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Instead, this work may more clearly speak to strands in political science or organizational sociology that examine disability rights as a case study of the politics of rulemaking or social movement theory. Regardless of whether this book fits neatly within the growing field of disability legal studies, there is no doubt that the excellent excavation of the events, people, and interests behind disability law and policy history will enrich discussions and improve scholarly understanding across the board.

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Gender, Power and Representations in Cree Law. By Emily Snyder. Vancouver. University of British Columbia Press, 2019. 248 pp. $34.95 paperback

Reviewed by Jo Carrillo, UC Hastings College of the Law

Indigenous legal orders are too often represented as simple and time bound. In *Gender, Power, and Representations of Cree Law*, Snyder uses Indigenous feminist legal theory to analyze a set of materials, all of which are produced by Cree knowledge holders for Cree audiences. What the materials have in common is that they promote the Cree concept of Miyo-wicehtowin, or good relations. Materials include educational websites about treaty relations (50, 55); a trade book about how (male) elders understand treaty relations (52); a comic book about social justice (52); a documentary about Cree natural law (53); academic books about restorative justice and narrative memory (54, 55); a video lecture (56); and a graphic novel produced through a law school research institute (58).

Snyder finds that several of the materials in the above set omit gender talk or, a variant of the same, female characters. Others include one female character, but then marginalize that character

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by leaving her unnamed or in a supporting role relative to male characters. One text represents law as handed down to humans by a supernatural creator. These are gender obscuring materials, says Snyder, because they give rise to a dominant narrative about the value of gender talk to Cree law. According to that narrative, gender conflict was not part of the Cree past, thus it is or should remain unimportant in the Cree present. Snyder discusses one material, *Cree Law*: *Mikomosis and the Wetiko*, as a "trouble maker" text for how it disrupts the dominant narrative by teaching about gender and gender conflict. By allowing gender talk about the past, Snyder argues, *Mikomosis* counters the racist settler ideology that posits Indigenous societies as lawless prior to European contact. And by highlighting gender talk about the present, *Mikomisis* counters the sexist ideology that posits gender as irrelevant to Cree law today.

Snyder analyzes how these materials are in tension over the use of gender talk in Cree law. The materials that omit or obscure gender represent Cree law as a collection of rules that predate European settler society. These materials tend to imagine Indigenous society as stemming from norms that are static but presumably authentic. Here, the argument is that accepting sexist rules (and implicitly the heteronormative structure they support) is a prerequisite for being part of the group. On the other hand, *Mikomosis*, the trouble maker text that openly includes gender talk, represents Cree law as an ongoing process (144). In *Mikomosis*, Cree law is explained as a complex system of rationales and lay explanations, some of which appear to contradict the traditionalist principle of good relations (158). The *Mikomosis* argument is not that rules must be accepted in order to join the group, or that discretionary power depends on where a knowledge holder learned the law. It is that Cree law is deliberative and open to change. Thus, *Mikomosis* teaches that to challenge a static Cree narrative about gender and gender identity is to forge good relations, not trouble them.

Snyder characterizes each material in the set as the product of a knowledge holder, meaning one who makes choices about how to exercise discretionary power. Knowledge holders who omit or obscure gender talk, ironically use gender and gender identity as the basis for deciding who is in or out of the group (159). They are culture cops, by which Snyder means people who *represent themselves* as knowing a culture well enough to make judgments about others' value to the group (159). This, says Snyder, is power exercised obscurely because the act of judging one person as valuable to a culture implicitly includes a shadow judgment about who can be deemed marginal or outcast. Snyder's concern is that when Indigenous knowledge holders use the traditionalist principle of

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good relations as a basis for exclusion, they may be consolidating gender privilege in a way that upholds oppressive colonialist structures.

Snyder understands that Indigenous social organization is complex. Plus, she addresses head-on the risk that her work might be "misused" by individuals who want to reinforce stereotypes of "Cree peoples as violent and dysfunctional" or as lawless without Canadian oversight (161). Unfortunately, the risk that Snyder's work could be misused is real. That said, Snyder makes a significant contribution to the sociolegal literature by how she opens up multiple conversations about the relationship between gender, Indigenous feminist legal theory, Indigenous legal theory, the complexity of Indigenous law, and the value of Indigenous law to settler society. If there is a limitation to this book, it is that the conversation has just begun; but the limitation is the book's strength, as there is the beginning of a conversation for readers from multiple disciplines.

I found the theoretical foundation of Snyder's work compelling as well. Chapter 2 brings three feminist frameworks into play. Multiple chapters rely on the Indigenous legal theory of John Borrows and Val Napolean, both of whom have worked with Snyder on the *Mikomosis* project for youth, community, and post-secondary educators. Borrow's work on gender, sexualities, and complexities is key to Snyder's analysis, as is Carol Smart's work on discretionary actors in the family court system. Smart's work supports Snyder's argument that knowledge providers are discretionary actors (161).

Snyder's theoretical strategies underscore how trouble making texts disrupt dominant narratives in the literature about Indigenous law and society. Trouble making texts highlight (rather than omit or obscure) discussions of gender, gender identity, and gender conflict. They also represent law as deliberative, thereby challenging claims about rule stasis and neutrality. And they recognize that Indigenous society is complex and changing, not static or time bound. Trouble making, Snyder concludes, is consistent with both good relations and Indigenous feminist legal theory because while there is a dominant narrative about Cree law as a system of rules that maintains "good" (too often gender-biased) relations, there is also a counter-narrative about Cree law as a deliberative force for egalitarian possibility.

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