

# INDIGENOUS MEN AND MASCULINITIES

Citing Statistics Canada, Robert Innes and Kim Anderson point out that, between 1997 and 2000, Indigenous men were murdered almost two and a half times more than Indigenous women, almost seven times more than white men, and over fifteen times more than white women.<sup>1</sup> Innes and Anderson also report that Indigenous men were charged with homicide over four times more than Indigenous women, almost nine times more than non-Indigenous men, and nearly ninety times more often than white women.<sup>2</sup> In the context of this crisis of Indigenous masculinity, the essays in this collection report efforts at its recovery and reconstruction.

Bob Antone tells “a story of a search for Indigenous knowledge that constructs masculinity within a reflective process, an examining of my personal journey to dismantle the Westernized male acculturation influencing the contemporary construct of being a Haudenosaunee man.”<sup>3</sup> “Haudenosaunee knowledge,” Antone continues, “is permeated with a theological word view rooted in a pragmatic spirituality of dream, storytelling, relationship, morality, dependency, thankfulness, and operating with a Good Mind.”<sup>4</sup> Central to “our identity through Haudenosaunee knowledge” is “ceremony.”<sup>5</sup>

That knowledge has several sources, Antone explains, one of which is the “Great Law of Peace,” brought “to the people through a messenger we call the Peacemaker ... during a time when violence was rampant among them,” adding that these “teachings of peace, power, and the Good Mind address the issue of violence within the community.”<sup>6</sup> Another source “dates back to 1799, when our people received a message from a Seneca visionary named Handsome Lake,” an “ordinary man who had lost most of what he loved to the invading forces,” but who had “the power of dream,” including “visions”<sup>7</sup> of the “need to stay away from the ‘*mind* changers’ of the white men, which included their alcohol, laws, Bible, diseases, and music.”<sup>8</sup> Handsome Lake also urged “keep[ing] the four sacred ceremonies going, follow the teaching of the Good Mind, ensure the raising of chiefs and clan mothers, and adjust the way one lived to keep life simple and meaningful.”<sup>9</sup> Handsome Lake’s teachings – the Gaiwio – prompted, Antone reports, a “process for the decolonization of Haudenosaunee communities,” one that “for the last 214 years ... has grown among us.”<sup>10</sup>

Handsome Lake advocated for observance of the “Great Law,” Antone tells us, the “original teachings of non-violence,” teachings conflicting with the “Western illusion of discovery and dominance of other cultures.”<sup>11</sup> Haudenosaunee culture, Antone continues, is also distinguished by its matrifocality, “rooted in the constructs of Mother Earth, Grandmother Moon, Three Sisters’ foods, and clan mothers who select the leadership and identity based on who your mother is,” adding: “As

Ukwehu:we men, our psyche has to accept those teaching if we are going to decolonize.”<sup>12</sup>

“My history is about a homeland in upstate New York,” Antone tells us, “the relocation to southern Ontario of 391 Oneidas, and the creation of a new community in Southwold, Ontario, which we call Oneida Settlement.”<sup>13</sup> He notes that he “was around when [1969] “a group of Oneidas from Wisconsin began their cultural recovery process,” nurturing a “relationship [that] grew between the Wisconsin and Ontario Oneida communities, both spiritual and personal in nature, commencing a new chapter in the Oneida cultural<sup>14</sup> recovery.”<sup>15</sup> “More men,” he reports, “were taking on long-forgotten responsibilities.”<sup>16</sup> He continues: “All Iroquois have an innate spiritualism, cultivated for generations, increasing the desire for their own identity,” adding: “The soul or spirit of the Ukwehu:we man is charged with a duty inherently attached to Haudenosaunee teachings.”<sup>17</sup>

“We are a more closed, isolated society,” Antone observes, “which has helped us to resist the assimilation efforts of the settler society,”<sup>18</sup> and “Oneida women are the critical identity holders of the nation.”<sup>19</sup> It is “the women [that] continue to pass on the inner desire to be Oneida and to be part of something larger, the Haudenosaunee,” and “proximity to the rest of the Haudenosaunee is a critical factor in the sharing of culture.”<sup>20</sup> “It is this history that informs my spiritual and political masculine thought,”<sup>21</sup> Antone acknowledges.

Antone cites Kivel’s book *Men’s Work*, detailing “a curriculum of twenty-two exercises for each topic, including becoming a father, cultural, racial, and class background; male spirituality; and getting help from others.”<sup>22</sup> He also cites a “multi-media curriculum,” titled *Power and Control: Tactics of Men Who Matter*, addressing “issues of family violence and men’s power and behaviours.”<sup>23</sup> A “third resource was Fanning and McKay’s *Being a Man*, helpful in curriculum development with this focus on ‘gendergraphs’: nurturing fathering; the importance of introspection; and clarifying and expressing feelings.”<sup>24</sup> He also acknowledges a 2005 handbook published by “the Aboriginal Healing Foundation ... that addressed some of the questions faced by Indigenous men.”<sup>25</sup>

A principle among Anishnawbe/Ukwehu:we men concerns “the role of fire, symbolically and in life,” as “fire is representative of the spirit of the human being.”<sup>26</sup> In “both Haudenosaunee and Anishnawbe cultures,” Antone explains, men are “responsible for care taking of fire,” a fact from which “we developed a program, entitled *Tending the Fire*,” a two-year program designed to reclaim Anishnawbe/Ukwehu:we teachings, to learn about self, and to learn strategies to help other men, families, and communities tend and fix the fires so they would burn pure.”<sup>27</sup> He continues:

Culture-based or traditional teachings formed the foundation of *Tending the Fire*. This program was also designed to be a discovery path, asking, What has

caused Indigenous men to be afraid of their own cultures and teachings? The original teachings are essential ingredients in the rebuilding and recovery of self-esteem and the empowerment of Indigenous men.<sup>28</sup>

Against the presentism and narcissism of late North American modernity, this program appears to reactivate the past in service to reconstructing the present.

That becomes explicit in a decentering of the human – also evident in contemporary scholarship on the post-human – disclosed in Antone’s appreciation that, in traditional teachings, the “human is the least significant in the total sacred cycle of life.”<sup>29</sup> Attention to the “human” is nonetheless a prerequisite to the realization of that insight, as well as to others: “reciprocity, respect, spiritualism, ceremony, and bravery are values that band together to form a caring male spirit.”<sup>30</sup> But this attention to the human occurs within more panoramic perspectives: “Without the teachings and care of the energy, the Indigenous conscience can falter and fail to react in the full expression of taking and giving life as a meaningful spiritual relationship with all life forms.”<sup>31</sup>

“The men who have attended Tending the Fire,” Antone summarizes, “continue to seek knowledge of Indigenous masculinity through experiential learning,” educational experience that provides “a set of parameters to function within, with a sense of morality, the principles we live by, building character that is balanced in accepting and understanding the power of their fire.”<sup>32</sup> Such “self-examination” represents a process of “decolonization” in service to restoring “culture-based whole persons,” a process that allows men to let “go of power and control behaviours, the source of violence.”<sup>33</sup>

That source, Scott Morgensen suggests, is less life history than it is History, “colonial violence<sup>34</sup> ... entrenched as methods of settler view,” creating “colonial masculinity,” adding that “forms” of which “are not natural, necessary, or permanent, any more than is colonization itself.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, “amid the myriad changes that took place in colonial societies, as the logics and methods of colonization shifted, colonial masculinity also changed.”<sup>36</sup> Admitting that “my historical claims are speculative,” Morgensen seems sure that self-knowledge is not: he locates himself “within forms of colonial masculinity, as their white settler cisgender inheritor – despite being their potential queer target, or a critic of their power, the power of colonial masculinity shapes my life and informs any insights I can imagine.”<sup>37</sup> He writes “to support all efforts to bring colonial masculinity to its end.”<sup>38</sup>

Morgensen returns to the beginning - when “Spanish invaders ... target[ed] individuals whom invaders read as male-bodied or intersex and as living in what they perceived as a feminine gender role”<sup>39</sup> - then moves back to the present to affirm that “Two-Spirit people reclaim today [gender diversity] as their contribution to the resurgence of Indigenous culture and governance.”<sup>40</sup> He then discusses “berdache,” a concept that translates as “kept boy” or “boy slave,”: a subordinate male youth sexually

enslaved by adult me, resulting in his feminization.<sup>41</sup> Early modern French and Spanish usage of the term had “purportedly” been imported from Farsi, implying that Middle Eastern or Muslim societies were a “source” of such sexual “coercion,” a genealogy whose colonial connotations Morgensen resists,<sup>42</sup> noting that “projecting ‘berdache’ onto either Muslims or ‘Indians’ also deflected attention away from the proclivities that many European men knew already might be present among themselves.”<sup>43</sup> Appearing to ascribe determination of identity to discourse, Morgensen suggests that the “new social order established also produced *colonists*, just as they refashioned Indigenous people.”<sup>44</sup> Likewise, he asserts that the “gendered story of ‘berdache’ function[ed] by altering identity for all Indigenous people and for European invaders, while facilitating broad establishment of a colonial and patriarchal social order,”<sup>45</sup> an act of expansive attribution even post-structuralists might resist. While overdrawn, Morgensen’s suspicion sounds right:

Yet, read in context of European men’s known capacity for, or indulgence in acts now associated with others, such violence may not only be indeed to destroy perversion elsewhere, but also may (try to) prove that perversion was being overcome among or *within* themselves. To what degree might we read European conquest as self-interested: informed by European men’s fears of a capacity within their own manhood for self-betrayal or loss?<sup>46</sup>

Such psychic self-delusion is not relegated to the past of course, nor limited to violence against “queer” men: Morgensen cites “the ongoing disappearance and murder of Indigenous women.”<sup>47</sup>

Pursuit to his point that colonialism constructed colonists, Morgensen asserts that the fantasy of being a “frontiersman,” even impersonating native men, accompanied by the recruitment and coaching of “working-class white youth and youth of colour in athletics, propertied white settler men virilised themselves by appear to absorb aspect of masculine strength from men whom they dominated, while asserting a paternal role as mentor and ruler of civilization.”<sup>48</sup> Through such “colonial virilisation,” he adds, “*their* ‘savage’ violence, as white men defending civilization, could become a sign of having *achieved* civilization.”<sup>49</sup> I am reminded of capitalism’s capacity to incorporate contestation when Morgensen observes: “Yet exposure to change has not threatened colonial masculinity; change becomes part of its perpetuation.”<sup>50</sup> Evidently colonialism, including “colonial masculinity,” featured – features – the same capacity. Morgensen concludes: “Yet even as I understand changing the self to be necessary groundwork for broader change, I argue in closing that, for white settlers, simply focusing on changing the self will not be a sufficient response.”<sup>51</sup>

“Like many Indigenous cultures,” Leah Sneider reports, “the Iroquois rely on a central tenet of balance,” a tenet contradicted by settlers who, “in order to create the imbalance necessary for colonization ... subjugated Indigenous women to patriarchal

rule.”<sup>52</sup> Sneider dwells on the concept of “complementarity,” which emphasizes “responsibility and relationship in the maintenance of social or communal balance and comprises the overarching ideology behind actions or performances reflecting responsible, reciprocal, and respectful relationships.”<sup>53</sup>

“Complementarity,” Sneider continues, “does not enforce strict binaries but, rather, recognizes specifically delineated gender-based communal responsibilities,”<sup>54</sup> thereby conceiving of “gender [as] based on the nature of relationships and particular actions that determine social roles in a particular cultural context; it is not essential or predetermined but constantly shifting.”<sup>55</sup> Invoking “Indigenous feminism”<sup>56</sup> and citing Gerardine Meaney, Sneider associates “colonization” with “feminization,” as settlers fantasized subjugated peoples as “passive, in need of guidance, incapable of self-governance, romantic, passionate, unruly, barbarous,”<sup>57</sup> a gendering I found also structuring racial politics and violence in the United States.<sup>58</sup> “Indigenous men were forced to become farmers,” Sneider reminds, “which in many Indigenous cultures made them ‘something other than a man’ and more akin to women,” e.g. a feminization that marred more than manhood: Sneider invokes the concept of “soul wound.”<sup>59</sup>

If the soul is wounded, tradition is trampled too, and Sneider suggests that “colonial models,” once internalized, becomes misrecognized as “tradition,” as evidently occurred among the Navajo.<sup>60</sup> That example illustrates how “Indigenous feminism relies on Indigenous masculinity studies to determine Indigenous men’s complementary contributions to personal and communal decolonization.”<sup>61</sup> Returning to the concept of “balance,” Sneider cites Sylvia Maracle, a Mohawk Two Spirit, who “explain[ed] that Two-Spirited people’s spiritual orientations and closer proximity to a higher power is based on their unique dual composition of water and fire elements, which makes them not only more balanced but also more connected to others in the community whose orientations are *either water or fire* (female or male).”<sup>62</sup>

Brendan Hokowhitu asks: “Why is masculinity necessary?”<sup>63</sup> Such a question directs one away from any “belief in a true, deep, and essential masculine core,” certainly separating “masculinity and sexuality from men,” seeing it as implying “as qualities or sets of attributes applicable to men or women.”<sup>64</sup> In contrast to “Western notions of biological determinism” – against which, he acknowledges, many Western intellectuals have written – “venerated perceptions of Indigenous gender are typically grounded in the immaterial, that is, in spiritual concepts of gender.”<sup>65</sup> There are, in fact, “multiple masculinities and sexualities.”<sup>66</sup>

At this point Hokowhitu reviews what he terms the “classic conception of Indigenous critical theory,” animated by a “search for pure origins prior to colonization,” one providing Indigenous peoples with “the moral high ground over the polluted moral nature of neo-colonial society.”<sup>67</sup> Armed with “righteousness,” then, Indigenous intellectuals have engaged in “moral derision,” inadvertently “position[ing] indigenous people as choiceless victims.”<sup>68</sup> While allowing that “the moral corruption of colonization has been a necessary project,” Hokowhitu worries that such critique

not only “reify[ies] pre-colonial purity through tradition,” it also “devalues an Indigenous existentialism located in the present, while failing to tease out the extremely important tensions within and beyond the colonizer/colonized dialectic; tensions and complexities that must be addressed if we are to reconcile the victim mentality that inhabits many of our so-called cultural traditions,”<sup>69</sup> noting that: “The emblazoned piety of heterosexual European sexuality drew a line separating itself from the sun-kissed passion of Indigenous flesh.”<sup>70</sup> The imagistic lyricism of the phrase does not hide its lasciviousness, sexual desire structuring the fantasies of Europeans from the onset of contact with Indigenous peoples and the enslavement of Africans.<sup>71</sup>

Hokowhitu contests criticism of Indigenous men “as the subordinators of women,” as this charge “fails to comprehend the construction of Indigeneity itself,”<sup>72</sup> in which (as we saw in Leah Sneider’s essay) gender “balance” is key. But Hokowhitu seems to sidestep the issue with post-structuralist phraseology: “Thus, masculine domination is a discursive propagation, internalized, and effected through male bodies, but it is not male domination per se.”<sup>73</sup> Then he shifts responsibility away from Indigenous men, explaining that “one of the symptoms of Indigenous masculinity’s mimicry of invader masculinity was the divestment of the feminine out of the masculine,” suggesting that such “mimicry” meant also that “post-contact Indigenous masculinity, thus, was based upon what Indigenous masculinity was not.”<sup>74</sup> Such “foundational insecurity has led to ritual displays of physical manliness and hypermasculinity, along with the traditionalization of heterosexuality, homophobia, and patriarchy.”<sup>75</sup> Hokowhitu concludes: “In the patriarchal Indigenous bedroom, pre-contact genealogical tradition (i.e. sexual partnering that was determined by producing offspring who held appropriate hereditary lines) merged with the demand for fertility by the utilitarian modern colonial and capitalist state.”<sup>76</sup>

The effect? Hokowhitu points to “the repressive and silencing nature of tradition and authenticity in Indigenous discourses,” wherein the “recourse to origins of sexuality has produced an invented tradition of hetero-patriarchal sexuality that serves to de-authenticate other forms of sexuality.”<sup>77</sup> He asks: “Particularly, how do tactics of tradition and authenticity determine Indigenous self-definition, subjugation, and exclusion?”<sup>78</sup> “Who is speaking and who is authorized to speak? And thus what forms of Indigenous subjectivity are being subjugated?”<sup>79</sup> Finally: “[W]hy have authenticity and tradition come to play such a central role in how Indigenous cultures discipline subjectivities?”<sup>80</sup> Hokowhitu concludes: “The notion of tradition is especially dangerous when it is predicated on the concept of authenticity simply because it relies on the idea that a homogenous Maori culture, for example, ever existed and that this cultural monolith is knowable, predicted, and can be authenticated,” adding: that “the idea that an Indigenous person must enact certain behavioural ideas to be considered authentically Indigenous is extremely repressive.”<sup>81</sup> Postulating, then enforcing “a pure and authoritative masculinity and sexuality serves to immobilize alterity.”<sup>82</sup>

Characterising Indigenous conceptions of “tradition” as “a strategy of biopower, tradition has served to kill variant forms of Indigenous subjectivity.”<sup>83</sup> To illustrate tradition’s contaminated condition, Hokowhitu cites “kappa haka (Maori performing arts),” a “traditional art as we know it today is undoubtedly a colonial construction.”<sup>84</sup> Traditional conceptions of gender are likewise contaminated, he suggests, asserting that “gender is thus a construction that regularly conceals its genesis,” evident, he continues, in “the heteronormativity of Indigenous sexuality through the idea of tradition and the search for origins, in producing the heteropatriarchal elder who embodies an authenticated sexuality, serves to conceal the genesis of that sexuality, as produced, as a cultural fiction.”<sup>85</sup>

Not only “tradition” is to blame; so is decolonisation: “Thus, the decolonial project often served to reassert a form of Indigenous masculinity especially that, in its cultural authenticity, reflected the collective will for liberation, when in reality it served to exclude alternative forms of masculinities and sexualities, and women from leadership roles.”<sup>86</sup> Citing Lacan, Foucault and Spivak, Hokowhitu allows for a “strategic essentialism regarding Indigeneity,” admitting that “Indigenous masculinity has functioned strategically through complicity with and assimilation into forms of invader masculinity so that Indigenous representative remained at the table,” but asking: “But at what cost?”<sup>87</sup>

Hokowhitu wonders if “Indigenous masculinity and sexuality are entirely historically contingent?”<sup>88</sup> Have they “only formed in the wake of colonization, complicit with invader subjectivities, yet resistant to colonization’s ultimate goal: extermination?”<sup>89</sup> “If the answers are yes,” he writes, then “often we are left holding on to false traditions that only serve to exclude and limit Indigenous men to heteropatriarchal, hypermasculine, stoical, staunch, and violent discursive formations, often channelling them into destructive behaviours.”<sup>90</sup> The challenge, he continues, “is to embrace an existentialism that effects responsibility,” but freedom as well.<sup>91</sup>

Kimberly Minor also acknowledges the experience existentialism accents when she reminds that “status as a warrior came not from physical and mental toughness alone, but was recognized more fully on the basis of one’s familial dedication, cultural pride, and consensus of respect,” emphasizing “the merit of experience over the premium of hereditary lineage.”<sup>92</sup> She examines drawings by Mato-Topo that “reveal the prowess of his masculinity as established by a social organization in which courage and bold action garnered respect,” required because it was “war [that] signalled the passage from adolescence into maturity, which, in turn, fostered greater gender separation, as few women participated in combat.”<sup>93</sup>

“In March 2012,” Erin Sutherland reports, “I curated a performance series, ‘Terrance Houle and Adrian Stimson: Exploring Indigenous Masculinities,’ in Kingston, Ontario,” featuring two artists, Terrance Houle (Blood/Ojibway) and Adrian Stimson (Siksika).<sup>94</sup> Stimson explained to Sutherland that his performance connected him to his Blackfoot culture, e.g. “a traditional past while bringing those

practices forward into a new time and space, demonstrating that Indigenous cultures are flexible and vital.”<sup>95</sup> The performance art of Stimson and Houle, Sutherland explains, is in service to “the broader project of decolonization and reclaiming agency,” an “opportunity to reclaim identities that have been disrupted through colonization.”<sup>96</sup> In what might be construed as an effort to externalize divestment of internalized colonization,

Houle began to slowly undress, removing all of his street clothes. After undressing, Houle used red lipstick to colour his face as well as the left side of his body. Covered in paint, he then donned the breechcloth that his mother made for him when he was ten years old, unapologetically letting his belly hang over the cloth.<sup>97</sup>

Sutherland likens the act of self-stripping to a “bison wallowing to remove their sloughed fur.”<sup>98</sup> In human terms, it seems an act of self-purification, explicitly so when “Houle began to wash himself with the dirt, smearing the sand and soil over his face, arms, torso and back. Houle remained silent, his sadness and loneliness seemly alleviated by the act of cleansing in the dirt.”

The same dynamics of divestment and purification seem in play when Stimson starts “his performance as his performance alter ego, Shaman Exterminator,” a figure who contests appropriations and misrepresentations of Aboriginal culture.”<sup>99</sup> Stimson names Shaman Exterminator’s alter ego Buffalo Boy, ‘a trickster character ... campy, ridiculous and absurd, but he is also a storyteller who exposes cultural and societal truths’.”<sup>100</sup> Stimson invites “audience members ... to have their photographs taken with Buffalo Boy on the cross,”<sup>101</sup> a not-so-subtle parodying of colonialization.

Sutherland suggests that “both artists used their bodies as a – if not *the* – central medium for questioning stereotypical representations of Indigenous men,”<sup>102</sup> evident in the modified designation of Indigenous queer people, now “LGBTQ2: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and Two-Spirit.”<sup>103</sup> “Historically,” Lisa Tatonetti explains, “the existence of third and fourth gender traditions in Indigenous cultures is well documented.”<sup>104</sup>

Stimson, Sutherland suggests, invokes “culture to protect,”<sup>105</sup> while for Houle, culture – specifically “the loincloth” - represents an act of “reappropriation,” as “stripping away his contemporary clothing and choosing to put on his loincloth, he [Houle] takes back control over his body as an image of Indigenous masculine identity.”<sup>106</sup> Self-purification is also in play, as Sutherland notes: “[b]y scrubbing himself with dirt, Houle appears to wash away the influence of colonialism.”<sup>107</sup> The performances were not all in service to subjective reconstruction, as both artists’ performances contested “stereotypes of the hypermasculine noble savage or the violent and/or drunken Indian.”<sup>108</sup> Houle in particular, “said that the nudity in his work is

supposed to elicit reactions from audience members, to provoke them to question their own taboos, and to humanize him as an expressly Aboriginal male body.”<sup>109</sup>.

Philip Borell reminds “that masculinity was/is very much a Western construct,”<sup>110</sup> connected to “coloniality [that] can be seen as a contemporary, lived continuation of colonization,” what he characterizes as “patterns of power that have become established over time as a result of colonization.”<sup>111</sup> Like masculinity, and intertwined with it, “sports, and in particular rugby union, are forms of coloniality, “means of social control,” rugby in particular “a method for imposing and patrolling boundaries in a manner disguised as opportunity.”<sup>112</sup> The “success” of this sleight-of-hand is evident when Maori “acknowledg[ed] the normalizing processes of rugby union as something that had saved their communities.”<sup>113</sup>

As do sports, “gangs create spaces for some young Indigenous males to express their maleness.”<sup>114</sup> Robert Henry reports that “just over 23.1 percent of all federal inmates are Indigenous, while only 4 percent of the total Canadian population is Indigenous.”<sup>115</sup> There are, he continues, “Indigenous youth in the northern communities” for whom “to become a ‘real’ man they needed to be involved in the criminal justice system.”<sup>116</sup> Citing Mark Totten, Henry acknowledges “that many of the Indigenous males that participate in gang activities were sexually abused when they were children, and it is because of this that they are uncertain of their sexual orientation.”<sup>117</sup> Again citing Totten, Henry reports that such “confusion” concerning sexual identity “leads to heightened levels of violence toward women and children as gang members reassert their power as men,” forms of hypermasculinity in service to “reaffirm[ing] power taken from them at a young age.”<sup>118</sup> To illustrate, Henry notes that “Indigenous street gang members use traditional warrior symbolism in their tattoos,”<sup>119</sup> and while early on gangs perceived themselves as protectors of their communities, “over time, the gang lost this sense of community protection and began to focus on the necessities of the gang itself.”<sup>120</sup> The “gang,” Henry concludes, “continues to be seen as the vessel in which Indigenous male rites of passage can occur through the construction of new ‘urban warrior,’<sup>121</sup> a “space for some young men to initiate into ‘manhood’ ... “reinforce[ing] colonial constructs of the ‘savage’ because of its continued reinforcement of respect through violence.”<sup>122</sup>

A non-Indigenous researcher engaging in ethical, respectful, and reciprocal community-based research, Allison Piché has served as a volunteer program facilitator and researcher with the Inspired Minds: All Nations Creative Writing Program at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre (SCC), a program that places student and faculty volunteers from the University of Saskatchewan at the SCC teaching creative writing courses.<sup>123</sup> “Together participants choose subject matter that interests them at the onset of each term and work with facilitators to explore these literary styles and techniques,” hoping to help “build a healthy and supportive learning environment for participants to express themselves through their writing.”<sup>124</sup> Piché points out that the liberal arts program aids in the “development of critical thinking skills, allowing not

only for the incorporation of various opinions and perspectives but also opening these existing perspectives to be challenged and transformed.”<sup>125</sup> Quite critical of prisons – “prisons worked to emasculate the men they incarcerated” – Piché reports that “Canadian correctional institutions mirrored those south of the border.”<sup>126</sup> Just as persons of color are overrepresented in prisons in the United States, First Nations and Métis are overrepresented in Canadian prisons, a fact “more pronounced in the Prairie provinces.”<sup>127</sup> Symbolic castration provokes compensation, namely “hypermasculinity and toxic masculinity,”<sup>128</sup> Indigenous “articulations” of which can be attributed to the “powerlessness experienced by some Indigenous men.”<sup>129</sup> Piché reports that:

The prison classroom is one means of combating both hegemonic and toxic masculinities in that it creates a space wherein participants can engage in discussions regarding power and privilege that could not be engaged in (in the same way) outside the classroom. In an institution where distrust is the norm, the classroom can become an environment where men feel comfortable sharing both their work and experiences with one another and where trust can be built and maintained. It is through the creative arts in particular – writing, in the case of our program – that men have found an expressive outlet.<sup>130</sup>

Composing poetry, short fiction, and autobiography, “participants have an opportunity to convey their stories and experiences and have these experiences heard and acknowledged.”<sup>131</sup> Respect followed, as “participants and facilitators do not need to use other means to attain respect – power in the classroom is shared.”<sup>132</sup>

In Diné (Navajo) philosophy, Lloyd L. Lee explains “Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón (SNBH) is a foundational principle of the universe ... exemplif[ying] values and beliefs and [it] represents an animated and living journey.”<sup>133</sup> SNBH combines “separate male and female concepts,” as the “two do not operate alone and apart but are complements to and halves of each other.”<sup>134</sup> SNBH also names “the Diné way of learning and knowing,” a “process [that] is comprehensive and includes ... thinking ... planning ... living ... and reflecting.”<sup>135</sup>

Diné men, Lee explains, “learn how to be a *hastiin* (man) through a Diné way of life and from the creation scripture and journey narratives.”<sup>136</sup> A Diné man, he continues, “must be knowledgeable, smart, and unafraid of responsibility, and he must protect his family and people.”<sup>137</sup> Living with their wives’ families, Diné men “made all possible efforts to ensure the survival of an extended family network,” although both “Diné men and women participated in the political system.”<sup>138</sup>

Starting in the seventeenth century and continuing into the nineteenth, Spanish and Mexican cultures influenced Diné men, Lee reports, who were also engaged in warfare with the Pueblos, Comanches, Utes, Mexicans, and New Mexicans.”<sup>139</sup> Not only warriors, “Diné were hunters, farmers, teachers, storytellers, traders, shepherds,

protectors, and healers; masculinities were based on a foundational image of spirituality, social ways, common living, and physical body.”<sup>140</sup>

Diné boys underwent a puberty ceremony to “learn what it means to live as a young man,” learning “stories, prayers, songs, and cultural knowledge.”<sup>141</sup> Traditional Diné masculinities “still exist,” Lee reports, “but they are not universal among all Diné men in the twenty-first century,” adding: “Several of the [Diné] men I spoke with believe problems in relationships have resulted from the loss of many cultural teachings, which is linked to the loss of arranged marriages.”<sup>142</sup>

Language is a “cornerstone of Diné identity and way of life,” Lee continues; it is “at the core of Diné being.”<sup>143</sup> While more than half of the men Lee interviewed spoke the Diné language, in “many Diné communities is that the language is shifting from Diné to English.”<sup>144</sup> Accompanying the loss of language is loss of traditional gender arrangements: “Prior to colonization,” Lee reports, “Diné men and women lived an egalitarian way of life,” but now “many Diné families are single-parent homes, which the primary caregiver being the mother.”<sup>145</sup> If cultural regeneration is to occur, gender equality must be restored Lee suggests, noting that “only one woman is serving out of twenty-four delegates on the Navajo Nation Council.”<sup>146</sup> He also thinks boys’ puberty ceremonies need to be restored; today “many Diné boys do not go through the ceremony.”<sup>147</sup> Finally, “male role models” are needed.<sup>148</sup>

Male role models must have been in play in the perpetuation of Indigenous “warriorhood,” the topic on which Ty P. Kāwika Tengan, in dialogue with Thomas Ka’auwai Kaulukukui, Jr. and William Kahalepuna Richards, Jr., focuses. Tengan tells us: “In reflecting on the thoughts of Kaulukukui and Richards, I was struck by the notion that warriorhood is an ‘inherent’ or ‘innate’ quality that is ‘just in there’ or ‘part of the DNA’.”<sup>149</sup> Even so Tengan “argue[s] for a critical reading of the claims of inherent/innate warriorhood as assertions of Indigenous genealogical continuity and persistence in the face of U.S. settler colonialism.”<sup>150</sup> Why is warriorhood a topic of concern today? “As the past is literally ‘the time in front’ (*ka wa ma mua*) in Hawaiian thought, projects of critical remembering are also ones of finding new ways forward – *i mua*.”<sup>151</sup>

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## COMMENTARY

As there has been among American and European men (Pinar 2001, 2006), there is now - the essays in this collection suggest - a crisis of Indigenous masculinity. That crisis follows the loss of pre-contact culture, including traditional masculinities and gender arrangements, as well as language. As settler forms of masculinity and gender became internalized, traditional gender arrangements were set aside or became

culturally convoluted. These essays testify to the power for the past in the regeneration of Indigenous cultures.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Innes and Anderson 2015, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Innes and Anderson 2015, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Antone 2015, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Antone 2015, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Antone 2015, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Antone 2015, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Antone 2015, 22.

<sup>8</sup> Antone 2015, 23. “We came to know settler men as the Axe People,” Antone reports, because “in the Oneida language, they are referred to as those who make axes or as ‘the ones who cut down the trees’” (2015, 26).

<sup>9</sup> Antone 2015, 23.

<sup>10</sup> Antone 2015, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Antone 2015, 23. Nonviolence is an ancient theme in (not only) Western philosophy: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/places/spain-portugal-italy-greece-and-balkans/greek-political-geography/nonviolence> accessed August 9, 2020. See Wang 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Antone 2015, 23. In certain strands of psychoanalysis (object relations theory), matrifocality is theorized as universal, leaving boys psychologically fused with their mothers, an identity-formation men contradict by compensation, e.g. hypermasculinity and patriarchy (see, for instance, Chodorow 1978).

<sup>13</sup> Antone 2015, 23.

<sup>14</sup> Antone 2015, 24.

<sup>15</sup> Antone 2015, 24. Antone (2015, 27) narrates a meeting among Indigenous men in service to such cultural recovery, a meeting that depicts the pain that surfaces when confronting colonialism internalized: “Each man stood and told his story; filling the room with regret, he would collapse in tears and weeping, asking to be

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released from the pain and to be free again as an Onkwehonwe man. The colours glistened in the vision, showing the strength of the spirit of the Anishnawbe man. Then the vision was gone, and I was back in the [sweat] lodge.”

<sup>16</sup> Antone 2015, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Antone 2015, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Antone 2015, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Antone 2015, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Antone 2015, 26.

<sup>21</sup> Antone 2015, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Antone 2015, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Antone 2015, 29.

<sup>24</sup> Antone 2015, 29.

<sup>25</sup> Antone 2015, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Antone 2015, 31.

<sup>27</sup> Antone 2015, 31.

<sup>28</sup> Antone 2015, 31.

<sup>29</sup> Antone 2015, 32.

<sup>30</sup> Antone 2015, 34.

<sup>31</sup> Antone 2015, 35.

<sup>32</sup> Antone 2015, 36.

<sup>33</sup> Antone 2015, 36.

<sup>34</sup> Lingis (1995, 9) reports that “Mesoamericanists today calculate the population of Mexico upon the arrival of Cortés variously between nine and twenty-five million; but they agree that it was reduced to one million during the first fifty years of the Conquest.”

<sup>35</sup> Morgensen 2015, 39. There was European opposition to European colonization; the “best known of these critics of empire,” Willinsky reminds, “was the Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas, who was the first priest to be ordained in the New World. In 1552, after decades devoted to protesting the abuses that the Amerindians were made to suffer at the hands of the Spanish, he published his *Devastation of the Indies*, which cataloged the horrors committed in the name of civilization.... In what was to become a common moral appeal, Las Casas reverses the sense of who the savage is, placing the priest-educator in a position to redeem both European and native. His arguments, in a contest over souls and bodies, would later contribute to the end of Spanish slavery among the Amerindians” (1998, 93).

<sup>36</sup> Morgensen 2015, 39.

<sup>37</sup> Morgensen 2015, 40.

<sup>38</sup> Morgensen 2015, 40.

<sup>39</sup> Morgensen 2015, 43. “The sodomy Bernal Díaz perceived,” Lingis (1995, 13) explains, “is not contemporary homosexuality, nor that of Greek classicism and

Renaissance humanism... not simply unnatural, according to the ideology of perversion and degeneration of the modern period, which explained it positively by a fault in nature, explained it thereby in nature – sodomy is anti-natural.” Lingis continues: “When Cortés burnt his ships before advancing upon Tenochtitlan, when they were but four hundred slashing their way through the enraged Aztec citadel, what maintained the epic resolve in the conquistadors was their horror at falling into the hands of these sodomites and being sacrificed on the altars of their demons thirsty for the blood of the human species” (1995, 14).

<sup>40</sup> Morgensen 2015, 43

<sup>41</sup> Morgensen 2015, 43.

<sup>42</sup> Morgensen 2015, 43. Whatever its history, man-boy (often forced) sexual relations is not uncommon in countries with Muslim majorities, among them Afghanistan, where the practice of “Bacha bāzī” (a slang term in some parts of Afghanistan for a custom involving child sexual abuse between older men and young adolescent males or boys) is not unknown: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacha\\_bazi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bacha_bazi) accessed August 13, 2020. There are widespread reports of teachers’ sexual abuse of boys in Pakistan’s religious schools: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/child-sex-abuse-pakistans-religious-schools-endemic-70221420> Accessed August 13, 2020. Homosexual desire, often expressed across generations, is found universally among humankind.

<sup>43</sup> Morgensen 2015, 43-44. Hypocrisy was – is – no doubt in play, but homosexual desire has been – remains – universal among European nations and societies, ancient Greece and (especially pre-Constantine) Rome perhaps its most conspicuous markers.

<sup>44</sup> Morgensen 2015, 44. Surely the “social” order “produced” *and* was produced by settlers and Indigenous peoples, concepts (or discursive formations) that substitute for historical detail.

<sup>45</sup> Morgensen 2015, 44.

<sup>46</sup> Morgensen 2015, 45.

<sup>47</sup> Morgensen 2015, 49.

<sup>48</sup> Morgensen 2015, 51-52.

<sup>49</sup> Morgensen 2015, 52.

<sup>50</sup> Morgensen 2015, 55.

<sup>51</sup> Morgensen 2015, 57. I, for one, have never suggested otherwise.

<sup>52</sup> Sneider 2015, 62.

<sup>53</sup> Sneider 2015, 63.

<sup>54</sup> Sneider 2015, 63.

<sup>55</sup> Sneider 2015, 64. I am reminded of Peter Taubman’s brilliant theorization of “the right distance” between teachers and students as always shifting.

<sup>56</sup> Sneider 2015, 67.

<sup>57</sup> Sneider 2015, 68. Here Sneider is quoting Meaney.

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- <sup>58</sup> Pinar 2001.
- <sup>59</sup> Sneider 2015, 69.
- <sup>60</sup> Sneider 2015, 71. Fanon knew that internalized colonialism threatened not only traditions but future generations of freed people: Pinar 2015, 188.
- <sup>61</sup> Sneider 2015, 73. To what extent is decolonization possible? Even if living in total isolation, in separation from “dominant” or colonizing cultures, colonized peoples still face the internalized traces of such cultures. There’s no going back to pre-contact times, surely one fantasized decolonized destination. There is, however, reactivation of that past to alter, however modestly, the present.
- <sup>62</sup> Sneider 2015, 76. Using quite different terminology, Freud said the same: <https://global.oup.com/us/companion.websites/9780199315468/student/ch4/wed/freud/> Accessed August 15, 2020.
- <sup>63</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 80.
- <sup>64</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 80.
- <sup>65</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 81.
- <sup>66</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 82.
- <sup>67</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 82.
- <sup>68</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 82.
- <sup>69</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 82.
- <sup>70</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 85.
- <sup>71</sup> I Hokowhitu 2015, 85. I have detailed the (homo)sexual structuring of racial politics and violence in America, an analysis in alliance with Hokowhitu’s: Pinar 2001.
- <sup>72</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 86.
- <sup>73</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 87. By positing discourse as determinative, post-structuralist theorists sometimes engage what might be termed “conceptual instrumentalism,” e.g. using language as a conveyance to (an allegedly “new”) set of circumstances. Certainly language can change reality, as when one finds words for how one feels, for what has happened, enabling actuality to be acknowledged. But to position language as a means to an end is like trying to talk one’s way out of trouble; it risks duplicity and it rarely works.
- <sup>74</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 88.
- <sup>75</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 88. Compensatory patterns of masculine aggressivity – hypermasculinity – are also associated with some African-American men, as castration – both literal and symbolic – have structured the gendering of racial politics in the United States (Pinar 2001).
- <sup>76</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 89.
- <sup>77</sup> Hokowhitu 2015, 90. This pattern too shows up among those African-American men who demonstrate both homophobia and homosexual behavior, e.g. the so-called “Down-Low” phenomenon where heterosexually-identified men have sex

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with each other, too often inflecting their wives and girlfriends with STDs and HIV.

<sup>78</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 91.

<sup>79</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 91.

<sup>80</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 91.

<sup>81</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 91.

<sup>82</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 91-92.

<sup>83</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 92. A key concept associated with the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations first formulated by Michel Foucault, biopower has now been superseded by a concept of psycho-politics: “Biopolitics,” Han (2017, 21) explains, “is the governmental technology of disciplinary power. However, this approach proves altogether unsuited to the neoliberal regime, which exploits the psyche above all. Biopolitics, which makes use of population statistics, has no access to the psychic realm.”

<sup>84</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 92.

<sup>85</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 92.

<sup>86</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 92-93.

<sup>87</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 93.

<sup>88</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 93.

<sup>89</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 93-94.

<sup>90</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 94.

<sup>91</sup> Hokowhiti 2015, 94 His embrace of “existentialism” and of “liberation” contests the possibility much Indigenous education affirms, e.g. the achievement of an authentic almost pre-contact cultural purity. To this outsider, reactivation of the past is an ethical obligation – not to take up, as Hokowhiti recommend, as a strategic essentialism – but to alter the internalization of alien culture he laments has long since taken hold.

<sup>92</sup> Minor 2015, 110.

<sup>93</sup> Minor 2015, 110.

<sup>94</sup> Sutherland 2015, 115.

<sup>95</sup> Sutherland 2015, 116.

<sup>96</sup> Sutherland 2015, 116. Given Hokiwhitu’s acknowledgement that pre-contact culture cannot be reclaimed in a post-contact era, I wonder if these performances are not more adequately theorized as reactivations rather than reclamations of the past, an inner reconstruction enacted in front of an audience, possibly a non-Indigenous audience, for them an instance of education?

<sup>97</sup> Sutherland 2015, 117.

<sup>98</sup> Sutherland 2015, 117.

<sup>99</sup> Sutherland 2015, 118.

<sup>100</sup> Sutherland 2015, 118.

<sup>101</sup> Sutherland 2015, 119.

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- <sup>102</sup> Sutherland 2015, 119.
- <sup>103</sup> Sutherland 2015, 121.
- <sup>104</sup> Tatonetti 2015, 132. In particular, “representations of female masculinity abound in poetry, novels, and short stories, in fact and creative non-fiction, in essay and film” (Tatonetti 2015, 133). “[F]emale masculinity,” Tatonetti adds, “has the potential to challenge dominant stereotypes about Indigenous masculinities” (2015, 140).
- <sup>105</sup> Sutherland 2015, 123.
- <sup>106</sup> Sutherland 2015, 124.
- <sup>107</sup> Sutherland 2015, 124.
- <sup>108</sup> Sutherland 2015, 124.
- <sup>109</sup> Sutherland 2015, 126.
- <sup>110</sup> Borell 2015, 167.
- <sup>111</sup> Borell 2015, 168.
- <sup>112</sup> Borell 2015, 170.
- <sup>113</sup> Borell 2015, 170.
- <sup>114</sup> Henry 2015, 181.
- <sup>115</sup> Henry 2015, 186.
- <sup>116</sup> Henry 2015, 186.
- <sup>117</sup> Henry 2015, 188. Given that masculinity and sexual identity are often defensive compensatory formations, and that male-male rape and father-son incest are much more widespread than reported, this insight is not limited to Indigenous male youth: see Pinar 2001 and 2006.
- <sup>118</sup> Henry 2015, 188.
- <sup>119</sup> Henry 2015, 189.
- <sup>120</sup> Henry 2015, 189.
- <sup>121</sup> Henry 2015, 189.
- <sup>122</sup> Henry 2015, 192.
- <sup>123</sup> Piché 2015, 198.
- <sup>124</sup> Piché 2015, 198.
- <sup>125</sup> Piché 2015, 198.
- <sup>126</sup> Piché 2015, 199. When I studied prison rape twenty years ago (Pinar 2001), I found that the problem was hardly limited to the United States, the focus of my study; I reviewed several studies of prison rape in Canada.
- <sup>127</sup> Piché 2015, 201..
- <sup>128</sup> Piché 2015, 203
- <sup>129</sup> Piché 2015, 205.
- <sup>130</sup> Piché 2015, 206.
- <sup>131</sup> Piché 2015, 208.
- <sup>132</sup> Piché 2015, 209.
- <sup>133</sup> Lee 2015, 214.

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<sup>134</sup> Lee 2015, 214.

<sup>135</sup> Lee 2015, 214.

<sup>136</sup> Lee 2015, 215.

<sup>137</sup> Lee 2015, 215.

<sup>138</sup> Lee 2015, 216.

<sup>139</sup> Lee 2015, 216.

<sup>140</sup> Lee 2015, 217. Diné masculinities were also “linked with how men maintained and cared for their horses” (2015, 217).

<sup>141</sup> Lee 2015, 217.

<sup>142</sup> Lee 2015, 219.

<sup>143</sup> Lee 2015, 221.

<sup>144</sup> Lee 2015, 221.

<sup>145</sup> Lee 2015, 223.

<sup>146</sup> Lee 2015, 223.

<sup>147</sup> Lee 2015, 224.

<sup>148</sup> Lee 2015, 224.

<sup>149</sup> Tengan, with Kaulukukui and Richards 2015, 240.

<sup>150</sup> Tengan, with Kaulukukui and Richards 2015, 240.

<sup>151</sup> Tengan, with Kaulukukui and Richards 2015, 241.