

***Making Space for Indigenous Feminism.* Joyce Green, editor. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 2007; 254 pages; ISBN 9-781552-662205; \$24.95 (paper).**

***Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground: Aboriginal Mothering, Oppression, Resistance and Rebirth.* Lavell-Harvard, D. Memee. and Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, editors. Toronto: Demeter Press, 2006; 249 pages; ISBN 1-55014-461-8; \$29.95 (paper).**

Seventeen indigenous, Métis and non-indigenous women's voices are heard in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, a crucial and timely contribution to the literature whose focus is indigenous feminisms. The issues addressed in this volume are wide ranging and multidimensional; while some authors challenge common misunderstandings of indigenous feminism, others question the veneration of traditions, the idealization of motherhood and indigenous Mother Earth ideologies.

A contrasting view is taken in *Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground*. Through a compilation of personal experiences, sharing of traditional teachings, academic and literary voices, the enduring force of motherhood, womanhood and indigenous traditions is honoured throughout this book. The authors are honest and thought-provoking when speaking of how colonialism has destructively impacted indigenous women in Canada, Africa and Australia. While the detrimental effects of forced colonial policies are discussed, the authors also acknowledge indigenous women and the teachings of motherhood and mothering as part of the reason why indigenous peoples continue to survive despite colonization. In *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, several of the authors (Green, St. Denis, Beads) identify only with feminist politics and not with their indigenous identities, while others (Smith, Kuokkanen, Henning, Irwin) present a melding of the two. What is key to both books are the authors' discussions of how the impacts of colonialism and patriarchy have become fixed within our communities and how they must be challenged.

A central theme from *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* emerges from a conversation about what indigenous feminism represents from each author's perspective. This encourages the reader to both look for a broad picture of indigenous feminisms as well as listen for individual voices and indigenous worldviews which are seen, for example, in Rauna Kuokkanen's essay. Kuokkanen sees it as our responsibility as indigenous women to challenge how Christianity, patriarchy and contemporary colonial perspectives influence how others see us. She outlines how these perspectives make it difficult to distinguish and make visible the traditional and present day statuses and roles of indigenous women. Kuokkanen's response to the internal and external impacts of colonialism is to revitalize our indigenous worldviews and teachings using postcolonial feminist theory as a tool to address the colonial and patriarchal values inherited by our people. Her engagement with the regeneration of indigenous worldviews and teachings is also spoken to in *Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground*.

In reading the essays in *Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground* it becomes easy to see that there are common experiences and core values shared by many indigenous people; among the most fundamental are those associated with motherhood and womanhood. It is also undeniably shown that colonial governments have profoundly denigrated these values and indigenous women. Many authors (Lavell-Harvard and Corbiere-Lavell, Simpson, Whitty-Rogers, Etowa and Evans) point to the everyday realities indigenous women live with in contemporary Canadian society. They explain that the state continues to regulate how indigenous women mother through the child welfare system, the *Indian Act* and other colonial laws, and through western ways of regulating pregnancy and birthing. The solution many authors present to colonial encroachments is to continue the regeneration of our indigenous worldviews, teachings and practices (Lavell-Harvard, Corbiere-Lavell, Anderson, Simpson, and Bedard). Indeed, the authors demonstrate that "being an Aboriginal mother is possibly one of the most dangerous jobs in contemporary Canadian society" (Lavell-Harvard and Corbiere Lavell, 192). McGadney-Douglas *et al.*, also speak of how the conquest and colonization of Urban Ghana has had destructive impact on many women there, but also describe how "mothering has been the failsafe for indigenous peoples" (105).

In *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, the authors envision ways to address the impacts of colonialism and patriarchy through, for example, feminist politics (St. Denis), rights-based discourse (Green) and the regeneration of indigenous values (Kuokkanen and Henning). In reading this book the reader will be challenged at various points to agree and disagree with the words of these women. But that is the point; the impacts of colonialism must be addressed in order to challenge, overcome and regenerate ourselves. These essays not only succeed in providing an opportunity for women to engage with indigenous feminisms but encourage the reader to add her own voice to the discussion. It is clear after reading the book that indigenous feminisms do not offer a specific set of ideals one must subscribe to; they are, rather, part of a continuous and evolving dialogue, and a creating of space where indigenous women can speak.

With regards to what is missing from *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, a chapter providing a critical look at how our national leadership, as represented through the Native Women's Association of Canada, as well as the Assembly of First Nations, collaborates with colonial governments would have strengthened an already impressive volume. The omission of such a chapter means that how our people have been conditioned by colonization to seek our colonizer's approval and emulate their lifestyles and values is not addressed. The acceptance of colonial values and collusion with our colonizers can be seen in the ways national aboriginal organizations are accountable to colonial governments through funding arrangements. As national aboriginal organizations depend upon colonial governments for their operation this works to divert focus away from being accountable to their indigenous communities. Also missing from this volume is a discussion of how our current political climate reflects a reliance on the colonial system to provide solutions to the impacts of colonialism in our lives - i.e., through rights and recognition, social and economic strategies and partnerships with colonial governments. Although some authors (LaRocque, Green) point to how indigenous traditions, under colonialism, have inherited

sexist and patriarchal values that have direct consequences for our people, specifically our women, there is very little focus in this book on the ways in which our traditions and teachings are currently helping our people combat colonialism. In *Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground*, by contrast, several authors (Bedard, Simpson, Anderson) speak of how our teachings about pregnancy, birth, mothering and motherhood are necessary elements in the battle against colonialism.

In conclusion, while *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* allows indigenous women a location from which to speak about the many ways in which colonialism has had an impact on their lives, communities and indigenous sisters worldwide, it falls short in reflecting on how our teachings may be the way to challenge colonialism. This is in sharp contrast to *Until Our Hearts Are On the Ground* where the authors concentrate on indigenous teachings as a way to address the impacts of colonialism on the lives of indigenous women. The authors included in this second volume show that it is now our responsibility to regenerate our indigenous values, specifically womanhood, so as not only to respect our ancestors and successfully challenge colonialism, but to ensure the next generation will be taught our worldviews as well.

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