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De-colonizing Gender in Indigenous Language Revitalization Efforts

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1. Introduction

It has been widely acknowledged by linguists that of the approximate 7,000 languages spoken around the globe today, at least half will have disappeared by 2100 (Krauss, 1992). There are many reasons why language extinction may occur. However, one of the leading contributing factors for the predicted deaths of over 3,000 languages is globalization and colonization. In Canada, one of the main reasons for the loss of Indigenous languages is European colonization. It has been predicted that of the 60 Indigenous languages in Canada today, only 4 will remain by 2100 (Pitawanakwat, 2009). Though colonization and globalization have resulted in greater opportunities for communication between people in different countries and from various cultures, these two phenomena have also resulted in an unequal distribution of wealth and power. As a result, certain groups have more resources, power, and control than others, ultimately leading to the deterioration and disappearance of many different cultures and languages.

The effects of colonization and globalization on Indigenous communities is but one of many examples. The horrendous treatment of Indigenous people in Canada, beginning with the arrival of European settlers, has continued into the present and has consequently led to a loss of identity, culture, and language. However, these processes have also altered gender relations within indigenous communities. By introducing Eurocentric ideas about religion, politics, and general societal norms, colonizers also altered how indigenous women are seen within their own communities even today (Frideres, 2012).

Over the past few years, the mistreatment of Indigenous people by the Canadian government has received increasingly widespread attention from the international community. The long-term negative effects of colonization and globalization have begun to receive attention from both local organizations and organizations abroad condemning the past and current policies of the Canadian government regarding the treatment of indigenous people (Frideres, 2012). This has led to a growth in academic research regarding Indigenous language and culture. Consequently, more research is being done in an attempt to preserve, if not reintroduce and revitalize, the culture and language of some of these marginalized communities.

It is often unclear to anthropologists how the revitalization of language and culture should be best approached. One of the foundational questions of anthropology is whether or not research should be influencing the communities they are learning about and, if so, to what extent. In this paper the question being posed is whether language revitalization efforts should simply focus on revitalizing language or also attempt to explicitly ‘improve’ gender relations within communities that were, in some cases, altered by globalization and colonization in the first place. The question takes on greater significance especially when one considers that what it means to improve a community varies widely across different groups of people. As language and culture are fundamentally interconnected, it is reasoned that language revitalization will significantly impact the culture of the affected community, which arguably encompasses gender relations as well (“Indigenous Peoples”, 2014).

However, sometimes revitalization efforts can become rooted in the same colonial discourses and western ideologies that bore the consequences of colonization in the first place. While creating written learning materials and curriculums provides resources for others to learn
2. The Colonization and Globalization of Indigenous Communities in Canada

In order to fully understand the gendered impacts of colonization and globalization on languages within Indigenous communities it is important to first review the roots of colonization in Canada and the impact this has had on Indigenous languages. The processes of colonization began with the settlement of fur traders in Canada on traditional Indigenous territory as early as the 17th century. What must be made clear, however, is that the current relationship between these communities and the rest of Canada has allowed for a continued colonization of their culture even today.

Prior to the establishment of settlements by European fur traders in Canada, the way of life for many Indigenous people focused on taking only from the earth the resources necessary to survive, be it food, clothing, or medicinal and spiritual resources. However, the relationship formed between many European settlers and Indigenous communities began to focus on trading goods and services leading to a growing dependency on systems of capitalism, such as wage labour. For example, Inuk people began to hunt not to survive as they had done for centuries, but to trade their furs. This introduction of capitalism altered the way of life of many indigenous communities (Frideres, 2012).

In other Indigenous communities, relationships began to form with European missionary groups in an attempt to ‘civilize’ and assimilate Indigenous people into a nascent Canadian society. However, the residential schools built to house and ‘educate’ Indigenous children had incredibly alarming results. Indigenous children were left with feelings of shame for their identity, culture, and language. The living conditions of these schools were both physically
unsanitary and emotionally traumatic. Surprisingly to many, it was only in 1986 that the last residential school in Canada was closed, the traumatic effects of which are being felt generations later in the form of poverty, substance abuse, and unhealthy relationships. (Frideres, 2012)

The relationships formed between Indigenous communities and the Government of Canada only became increasingly imbalanced as more treaties and discriminatory legal acts, to further the government’s control of Indigenous territory, were passed. The passage of the Indian Act in 1876 is one of many legislative actions that have had detrimental effects on many Indigenous communities. This and many other laws and policies legally made Indigenous people unequal, in terms of politics, finances, and rights by giving the Canadian Government the right to claim land and other resources of First Nations people. Furthermore, the definition of who could legally be considered an ‘Indian’ person was constantly changed to further disadvantage Indigenous people. Even today, the Government relies on outdated and discriminatory policies, such as Bill C-31, to verify ancestry of those wishing to gain ‘Indian Status’. This resulted in a form of ‘indigenous welfare’ through which some First Nations have become dependent upon Government support, lacking the capacity and resources to become independent of the Federal Government’s ‘supports’ (Frideres, 2012).

The introduction of European capitalism, residential schools, and legal policies in Canada had a patently obvious effect on Indigenous communities, erasing cultural, linguistic, and spiritual aspects of these societies. “Language and linguistic practices are linked to changing consciousness of self and community through notions of agency, morality, affect, authority, and authenticity” (Makihara, 2007).

While it is easy to assume that colonization has come and gone, the fact of the matter is that contemporary indigenous society is still being colonized in more discrete ways as a result of current Canadian policies. The ramifications of losing land (due to forced resettlement, disenfranchisement, and unrecognized land claims) has meant lost spiritual connections with ancestors, lost community support and resources, and a lost sense of identity. While some First Nations have been able to regain a sense of independence, this has largely been the exception to the rule (Makihara, 2007).

3. Language Dominance of English

As a result of colonial processes, English has become one of the most dominant languages in the world; otherwise put, it has endured a process of linguistic imperialism. This is explained by Phillipson to be the dominance of a language that is “asserted and maintained by the establishment and [the] continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between a dominant language and other languages” (1992). In effect, this has created a system of inequality within society that is based on one language being valued more than another. This can also be explained in terms of ‘linguistic capital’, whereby languages become the currency needed to gain status and social order with some languages carrying a higher value than others (Bourdieu, 1991). A great deal of linguistic capital, such as that held by English speakers, allows for an increased anthology of news, media, and academic writing and ultimately more power within political and economic circles. Moreover, it connects people who have more linguistic capital and excludes people who have less.

However, the domination one language has over another does not just change the words being spoken or heard. It also changes how thoughts are expressed and moreover the social and cultural ideologies wrapped up within the dominated language. This notion of linguistic relativity refers to the idea that the language we speak shapes the way we think about the world around us and the social structures within it. The strength of a language lies in its ability for speakers to communicate their thoughts and ideas. When one is forced to express thought in a new language, it becomes challenging because in addition to the language itself being different, so too is the
speaker’s way of expressing thought (Whorf, 1964). The domination of English over other languages in Canada, for example, has altered the way smaller language communities are able to express thought.

While it is clear that, as articulated above, English is the language of policy, education, and media in Canada and that the western ideological thought embedded within it has caused other languages and cultures to become marginalized, this conclusion prompts further consideration of why it is English is embedded with the ideologies that it is. If one were to surmise that the language itself is intrinsically patriarchal then the social structure of every language community that speaks English would parallel what we see in Canada and this is not the case. Instead, we must look to the community that introduced English to Canada, who in this case are English settlers. One of the biggest societal influences during the settlement period was religion. The extent to which religion has informed notions of gender roles requires a much fuller discussion that goes beyond the scope of this paper. That said one must be clear that it is not the case that the English language is structured to explicitly affect gender relations; rather, English is a propagator for gender norms within North American English-speaking communities. For example, to fully understand the relationship between gender and language, it is important to observe the linguistic practices of specific communities. English is more of a tool used to express patriarchal gender norms than it is an actual agent in creating them.

4. The Effect of English on Gender Relations in Indigenous Communities in Canada

The influence that English has had on other language communities can be seen in the way that it has affected gender relations specifically, by disempowering women in indigenous communities. It is evident that the dominance of English has transferred more than just vocabulary to indigenous communities. The overwhelming presence of English forces indigenous speakers to abandon not only their language but also their way of thinking, and in particular their way of thinking about women. This can be seen in the subordination of women that is covertly expressed in English language media, religious ideology, and in political legislation. Regardless of whether precontact gender relations within any particular indigenous community could be understood as more equal, what remains is that the ideological notions within the English language have altered gender relations in indigenous communities today.

The role that media plays in the subordination of women has increased vastly as a result of globalization. This becomes even more evident as new developments in the digital age proliferate. Women lack visibility in films and on television shows not only in front of the screen but also behind them, informing the reflection of real women who actually exist (Smith, Choueiti, & Pieper, 2015). The language used to portray women in media often subordinates them and places their opinions and ideas on the sidelines. Their agency is sidelined to that of men in news reporting and in movies and television (Kauffman & Williams, 2010). Terms of endearment, such as ‘sweetie’, ‘cupcake’, and ‘honey’ infer that women are sweets to be consumed (Sutton, 1995). These among other examples place women in a position of less power in society and as a result of colonization this has been transferred to indigenous communities.

The introduction of European religious ideology to Indigenous societies and the patriarchal processes situated within it has also altered the way women are perceived and the roles women have within Indigenous communities. Traditionally, indigenous women from many communities were well respected and held considerable cultural knowledge and power. The Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people for example, follow what is called The Discipline of the Good Mind. Through its application, this practice has created a community that is harmoniously gender equal. In fact, it is believed that the existence of feminism in North America is due to the Haudenosaunee people and their cultural traditions. Even though men and women held different roles, none was valued less than any other (Wagner 2001).
However, the introduction of Christianity brought European values and ideas about gender and identity to settler communities and to indigenous communities soon after. It was only after decades of observing the Haudenosaunee people that the women we credit to founding feminism in North America began to see where their own agency was being compromised (Wagner 2001). Furthermore, while many Indigenous communities allow for individuals to identify as ‘two-spirited’, embodying both the masculine and feminine gender, European values were much more inflexible not only in classifying gender, but also in their definition of gender roles (Frideres, 2012)

The imposition of the ‘civilized’ European’s values on ‘the savage’ had a destructive influence on the positive and vibrant roles that Indigenous women played within their communities. Consequently, the roles of women in indigenous communities were reduced to include only those that were subordinate to indigenous men. It was from these processes that a more rigid understanding of gender and gender roles was constructed where it didn’t exist before. (Leigh, 2009)

While many traditional indigenous communities divided labour based on the skills and strengths of the individual, western society, rooted in Christian ideology, created a more inflexible divide between genders. Rather than basing divisions of labour on the skill, knowledge, and ability of the individual, irrespective of gender, European ideology based divisions of labour on assigned gender roles, constructed out of Christian doctrine. Put another way, in contemporary society the processes of capitalism heightened the importance of individuals being economically productive. Men were assigned the role of hunting, and as such, became the ‘bread-winner’ of the family. Women, on the other hand, were relegated to take care of the house and children, leaving them with no economic power and a perceived subordinate role within the family. (Leigh, 2009) These processes, as a result, not only changed the way indigenous women perceive themselves, but also the way their communities perceive them.

This negative perception of indigenous women was institutionalized in contemporary Canadian society as a result of legislation, such as the Indian Act, which further dehumanized indigenous people, while also targeting indigenous women. This was done by “defining them through their relationship to Indian men” (Frideres, 2012). For example, indigenous women were only able to achieve legal status through their marital status. The deterioration of the indigenous way of life through these policies was also imposed through the propagation of the residential school system. The effect being that Indigenous women were marginalized within their own communities. Even as some of these processes are changed or removed, the negative stereotypes and perceptions of Indigenous women continue to exist today, with detrimental consequences. As will be discussed, this is due to the fact that western constructions of gender are still present, even in earnest language revitalization efforts.

5. Implications of Western Ideology in Language Revitalization Programs

Since the 1970s efforts have been made to reintroduce and revitalize languages that are being threatened with extinction. Through partnerships with academic institutions and non-governmental organizations, indigenous communities have sought to reintroduce languages within their communities and restore cultural and linguistic heritage that has disintegrated as a result of colonization. The intent of these language revitalization efforts is to strengthen the language of endangered communities. Beyond this, however, these efforts also have the opportunity to break down and weaken systems of disempowerment that exist in many indigenous communities as a result of colonization and globalization. By helping communities speak a language that is historically significant to them, language revitalization projects allow community members to take back their own cultural knowledge and reintegrate it into their current lives.
In order to be successful in revitalizing a language, two things must be occur. First, ensuring that the community is geographically united, as opposed to being spread out in small clusters will help safeguard that the language community faces less pressure from other competing languages. Second, internal participation in the design and implementation of programs ensures there is interest within the community to work and participate with those external to the community wishing to implement these programs. Without the interest of community members to regain control of the knowledge, there is little hope for success. Once these issues have been resolved different methods of language reintroduction can be applied depending on the level of endangerment of a language.

According to Hinton (2001) there are 5 major methods of language revitalization being used currently: school-based programs, children’s programs outside of school, adult language programs, documentation and material development, and home-based programs. In addition to being different in terms of endangerment level, each language community will also have different cultural and linguistic needs and this will ultimately assist those involved with the project to determine which program is best suited for the language community of focus.

The three types of school-based programs (i.e. learning an endangered language as a subject in education, creating a bilingual education program in schools, or creating full immersion programs) give learners the chance to begin to learn some of the basic vocabulary and grammar of the language at a steady pace. As the students become more and more immersed in the language they are able to fully absorb more of it. In addition to school based programs, community learning programs for adults and for children are also frequently implemented. Though these language programs are usually most often offered in weekly class lessons, they are not constrained by curriculums imposed by the Ministry of Education as are school based programs (Hinton, 2001).

Home based learning programs, where parents begin teaching their children the language at a young age, in that both allow for flexibility to teach and learn in a way that bests accommodates the learners. The challenge with home-based learning programs is that the language being taught may not always be the parents’ first language, or the language taught in school or heard in the community. This makes it more challenging because of the external pressure caused by the constant (Hinton, 2001).

Though communities may benefit from classroom learning programs mentioned by Hinton (2001) because it is an environment for collective language revitalization efforts, in some cases, there is risk that efforts may be well rooted in western ideas about language and education, especially when the Ministry of Éducation is involved. Being told to learn and to be assessed on the vocabulary and grammar of a language independent from the culture and history of the language community may result in important aspects of the language being left out. Not only is it difficult to properly absorb the language in these environments (even immersion) but it structures the learning in a very Eurocentric way. Furthermore, it forces learners to find ‘translated’ labels for the world created by their first language. Otherwise put, a speaker of English who is learning an endangered language will be relabeling their current world instead of being able to create a new world and a different ways of thinking. In contrast to most Eurocentric approaches to education Battiste (2002) explains that:

“Indigenous knowledge comprises the complex set of technologies developed and sustained by Indigenous civilizations. Often oral and symbolic, it is transmitted through the structure of Indigenous languages and passed on to the next generation through modeling, practice, and animation, rather than through the written word…Indigenous knowledge is typically embedded in the cumulative experiences and teachings of Indigenous peoples rather than in a library.”

In other situations, as Hinton (2001) mentions, documentation and material development may be the best method of reintroducing a language to a community. This is generally the case for many Indigenous languages in Canada because there are so few speakers left. In these cases a
linguist or an anthropologist may come into a community to work with community leaders. In order to have access to academic grants and funding for these projects, it can be beneficial to have this kind of external field team work toward the goal of reintroducing the language.

Alternatively, having parents teach their children the endangered language from an early age increases the likelihood of them becoming a fluent speaker. However, if the family is isolated from other speakers, isolated from the cultural aspects of the language, or are resistant to teaching them such cultural knowledge, then significant aspects of the language will not be learned. Furthermore, if there are additional languages being spoken and learned in school, there is a risk of the endangered language becoming once again a way to ‘re-label’ their world.

If these programs do not suit the language or community, documenting the language with field notes and audio recordings may occur. Working with native speakers to do this may mean that ethnographic tales and cultural information is recorded and preserved. However, the success of this approach depends in part on the ability of linguistic field worker to not only elicit the right information, but to understand what the speaker means.

Part of the reason these programs may not always successfully reintroduce a language in a community is because there seems to be limited discussion about language revitalization ideology. As a result, it is unclear how linguists and anthropologists discuss the broader sociopolitical implications of having a minority language and the effect revitalization efforts will have on them. While anthropologists and linguists know that differences exist between and within societies, acting on these differences in research may be harder to do or even may be forgotten.

As discovered by Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1998) a lack of ideological clarification can end up leading to gaps between language revitalization goals and unstated emotions and concerns. It is the process “of identifying issues of language ideological contestations within a heritage language community, including both beliefs and feelings indigenous to that community and those introduced by outsiders” (1998, p. 73). When a language revitalization project has conflicting language ideologies, described as “ideas and objectives a group holds concerning roles of language in the social experiences of members as they contribute to the expression of the group” (Heath, 1977 p. 53), not only will the project be more challenging, but that it will be inadvertently unable to offset the imbalance in linguistic capital created because of colonization (Kroskrity, 2009).

Furthermore, projects that are not overtly grounded in western ideology may still be not as effective as desired because language policies like the Indian Act and AANDC (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada) allow constructions of colonization to persist in contemporary society, especially with respect to gender. “The process of disempowering women was codified in the policies and laws of the settler colony, and later in those of the nation-state” (Grey, 2004). Since it is often these same policies that inform how academia is organized, gender is not always discussed in language revitalization projects and as a result indigenous women still experience trouble re-integrating themselves into their communities in an equal way. In fact, numerous reports from Amnesty International over the last decade have linked the high level of violent crimes committed against indigenous women to the impacts of colonialism (Native Women’s Association, 2010). This then prompts the question how, through language revitalization efforts, can we effectively change current gender relations in Indigenous communities that have been influenced by colonization/globalization in a way that is culturally sensitive?

6. The Coast Salish Language Revitalization CURA Project

To answer this question I looked at the intersection of gender and language revitalization ideology more closely, specifically by examining a research project that was conducted in British
Columbia almost 10 years ago. The Coast Salish Language Revitalization Project was conducted to reintroduce SENĆOŦEN and Hul’q’umi’num’, two Coast Salish languages in British Columbia. The conception of the project began with the Saanich Native Heritage Society reaching out to the University of Victoria for support in documenting and revitalizing the SENĆOŦEN language. At the same time, the Hul’q’umi’num’ Treaty Group was trying to create a Strategic Plan for Hul’q’umi’num’ language revitalization. It was out of these parallel relationships that the ‘Coast Salish Language Revitalization CURA Project’ was developed (Czaykowska-Higgins et al., 2011). This project was at the forefront of linguistic research in many ways by adopting a ‘Community Based Language Research approach’, a term coined by the project Director Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins (2009). In many ways, it addresses the concern previously mentioned that anthropologists face. When beginning a new project teaching and training community members it allows those community members to continue to be the expert about their own culture and language.

However, is community involvement enough to ensure that gender is properly taken into account? There are still many ways in which western ideology can involve itself in community based projects. Although, from an academic stance, the project describes itself as a ‘CommunityBased Language Research’ project, it is important to note that because the project was being funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), academic and grant responsibilities did of course influence the governance of the project. As outlined in the final report, “an interesting challenge of the Project was the need to translate and mediate between expectations and structures of the worlds of the academic and granting agency institutions and the non-university partners” (Czaykowska-Higgins et al., 2011). As previously mentioned, this runs the risk of omitting cultural aspects of the language that cannot be expressed in Western education and learning practices.

This is especially true when there are discrepancies in what project stakeholders expect the research to look like. For example, at the early stages of planning for this revitalization project, one of the overarching goals in mind included looking at and researching the use of multi-media in language learning, as well as developing the resources necessary to effectively revitalize the language. The project was quite successful in meeting these goals and many resources in the form of booklets, DVDs, lesson plans and dictionaries were created from the project itself (Czaykowska-Higgins et al., 2011). However, community speakers of both SENĆOŦEN and Hul’q’umi’num both rely on other forms of learning that allow them to better connect to their culture. For example, part of Hul’q’umi’num culture and language revolved around what is known as ts’eэкwten or roughly “inherited /ritual/ceremonial property” (Thom, 2003). This extends from rituals, masked dances, powerful dolls, but which were not touched upon at all in this language revitalization project and were likely unrepresented in the physical material that abounded from this project. This is different than knowledge known as snew which translates to “private-advice/knowledge” which would likely not have been shared by community members for the purpose of this project (Thom, 2003).

In some cases funding may be distributed in such a way that encourages the development of physical resources in forms of books and video, a need for academic stakeholders, but perhaps ignores the significance of resources for cultural and spiritual practices, a need for community stakeholders. The kind of projects that funding agencies are willing to finance may not align with community expectations, thus limiting the success of the project overall. It is important that this disconnect be addressed by those involved with the project because of the power dynamic that it creates between stakeholders and community members. This is not to say the needs of academic stakeholders and community stakeholders cannot be reconciled but that exploring this dynamic is particularly critical for projects that aim to address the cultural identity of Indigenous communities through revitalization efforts because of the hegemonic imbalance of power that has littered their histories as previously discussed.
7. Decolonizing Gender in Coast Salish Communities

In the Coast Salish Language Revitalization Project, not once were women mentioned in the project report itself; nor was gender included in the principles of methodology or in the goals. It is not enough to assume that gendered cultural and linguistic aspects of a community will resolve themselves in language revitalization efforts. Asking where women fit into this process of decolonization and whether it creates opportunities for women within their community is crucial.

Reconnecting cultural and linguistic revitalization with community healing allows women to be “active in ‘on-the-ground’ decolonization efforts” (“Culturally Relevant Gender Based Analysis”, 2007). The Native Women of Canada Association (2010) highlighted the importance of being conscious of in development projects. Of them, that which applies most directly to language revitalization efforts is to “Reclaim and revitalize Indigenous knowledge, worldviews and traditions of gender balance in ways that are relevant to the contemporary context”. This can be achieved by ensuring opportunities for women in ceremony, truth-telling processes and in communication material (including the language itself).

With respect to the language revitalization effort of this project, it is unclear whether such efforts were made. As stated, no mention of gender was made in the final report of this project. However, until one is able to more closely examine both the data and resources that emerged from this project, something that was not publicly accessible to me at this point, the extent to which gender was addressed will remain unclear. If we are to assume that an examination of gender was beyond the scope of the project, then the most agency indigenous women could have achieved would have been through ensuring participation in the collection of linguistic data, and ensuring their stories were recorded.

Language revitalization efforts have a unique dual role in gender decolonization. In addition to equal cultural representations of all genders, equal linguistic representation in language is also at question. Due to natural processes of language contact and borrowing, languages are bound to change. As a result, some languages may become more ‘gendered’ by others if they were not already. For example, in Malawi, many proverbs express subordination of women. As mentioned, the gendered nature of the English language greatly affected indigenous women and this in turn affected Indigenous languages. Projects of revitalization have the opportunity, if this is acknowledged, to rectify this (Kamwendo, 2010).

8. Concluding Thoughts

In contrast to the foregoing discussion, many argue that the role of women in Indigenous communities have not been as colonized as made out to be by many academics. While it is true that colonization introduced ideologies of patriarchy, the concept of feminism is widely regarded by indigenous women as a western construct, the imposition of which is just as colonizing as colonization itself. While this may seem to be an incredible statement to make, it begs the question to what extent should anthropologists be working towards ‘improving’ other communities.

This question has been asked particularly in discussion of the cultural practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). For some time it was thought by many that these practices were acceptable because these cultural practices could be seen in many societies around the world. To condemn them was viewed as just another imposition of beliefs based on different values. However, there has been more discussion within the gender development sector surrounding this issue (and others like it) that led to the reasoning that cultural traditions should not excuse gender based violence, or any violence for that matter. In indigenous communities, though there are fewer gendered cultural practices as shocking as FGM, this conclusion still remains.
That being said, the line between ‘aiding’ other communities and colonizing them is blurry. To what extent should anthropologists try to ‘improve’ gender relationships within communities? Many of the consequences of colonization, as discussed already, created terrible situations for Indigenous women and yet “if language, the law, and the archive have historically served as instruments of colonialism… how could these same instruments be used in the construction of autonomy?” (Mallon, 2012) How do anthropologists justify going into societies and changing those things that we think are unjust and that are contributing to an imbalance of power within societal discourses?

In fact it is this very question that is posed when discussing feminism in indigenous communities. Many indigenous women firmly position themselves counter to mainstream ‘white’ feminism. The reason being that because women are rooted at the center of Indigenous culture, until proper decolonization has occurred indigenous women will not be able to achieve the parity expressed in contemporary feminist thought, especially because feminist thought has been criticized for being Eurocentric in the past (Grey, 2004).

However, this has led to new topics of discussion for academics and the creation of indigenous feminism, which allies itself with contemporary feminism against systems of patriarchy in the context of traditional Indigenous cultures. It is hopeful that with this new field, those working to reintroduce language in indigenous communities will be conscious of the colonization of gender that is present in both culture and language and as a result be more effective in ensuring the preservation of the diverse communities that exist in Canada and the world.

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