see that she is a good settler, an ally. But my only thought is: *Don't smile at me*. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1967) demonstrates the futility of appealing to the Other for recognition and instead identifies the enemy, “since the Other was reluctant to recognize me, there was only one answer: to make myself known” (p. 92). Similarly, when Indigenous peoples deploy ‘settler’ it identifies the enemy, whereas, when deployed by settlers it is often depoliticized and neutralized rather than counter-performative in its function. When the colonized are not grateful or *fail* to recognize and commend the self-decolonizing of the settler, we are resented.

Each person is responsible for her own action and evading such responsibility is to live in bad faith, “the one who practices bad faith is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth” (Sartre, 1965, p. 89). Irlbacher-Fox (2012) states, “co-resistance is the responsibility of all settlers;” however, in the case of Idle No More, struggles that began in our communities were co-opted by settler allies, our messages were distorted, and the original voices, such as those of Indigenous women, were silenced in our own sites of resistance. For Indigenous peoples, unbearable suffering is often the motive for revolutionary action; whereas for the settler, it is anguish of facing the truth that compels them into action and, as Sartre (1965) reminds us, “most of the time we flee anguish in bad faith” (p. 711). This is the limitation of co-resistance as conceived by Irlbacher-Fox (2012), it presumes the inclusion of Indigenous peoples in anticapitalist decolonial struggles for land and freedom. While she suggests that co-resistance is the responsibility of settlers and the means to co-existence, it functions by collapsing our needs into one and requiring Indigenous peoples’ resistance to serve, albeit unnamed, settler shame. To my mind, this form of co-resistance attempts to render Indigenous peoples and our needs intelligible in order to consume them, to eat the other. Irlbacher-Fox’s intention is constructive but it is also presumptuous. Maybe some Indigenous peoples don’t want or need settler co-resistance because we don’t trust them. Many Indigenous peoples are not willing to forgive settler violence, so how can we trust and move forward in co-resistance without first being able to relinquish our resentment? This places the onus on Indigenous peoples to facilitate moving forward with settler society for a shared future of co-existence on our lands and in our lives. Though Indigenous peoples rebel against the permanence of the settler colonial reality, maybe some are not ready to sever themselves from the colonial relationship yet. For many Indigenous peoples the settler never ceases to be the enemy; the settler cultivates righteous anger within the colonized. As Fanon (1968) would have it,

There is no conciliation possible [between the native world and the colonial world], one of them is superfluous... To dislocate the colonial world does not

mean that once the borders have been eliminated there will be a right of way between the two sectors. To destroy the colonial world means nothing less than demolishing the colonist's sector, burying it deep within the earth or banishing it from the territory (pp. 4-6).

All this is to say that, through an analysis of power relations and their historical formation, the "conditions that are necessary to transform some or to abolish others" are revealed and open a field of possibilities for struggle and strategies of resistance (Foucault, 1982, p. 343). This resistance is not only about refusing or disobeying unjust law or power; it also concerns an unwillingness to give assistance to those individuals who administer such laws or the regime (of knowledge or power) itself: "To will this change is at the same time not to be willing to bear or reproduce the present; the project of willing thus began with, but exceeds, negation: to oppose the old directives is to will what follows" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 141). For Indigenous peoples' struggles, the unified "no" is also a resounding "yes" to something different, yes to a reality "to-come". Any conciliation possible is displaced into the future and is contingent on the progress of anticolonial struggle.

"Yes to life. Yes to love. Yes to generosity."

Often Indigenous activism and resistance, as shown during the Idle No More movement, relies on self-affirmative practices of culture and tradition to counter oppressive structures and discourses, bringing what is particular into public spaces. Over the last four years of organizing and speaking at the Memorial March for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Victoria, I witnessed women and men come together in affirmation to share both their sorrow and love in remembrance of our sisters, and to demand that violence against Indigenous women come to an end. These demonstrations provide a counterdiscourse to the dominant narrative that Indigenous women and girls are "vulnerable" thereby placing the burden on us to not only protect ourselves by changing our "risky" behaviors, but also to find solutions to ongoing systematic violence and oppression. For example, rather than providing adequate transit along the Highway of Tears, billboard signs were erected instead, which read, "Girls don't hitchhike on the Highway of Tears - Killer on the Loose."⁵ This public discourse reinforces the idea that Indigenous women and girls simply need to stop engaging in risky behavior rather than address the structural and ideological conditions that allow and depoliticize violence against Indigenous women. While there is an increasing awareness around the disappearance and murder of Indigenous women and girls, there continues to be a failure to name white male violence as a root cause. As Hunt (2014) argues, "the erasure of that violence as a topic of social and political concern is arguably a form of violence itself, as it serves to remove white men from the equation." Hunt (2014) continues, Indigenous women "know that systemic neglect, racism and violence of legal indifference within

⁵ See, <https://warriorpublications.wordpress.com/2015/05/29/b-c-government-accused-of-deliberately-destroying-highway-of-tears-internal-records/#more-6339>

a society largely run by white men have contributed to the normalization of violence against us.” Increasingly, antiviolence demonstrations and organizing around missing and murdered Indigenous women are adopting the language of love and emphasizing that these women were mothers, sisters, aunties, and daughters, and also students or professionals. While the intention is to remind the public that these women are valued, the effect of the reminders to recuperate the humanity of these women also functions to devalue women who may live on the margins or are involved in sex work and therefore deemed ‘vulnerable’ and ‘at risk’. Certainly, for families of missing or murdered loved ones, these memorials and protests are a space for grief and love for our sisters; but make no mistake, we are also angry. Our resistance is written in both rage and love.

Nason (2013) captures the centrality of Indigenous love: “the world has witnessed the boundless love that Indigenous women have for their families, their lands, their nations, and themselves as Indigenous peoples.” As an anticolonial project of resurgence it is essential that we direct Indigenous love *inward*. As Simpson (2015) writes, recognition for Indigenous peoples is about presence, “about recognizing and affirming the light in each other, as a mechanism for nurturing and strengthening relationships.” Certainly the love we have for our world motivates Indigenous women to resist settler colonialism. Love is the force behind our conduct, it informs our decisions and our resistance; we affirm our love for self as a technique of collective self-recognition. However, our love often does not extend into the colonial sector; our love is reserved for one another. Indeed, Indigenous women commonly experience depression and sadness as an entirely reasonable response to the heteropatriarchal colonial violence in our everyday lives. Often our love and positions we hold in the community make us targets of colonial violence; ultimately, our resentment and anger are in response to the modes of gendered colonial violence that exploit our love. As Nason (2013) reminds us, Indigenous women and our love inspire resistance and responsibilities to protect our values, traditions, the lands, waters, and peoples. While I agree with Nason, it is important to include Indigenous women’s rage in/as resistance. While the world has seen our “boundless love,” maybe Indigenous women need to better determine the boundaries of our love. Simpson (2013) proposes that there should be no limits on decolonial love but, as I propose here, our limitless love must be turned inward: for our cultures, each other, and ourselves. Indigenous women’s love is not a given; it is the result of tremendous desire to survive, to carry our teachings forward so that our ancestors recognize us and so that we become good ancestors. If our gift is received and respected, then the gift binds people together in an ongoing relationship of reciprocity and responsibility. When this gift is rejected or abused, expect our sadness, our resentment, and our rage. When the dehumanization of all Indigenous peoples is accepted as normal, especially aimed at the minds and bodies of Indigenous women through continued land dispossession and violence, it is unrealistic for settler society to expect us to forgive let alone love. In those moments when we come together in protest or in remembrance for our sisters (and brothers and non-binary relations) our anger is not abandoned, our resentment is not relinquished; it is because of our profound love for one another

and our lands that we are full of rage. Anger and love are not always mutually exclusive emotions.

Irlbacher-Fox (2012) also makes the connections between Indigenous women, their love, and their resistance:

Being at the Idle No More drum dance in Yellowknife this past week was moving in many ways. It was led, in part, by strong young Indigenous women who have moved in their own decolonization journeys from frustrated anger to empowered loving action.

In her statement on Indigenous women's love and decolonization, Irlbacher-Fox makes two oversights. First, she suggests Indigenous women's emotions move in a singular, linear direction that parallels the move to decolonization: as we move from colonization to decolonization, so too do Indigenous women move from anger *to* love. Irlbacher-Fox deploys a conciliatory approach of co-existence whereby the taming of Indigenous women's emotions is part of a generative process, a pacification of what are perceived as negative and immobilizing emotions, such as frustration and anger, as a necessary precondition to achieve love and therefore decolonization. Second, she implies that we are trapped in "frustrated anger" until we reach a redemptive stage of "empowering loving action." My concern is that this move to separate love and rage portrays our rage as merely reactionary to external forces and only through love can we transcend those structures. Indigenous women do not desire to overcome our anger for love and, indeed, we are not limited to one or the other; many of us are often limited to feelings of sadness, mourning, and remembrance, rather than anger.

When we account for settler possession as a structure that continues to dispossess peoples from the land, there is a clear connection between land and the bodies of Indigenous women. Often, Indigenous women's bodies are explained in symbolic terms, as a microcosm of Indigenous lands; her body is where our sovereignty begins. Indigenous women represent our political orders, our political will, our cultural teachings, our laws, and the power to reproduce Indigenous life. While Indigenous women's bodies are described as targets of gendered colonial violence, it is critical not to lose sight that we are also legal and political actors. Maracle's (1996) grandmother taught her that, "In the end, granddaughter, our body is the only house we will every truly own. It is the one thing we truly own... What is more, in the end, command of it will only amount to the sacred right of choice" (p. 27). Here she is explaining the "the absolute right to be cherished and the absolute freedom to govern our love's expression" but, to my mind, she is also speaking to the right to choose who receives our love, who we allow to enter our house, our village, and our world. While there is pressure on Indigenous peoples to forgive during this era of reconciliation, as Coulthard (2014) explains, Federal Indian policy has not changed but merely shifted from genocidal practices of forced exclusion and assimilation to a mode of colonial governmentality that works through politics of recognition and reconciliation. Colonial violence has not ended. These discourses that emphasize accommodation are seemingly more conciliatory; regardless of this shift, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state

remains colonial. State violence continues to constitute the regulative norm of colonial dispossession directed at Indigenous women. Even though the settler polity is ostensibly dedicated to a new relationship and reconciliation, it is predicated on the disappearance of Indigenous peoples, women in particular. The story of the settler colony is founded on disappearing peoples, from *terra nullius* to missing and murdered Indigenous women. Colonialism operates as a form of structured dispossession and the current relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state is part of that continuum. Ongoing extractionist politics continue to inform our place-based arts of resistance and critiques in our struggles not only *for* land but also informed *by* the land.

Indigenous peoples' resistance to the calls for forgiveness is a legitimate rejection of a new relationship that is simply the old relationship with new clothes. In our *hwulmuhw snuw'uy'ulh*⁶, we have stories and dances that demonstrate that some beings are duplicitous and must be approached with caution or outsmarted in order to stop them from causing any further harm to the people or the village; suspicion, anger and resentment cannot be disqualified. To disregard anger and resentment as destructive emotions is an uncritical move to absolve the unforgiven, whereby blame is placed on the injured party, who is seen as an irrational 'blockade' blinded by their rage compared to the 'reasonable' apologist. Moreover, when apologies offered (by the state and individuals) can be understood as displays of virtuousness, as spoken desires to forget the past and to move forward in a shared future, how can forgiveness be expected? These apologies are events that express regret and ask forgiveness for an event in the past, they are not commitments to structural change that acknowledge and identify the processes and structures that permit atrocities to occur and which continue to dispossess and dominate Indigenous peoples. For example, the Canadian state's 2008 apology for the residential school system revealed the country's escapist forgetfulness. Many elders and residential school survivors believe that the apology lacked substance, but it still provided a necessary piece of their healing. I have a sense that the apology contributed to a process of desubjectification for many residential school survivors. Here, desubjectification is a process of breaking free from one's subject position. This involves adopting a critical attitude toward, or destroying, the discourses and norms by which one is made a subject, namely, a colonized subject. In Foucauldian terms, through a process of desubjectification, individuals stop comparing themselves with the 'legitimate' norms and ethics imposed by power/knowledge and stop changing themselves/their behavior in order to align with structural and institutionally ordered power/knowledge. Residential schools were a fundamental overseer of discipline and subjectification yet there is little to no acknowledgement that the violence of the residential school system is connected to the forms of violence that Indigenous women continue to experience throughout their lives. Advocacy for forgiveness is steeped in promises of peace and healing; it is not surprising that forgiveness is desired and tempting because of its seemingly redemptive quality and appeals to basic Indigenous principles of harmony.

⁶ *Hul'qumi'num'*: *snuw'uy'ulh* refers to our laws and teachings.

Refusal to forgive, then, must be understood as not only negation, but also affirmation. In refusing the ongoing violence of the colonial state, it demonstrates a commitment to affirm my hwulmuhw teachings as a Leey'qsun woman and direct my love *inward*. One of the ways we accomplish this is by giving authority to our own laws and governance. It is essential that the revival of our laws and practices is not undertaken in the spirit of competition. By this I am referring to ways in which claims of authenticity or cultural authority are used by some to assert power over others; this is not resurgence. One of the first laws we learn is to be kind and help one another, to conduct oneself with kindness. Treating each other with kindness instead of lateral violence is one simple gesture that should go without saying, and makes our communities stronger and healthier. Our laws also provide our original responsibility to love and care for the lands, the waters, the sky, and all its beings. The law to be of good mind and heart is a law of the everyday. A good mind and a good heart, or 'uy shqwaluwun', is the core of our way of being. We must affirm our love for one another through our laws and re-vitalize them in our daily lives and in our minds, to share our 'uy shqwaluwun' inward. Simpson (2015) reminds us, "Although individuals have the responsibility to self-actualize within this system, intelligence in this context is not an individual's property to own; once an individual has carried a particular teaching around to the point where they can easily embody that teaching, they, then, also become responsible for sharing it according to the ethics and protocols of the system. This is primarily done by modeling the teaching." The same is true for the kind of love that we learn from the conduct of our old people. They understand and embody love and share it with us, so that we might learn to embody it and share it according to our ethics and protocols.

I also wish to nuance this discussion of forgiveness; not all forms of apology and forgiveness are shams. For example, in her discussion of the distinction between what Indigenous women want for themselves and for their communities, Nason (2013) asks us to consider the role of Indigenous men in our communities in relation to missing and murdered women. She points to the incongruity of Indigenous men whom publicly profess an obligation to "protect our women" and then "take leadership positions that uphold patriarchal forms of governance or otherwise ignore the contributions and sovereignty of the women" (p. 127). As Simpson (2015) argues, when Indigenous men engage in gender violence, or are silent in the face of it, they are in collusion with white male colonial violence that functions to destroy Indigenous nationhood. As such, they are traitors to Indigenous nationhood and resurgence. I wonder how an apology to Indigenous women, from Indigenous men who were violent toward women and have since reformed their behavior, might be a powerful and irreplaceable contribution to our desubjectification as objects of patriarchal violence. Whether these women choose to forgive is a separate consideration. However, the move from men to recognize their role in violence and take on the responsibility for change might provide some relief from the crushing weight of the persistent denial of violence within our communities. It is crucial that we shift our mode of thinking away from ownership of community members, toward our own understandings of kin relations, the system of relationships wherefrom we derive our obligations and laws. How might the healing needed in our communities take place differently if men stopped talking about

“protecting *our* women” but rather about “reforming our brothers” and “honoring our sisters, mothers, daughters”? Hunt (2015) points out to us,

There would be many chiefs, language speakers, cultural and political advocates who would lose their heads, because the version of resurgence we’ve been nurturing has allowed for cultural leaders to take up their roles on the ‘political’ front-lines even while violently preying on people at home. And we have left victims of violence at the whim of state actors who regularly demonstrate indifference or contempt for us, rather than building alternative mechanisms for dealing with interpersonal violence.

Our resurgence must abolish all forms of colonial violence. It is crucial to center Indigenous women’s voices while we build stronger relationships with one another, healing from violence means rebuilding our strength rather than reinforcing state power (Hunt, 2013). Monture-Angus (1998) explains that self-determination is about relationships, “communities cannot be self-governing until members of those communities are well and living in a responsible way” (p. 8). Resentment cannot be removed from the colonial relationship, as love cannot be separated from our resurgence.

“The rage of the oppressed is never the same as the rage of the privileged”

As Coulthard (2014) elucidates in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Indigenous peoples’ resentment is a legitimate response to ongoing colonialism and state violence. Commonly, discourses about resentment are referenced alongside negative emotions and attitudes like anger and hatred (Brudholm, 2006, p. 8). I will briefly discuss the distinctions between the notions of resentment and *ressentiment*, then I will consider them in relation to the Hul’qumi’num’ concept of anger. In a long tradition, resentment is characterized by a legitimate and politicized form of anger in response to perceived moral wrongs (Coulthard, 2014; Murphy, 2003; Smith, 2005). Generally, resentment is defensible because it is seen as an appropriate response that indicates care for oneself, if one’s value or rights are violated. *Ressentiment*, on the other hand, is distinct as an irrational and unjustifiable reaction to the past. As Coulthard (2014) explains, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche (1998) profoundly influenced the understanding of resentment and *ressentiment* when he described the pathological “man of *ressentiment*.” In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (2006) explains that the man of *ressentiment* is an “angry spectator of everything past” (p. 111). In this distinction it is clear that time operates to determine the validity of different forms of anger, and perhaps whether the harm or injustice was experienced directly or as a consequence of time. In contrast, Améry conceives of *ressentiment* not entirely unlike Nietzsche, yet similar to resentment, as a “belief that a moral injury has been done or that a justified demand or expectation has been violated” (quoted in Brudholm, 2006, p. 15). Moreover, Améry’s *ressentiment* is characterized by intolerance for the

way in which descendants of the perpetrators are allowed or facilitate a forgetting of the past. He explains, in relation to post-war Germany, the “failure to face the past reflected a continued existence of attitudes of contempt, hatred, or indifference toward the surviving Jews” (quoted in Brudholm, 2006, p. 15). This is also precisely the case in Canada.

I am certainly aware that negative emotions such as anger and resentment have the potential to manifest themselves in disempowering and violent ways, I am not advocating for Indigenous peoples to be angry or to harbor hatred for the colonial world; rather, I am advocating that we love ourselves. At the same time, I am exploring my own resentment (or *ressentiment*) and attempting to apply my own understanding of Hul'qumi'num' practice as a starting point to express emotions other than love. Finally, I remain unconvinced that *ressentiment* is not defensible as a potentially transformative subjectivity or affective reaction to the practices of the Canadian state in the past and present. The Western tradition is particularly obsessed with time, inventing different times (Fabian, 1983), exploitation of time, transcending time, evolution through time and so on. This is true for their conception of resentment and harm, that “*ressentiment* nails us to the past, blocks the exit to the future, twists or disorders the time-sense of the person trapped in it” (Brudholm, 2006, p. 21). For Hul'qumi'num'qun' nations, we are more concerned with place, but in our big house when a harm or transgression is committed, it is addressed before the ceremony or family can move forward, and nobody in attendance is allowed to leave until there is resolution witnessed and the place where the incident occurred is cleansed by the women.

In Hul'qumi'num', *teytiyuq* translates to angry, whereas *qul'sthaat* translates as anger that involves the entire body. The root words of *qul'sthaat* are *qul'* and *qul'aan*. *Qul'* is our word for eye, and *qul'aan* means a terrible thing that happened (in the past) that can be fixed, which suggests that some things can not be fixed. For Hul'qumi'num'qun', anger is an embodied experience that is localized in our eyes and in our vision, how we see the world and how we are seen. For Hul'qumi'num'qun', there are different forms of anger. Individuals must engage in certain practices to ensure protection for themselves and others *from* that anger, but certainly no outsider can assess the validity of another's anger. Depending on the form, we have different practices that function to cleanse those feelings so that they do not harm that person or others in their family and community. Traditionally, and especially during ceremony today, if we are sad or angry we are instructed to not look other people in the eye for fear of hurting them, we say that our eyes are *sharp*. These cleansing practices, however, do not banish that anger and ask the person to forget, they are concerned with protecting the people from that anger so that it is not directed inward. Given that the violent colonial history of domination and dispossession of Indigenous peoples continues to structure our daily lives and has profound affects on our health, colonial rage overtly and covertly shapes our relations with self and Others. Indigenous women's voices including those of love and anger must prefigure the politics of resistance and approaches to solidarity.

Conclusion

Recently, I visited my grandmother and she shared stories with me over coffee as she always does. We spoke briefly about the challenges I encounter as an Indigenous student in the academy. But I do not visit her to talk; I go to listen. I asked about her house that she lived in for nearly 50 years, which recently was put on the real estate market. She told me that the realtor came over one morning and moved her fence posts reducing the size of her property. She stood on her porch and mocked him saying, "Haven't you stolen enough land from the Indians?" He had no retort, what could he say to this 81-year-old Indian woman who was angry as though he was the first land surveyor to come to Indian country? Like many of those tough old Indian women, my grandmother has seen more in her day than I can imagine.

I have heard many stories from the community about racism, poverty, and inter-generational trauma and healing. My mother grew up in the city after my grandmother took her kids off the reserve and hid them from being taken to residential schools. My grandmother has told me stories of Kuper Island Residential School and the Nanaimo Indian Hospital that break my heart and fill me with a rage. She tells me about raising her nine children as a single mother in a one-bedroom apartment, but recently she shared a story of her childhood that seemed minor but obviously is significant because she retold it. She was at the store with her mother shopping for groceries. When her mother went to the cashier to pay for her items, the cashier said something to the effect of, "You can't have that, that's for our white customers." Item after item was taken away from my great-grandmother, she was denied purchasing foods like butter and milk because she was an Indian. After a few items, she said to the cashier, "keep your food, I don't need it" and they walked out of the store.

My great-grandmother rejected the remaining groceries that the cashier thought were acceptable to sell to an Indian. She walked out, and in doing so, if only for a moment, broke a silence passed down through generations through Indian residential schools, Indian hospitals and other institutions of violent discipline and oppression that subordinates Indigenous peoples and voices. Does my great-grandmother's refusal make her complicit in racist rhetoric by accepting and reacting *negatively* to her existential reality or does her refusal serve as a rejection of colonial violence? While it was a reaction to power and symbolic violence, it was also a reclaiming of her power through refusal. Perhaps she had a responsibility to refuse, if we consider that some reactions are valuable or necessarily appropriate in the face of discrimination. When we give breath to a lie or don't speak back to power, the result is the burial of rage; the original oppressor remains in the memories of childhood, yet is also taken into adulthood through the internalization of the oppressor's voice. While my great-grandmother didn't say anything to address the racist position of the cashier, there is much articulated in the absence. I think of my great-grandmother's experience sometimes when I'm standing in line at the grocery store. I think of the process and structures of colonialism that allow settlers to refuse Indigenous existence. I think I understand how my great-grandmother might have felt in that moment based on experiences where I too was denied, assaulted, or insulted because I am an Indigenous woman.

Forgiveness is a gesture reserved for the oppressed to capitulate their resentment to benevolently apologetic structures. In my attempt to gender resentment, I refer to the anger of Indigenous women as righteous; we continue to be the focus of heteropatriarchal colonial policy and practice of domination and dispossession. If we understand forgiveness as the relinquishment of resentment, then my only option as *hwulmuhw slheni* is refusal to forgive. Moreover, forgiveness assumes a singular event that can be reconciled, rather than structures of dispossession that are ongoing and reinforced through settler statecraft. An apology is a singular event that addresses a singular event, rather than a commitment to changed behavior in response to recognizing the structures and systems that are predicated on violence and permit it to occur in the first place. The anger that we experience as a response to violence is our tool to unleash against the very techniques that brought it into being. The presence of our resentment reveals ongoing harm and a desire for freedom. At this point, I cannot relinquish my resentment. Perhaps that makes me a woman of *ressentiment*, but it is absurd to expect or demand that we release our resentment or *ressentiment* when our concepts of time and justice are incongruous. Maybe this makes me a *slheni qul'sthaat*,⁷ but that does not negate the love I have for my relations. Our love is used to take care of one another, and in this way, our love and acts of remembrance are ways to hold up our communities. You will never have my forgiveness as long as land dispossession, domination, and violence are present in the lives of Indigenous peoples; in particular the lives and bodies of Indigenous women and children. The division that currently constitutes our colonial reality is a first and necessary step toward reconciliation on equal terms. This discomfort productively forces each of us to engage in projection: to imagine other ways of being in relation, politically transforming all parties and our relationships with one another, and to transition toward a future ethos, the scope of which may be beyond a foreseeable progression.

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⁷ *Hul'qumi'num'* for angry woman, referring to embodied anger in response to something that can be fixed.

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