Summary of Themes
Dialogue on Intersectionality and Indigeneity
April 26, 2012
Wosk Centre for Dialogue, Coast Salish Territories, Vancouver BC

Purpose of this document

In April 2012, a diverse group of Indigenous people gathered in Coast Salish territories for an all day dialogue on themes of intersectionality and indigeneity. This document is intended to provide a summary of themes from the dialogue, with individual stories and comments included anonymously in order to allow participants the ability to share their perspectives openly. Questions raised during the dialogue are also included in this summary, providing potential topics for future dialogue and investigation.

Intentions and background

On April 26, a gathering of Indigenous people was held in Coast Salish Territories (downtown Vancouver) to begin a conversation about ideas of intersectionality and indigeneity. Twenty-six participants came together, bringing their diverse experiences in frontline human services work, community activism, and visual and multimedia arts, with a majority of people currently working or studying in academia. Participants worked in diverse areas of indigenous identity, social justice and community organizing, governance, health, gender and sexuality, labor issues, violence, law, education, arts, performance and creating writing, and much more. In addition to sharing academic and professional knowledge, participants were invited to share their personal experiences and family and community histories as they felt comfortable.

Sponsored by the Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy at Simon Fraser University, and organized by Sarah Hunt (Kwagiulth, Kwakwaka’wakw Nation), the dialogue emerged from a series of discussions about the relative lack of Indigenous voices in intersectionality scholarship and academic spaces. The gathering was intended to build on recent assertions by a number of Indigenous activists, writers and scholars who have responded to intersectionality scholarship with the assertion that Indigenous worldviews are inherently intersectional. The dialogue was intended to be an exploratory discussion centered on a diversity of Indigenous peoples’ perspectives, to examine how ideas of indigeneity and intersectionality are understood and utilized in their academic and community work, and life experiences.

A call for participants was circulated widely, and the Institute was happy to receive a wide range of interest from people with diverse Métis and First Nations heritage, as well as one participant who was indigenous to the lands now known as Mexico. The Institute provided some travel funds for participants from outside the Vancouver area, with priority given to non-faculty members, to encourage student and community
participation. Participants traveled from Kamloops, Alert Bay, Victoria, and Kelowna, with the majority living in the Vancouver area.

**Dialogue process**

The format of the dialogue reflected a desire to use the day as a space for Indigenous people to explore these ideas as emergent, in process, and unfolding. Due to the very interdisciplinary nature of the participant group, and the exploratory nature of the discussion, the day was structured around a simple circle format followed by small group discussions on topics chosen by the group members. Although the initial intention was to spend part of the day writing in small groups, the roundtable took up most of the day. This summary was therefore created from notes taken by the facilitator and limited notes submitted by small groups during the final part of the day.

Participants were invited to use the circle as a space to introduce themselves, their work, and their use and understanding of intersectional approaches and indigenous knowledge. Questions were distributed prior to the dialogue for participants to consider before the gathering. The group was broadly asked to consider: definitions and uses of intersectionality; indigenous knowledge and intersectional approaches; indigenous identities and worldviews; and intersectionality in action. This opening circle ended up taking from 10:30am to almost 3pm, with a one-hour lunch break for networking. Within the circle format, each person was given a time to speak without interruption or intervention, honoring the need for each person to share freely within the circle. Because the opening roundtable took up the majority of the gathering, the questions were not directly discussed but were woven into stories shared by individual group members as they went around the circle. Each person’s story revealed the individual ways that people are making meaning of intersectionality and indigeneity, both in relation to one another and separately.

In the final hour, three small groups were formed around issues of two-spirit, gender and sexuality; community practice with youth, families and communities; and ‘everything goes’.

The circle was shaped by those who gathered, as many people shared stories that were personal, emotional and spiritual in nature. A prayer was offered by group members before lunch and at the end of the day, and as one participant shared, this acknowledgement of our ancestor allowed us not to carry this heavily on our own shoulders, but to recognize that we are being guided by the teachings of those who have gone before us.

**Themes from the dialogue**

**Relationships to the term ‘intersectionality’**

Participants expressed varying and complex relationships to the term ‘intersectionality’. A number of people said that Indigenous knowledge and worldviews already include ways of expressing the interconnectedness of all things and various forms of knowledge, so intersectionality was not a new concept to them. One person shared “this is a new
term, but I’ve been living it since I was a child,” while another participants said “this word isn’t very exciting – I’ve already been doing this for a long time”. Underlying these sentiments was the reality that as Indigenous people grounded in Indigenous knowledge, “we know intersectionality even if it’s not named as intersectionality”. Intersectionality was seen as “a new word for something we’ve always known, been, done”.

At the same time, many participants work in academia and find intersectional frameworks useful in their work, or expressed an interest in learning more about its roots and applicability to their areas of research. In these cases, tensions between Indigenous and western systems of knowledge can be productive and creative, and are not necessarily a bad thing. Some participants also shared examples of how intersectionality has been useful for making connections between Indigenous knowledge and other epistemologies, or for making sense of colonial ideologies and institutional frameworks.

However, other participants felt that academic terms such as ‘intersectionality’ should not be needed to legitimize Indigenous knowledge, particularly as the revitalization of Indigenous language and concepts are integral to self-determination. For Indigenous people who don’t know their own Indigenous language, academia might provide ‘fancy words for things we wish we had our own words for’, creating an additional layer of complexity to their use of the intersectional frameworks.

Indigenous epistemologies allow for diverse forms of knowledge to be valued, including the wisdom of elders, dreams and spiritual guides. A variety of metaphors were used to describe the interrelatedness of various aspects of life in Indigenous knowledge, including ‘weaving our knowledge together’ and ‘standing on our own traditions’.

The stories shared by participants demonstrated that Indigenous and western worldviews are founded on distinct categorizations, which are expressed in language. Whereas the language of intersectionality might be needed to make sense of western ideologies that categorize and break apart various aspects of life, in Indigenous worldviews, concepts of intersectionality already exist. Understanding the animation and cross-fertilization of categories (of race, gender, animal, human, law, etc.) is the foundation of intersectional frameworks. How, then, do theories of intersectionality account for Indigenous worldviews or experiences, when the categories within intersectional theories are not rooted in Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies?

It was suggested that intersectionality might be useful for understanding how colonial systems or axes of power work together, but it is not needed to validate the inherent complexities of Indigenous knowledge. Some participants said they would rather use Indigenous concepts and ways of knowing, and were unsure how Indigenous knowledge fits with intersectionality, as it is understood to be a non-Indigenous academic framework. Additionally, some people expressed that the language of intersectionality may be alienating to Indigenous communities because of its academic framing.
**Intersections of Indigenous and western in Indigenous peoples lives**

Many participants shared stories of navigating Indigenous and western worldviews and cultural and social norms in their everyday lives and in their work. One participant described this cross-cultural experience as ‘a collision’ rather than the more harmonious or passive language of intersectionality. In this way, intersectionality was seen as failing to capture the violent reality of colonial power relations in the embodied daily experiences of Indigenous people. Those working in academia talked about navigating the different expectations of academic and Indigenous spaces, an experience of ‘walking in different worlds’. The norms of mainstream society or institutions may conflict with early teachings that Indigenous people learn in small towns, on reserve, or living with grandparents or extended family. Many participants echoed that where we come from and who we are as people comes before new (western) teachings, taking a central place in our daily lives, work and worldviews. Thus, as indigeneity takes a central position in Indigenous peoples’ worldviews and identities, some talked about ‘otherizing the colonizer’ or positioning themselves at a more critical distance to colonial norms. Participants of mixed Indigenous backgrounds also talked about cultural intersections in their own families, as children of parents with diverse backgrounds or adoptees. In this way, Indigenous people of mixed ancestry may embody intersections of colonial and Indigenous histories.

**Indigenous languages**

As previously mentioned, participants shared the many ways that Indigenous languages are embedded with concepts that reflect the interconnectedness of all things. Translated into English, these concepts include ‘all my relations’, ‘weaving the strands’, and ‘a web of community relations’ that extends beyond humans to include other animals, the land, water, and all living things. Indigenous knowledges (IK) are expressive of moral and ethical teachings that cannot be captured in the English language. Thus, the expressive potential of intersectionality may be inherently limited by its western, academic foundation, even though it is rooted in social justice frameworks seeking to challenge dominant power relations. English and Indigenous languages are expressive of ontologically distinct concepts of identity in relation to the world we live in. As one participant expressed, ‘there is a false separation between us and the ground, or the ground already laid’.

Some participants saw themselves as navigating and translating between Indigenous and English languages, finding creative ways to hold multiple concepts at the same time. In this way, Indigenous scholars may be understood as ‘transliterations’. Participants also talked about the ‘pedagogy of the imagination,’ the usefulness of hermeneutics and the epistemic privilege of the oppressed.

**Indigenous identity and defining indigeneity**

Tensions between Indigenous identities and those imposed through colonialism emerged in the dialogue. While some expressed fractured identities, others saw themselves firmly rooted in cultural teachings, claiming ‘our names for ourselves’ rather than government-defined Indian status. Stories were shared about ‘walking in today’s world, finding our voice’ as Indigenous people asserting ourselves amidst the forces of ongoing colonialism.
One participant expressed that their identity as an Indigenous person was rooted in ceremony and spiritual practices, while another referenced creation stories as central to their identity and orientation to the world. As one person shared ‘to honor the legacy of our ancestors, this is the definition of indigeneity’.

**Personal and family histories as intersectional**

Many of the participants had families, parents, and grandparents from diverse places and traditions, which they understood as being carried and embodied through their individual identities and lives. These histories can be understood as intersectional manifestations of indigeneity in a contemporary context. Some expressed that the various parts of their own family history don’t fit together or could be seen as situated in tension with one another. Yet it is the intersection of these various histories and lineages that make Indigenous people who they are today. Despite these seemingly disparate histories, one participant noted, ‘I am part of a whole: community, family, nation’, not just an individual.

**Impacts of colonialism**

The varied impacts of colonialism were threaded throughout the discussion, as participants shared stories from their own lives and experiences, as well as their work and research. In particular, the fracturing of family and intergenerational relations was at the core of colonial impacts, with children pulled between ceremonial or cultural grounding and being oppressed in larger society. Healing from trauma and violence, especially sexualized violence, was discussed as foundational to the present and future paths of Indigenous communities. One participant expressed deep concern about how Indigenous people can continue to carry the burden of ongoing trauma, especially intergenerational abuse, along with all the other challenges of community healing.

Another participant expressed that our communities are out of balance, but that it is necessary to be out of balance for a moment in order to heal. Lateral violence within communities was seen as a key expression of losing balance in our communities. This included the internalization of homophobia and lack of gay leaders that has resulted from fear-based learnings of colonial education.

Colonialism has entailed displacing longstanding teachings through forcibly imposing colonial value systems, governance and ways of life. For the past 200 years, colonialism has unraveled thousands of years of envisioning a stable, balanced system, taking things out of the earth that shouldn’t be taken out. Restoring the interconnectedness of people and their environments is key to shifting power relations under colonialism. This involves invigorating systems of thought rooted in indigeneity itself, which may not be captured in existing intersectional frameworks.

**Indigenous geographies**

Although the majority of dialogue participants were Indigenous to turtle island (now called North America), one participant was Indigenous to the lands now known as Mexico. The dialogue was largely shaped by the shared experiences of Indigenous people colonized by the Canadian government, but discussion also acknowledged state borders themselves as colonial. Participants talked about the contentious nature of state-crated
‘borderlands,’ with Indigeneity and relations among Indigenous peoples working across these borders. Differences between Canadian and US political geographies were discussed, as in the US Indigenous is understood as ‘a rural, past-tense term’. Thus, Indigenous people are caught within colonial geographies that are specific to state policies and discourse.

Underlying colonial geographies of BC, in which Indian reserves are separated from other lands through the federal Indian Act, Indigenous peoples geographies are still alive upon the land. One participant noted that although lines may be drawn between one reserve and another or one town and another, BC is connected through the movement of salmon. Even those communities that are not side by side are connected through salmon, as some communities are responsible for the fryes, others for the adult fish, and others for the spawning grounds. Another participant saw water bringing people together, as it flows through Indigenous communities across territorial borders.

**Contested terrain of academia**

Academia was discussed by participants as a complex site of knowledge production which Indigenous people have increasing access to. For some, academia gives Indigenous people multi-language abilities, with the gift of reading in different ways. This was seen by one participant as part of way-finding, navigating our way forward as Indigenous people.

Other participants expressed frustration at how education can be used as a weapon to cut each other down. We must be careful to wield the privilege of academic education responsibly rather than using it to hold power over one another. This might include taking on theoretical language, such as that of intersectionality, with caution. Some participants expressed a desire to take down the academic industrial complex’ by making academia accessible, free and open to anyone who wants to learn, rather than commodifying knowledge. Currently, bringing Indigenous knowledge into academic spaces and theoretical framings is exclusionary, as not everyone has access to learning in these institutions. On the other hand, intersectionality was understood to be useful specifically to marginalized scholars, as it was seen as ‘not recognized by white male scholars’ or by mainstream scholars within our various disciplines.

These tensions were made clear through the stories of participants who had been through graduate school. For example, one person shared that the first draft of their masters thesis was all academic and, as a result, they were close to quitting. However, they felt a renewed belief in their work after recentering the thesis around stories, dreams, and heart voice. The student ‘gave myself agency through that model of the heart voice,’ which ‘emerged from silence’ or an internal focus rather than emerging from academic sources.

Some participants shared ways that they are involved in reimagining post-secondary institutions to create more space for Indigenous people, epistemologies and ontologies. These included a Dean’s Accord for Indigenous Education and Indigenous Research Institute, as well as the creation of innovative ways to communicate students’ needs. Running throughout these navigations of academia were diverse understandings of the
responsibilities that come with ‘moving between two worlds’. Although the language of
intersectionality may partially account for these experiences, it may be necessary to
develop specific language emerging from the tension between western and Indigenous
systems, in order to make Indigenous worldviews visible, audible and powerful within
dominant institutional frameworks.

**Arts based education**
For some participants, arts-based methods provide powerful educational tools that allow
us to get beyond the confines of the English language. In this way, concepts underpinning
intersectionality may be expressed without the language or theory of ‘intersectionality’.
Some resources that were shared included the work of Dennis Foley’s Indigenous
standpoint theory (*Indigenous Standpoint Theory: an acceptable academic research
process for Indigenous academics, 2006*) and the storywork of Jo-ann Archibald
(*Indigenous Storywork: educating the heart, mind, body and spirit, 2008*), which
provides a cultural interface.

**Beyond gender and sexuality: two-spirit traditions**
In addition to stories shared in the circle discussion, a break-out group was formed on the
topic of two-spirit issues. Participants understood various cultural two-spirit traditions to
not only embodied expressions of gender and sexuality, but also a responsibility to take
care of the land, as a spiritual leader, or holder of knowledge. These qualities sometimes
gets lost in the translation of ‘two-spirit’ from Indigenous words and concepts into a
‘lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ) native person’. In this way, two-
spirit is ontologically distinct from categorizations of gender and sexuality that are
possible to express in the English language. Two-spirit is thus understood as rooted in
culturally-specific Indigenous languages and understandings of individual community
responsibilities.

Participants also discussed teachings from two-spirit writers about how colonialism has
introduced divisions between masculine and feminine elements, as well as men and
women, rooted in teachings of Christianity. Colonialism has entailed enforcing these
gender relations through residential schools and more broadly in dominant cultural
norms, which have displaced Indigenous perspectives with varying systems of gender.

In contemporary society, two-spirit people struggle with the ongoing impacts of
colonialism which serve to force the gender binary and western views of sexuality on
diverse Indigenous cultures. Today, many Indigenous communities have internalized
homophobia, transphobia and gender stereotypes along with other colonial teachings.
Some participants expressed feeling judged as not being native enough or gay enough
when they claim a two-spirit identity. Others said the lack of two-spirits in provincial
leadership of native communities is a reflection of the continued erasure of two-spirit
traditions. Tensions also exist between identifying as gay or as two-spirit, as for some,
two-spirit is inherently a spiritual role that includes being sober, healthy and clear-
hearted.
In the context of revitalizing and reinvigorating two-spirit experiences and worldviews, intersectionality must be able to capture categorizations that are in flux, changeable, unfixed and resisting rigidity. Two-spirit peoples’ lives contest quantification or categorizations based on identity categories or power dynamics, as they do not adhere to fixed expressions of identity. Two-spirit people might be understood as shape-shifters, adapting and changing across various socio-cultural contexts. One participant shared a model that he has used to understand intersections of gender and sexuality within an Indigenous framework. In this model, gender and sexuality are always interrelated in a range of expressions that are not limited to binary models, as individuals can position themselves within a scale of interrelated, yet undefined, gendered and sexual identities.

![Model](image)

*Model included here with permission from Rocky James.*

Rather than understanding experiences of LGBTQ people as always marginalized, some two-spirit participants discussed the importance of using individual privilege to contest oppression. This calls on individuals to use their agency, their gifts and responsibilities, rather than only seeing oppression. Although this was specifically discussed in relation to two-spirit people, the same teaching could be applied to any groups who are normatively situated as oppressed, including Indigenous people as a whole. How do intersectional frameworks account for the strengths, abilities and agency of people from marginalized groups? Are two-spirits understood as only marginalized or are they also understood as leaders, role-models and gifted with Indigenous teachings?

This conversation gets at the heart of many Indigenous peoples’ use of intersectionality, its potential, its tensions and its limitations in accounting for Indigenous worldviews.

**Indigenous feminism/gender analysis**

A number of participants shared experiences of working on issues specific to girls and women, two-spirit people, or men and boys, as well as the utilization of a gender analysis in their work. Although Indigenous cultures had, and continue to have, their own understandings of gender that are distinct from the binary of men and women, colonialism has entailed the imposition of western gender norms through the Indian Act,
residential schools and other colonial systems. How might intersectional frameworks account for these complex relationships to both colonial and Indigenous systems of gender? Although participants saw the need to develop specific supports for Indigenous women and girls, healing from colonially-imposed gender norms might include ‘inviting men back into the circle’ in order to heal families and communities within more holistic frameworks. The important roles of Indigenous women in diverse cultural contexts was also discussed in relation to redefining feminism within an Indigenous framework. Indigenous women must be allowed to define rights, responsibilities and roles on terms that make sense within specific cultural contexts, and in relation to the impact of colonial gender norms. Additionally, participants shared examples of utilizing gender analyses in evaluating contemporary socio-economic conditions in Indigenous communities, such as an analysis of the labor market in Canada which utilizes an intersectional feminist approach in understanding Indigenous women’s employment status.

**Roles of children and youth**

Treatment of children and youth was a theme running throughout the dialogue, including the history of Canada’s residential school system, which separated children from their families and is still impacting family integration today. Participants shared a variety of healing models, including medicine wheel teachings, which provide holistic approaches to reintegrate children into their families and communities. Venues such as the transitional justice forum of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) provide a place for those who experienced displacement and violence at residential schools to tell their stories, and to integrate this history within their own family healing process. One participant spoke of their own family heritage as ‘intersectional’, because one parent had attended residential school while another parent was grounded in traditional teachings.

Through colonial laws and the forced imposition of colonial systems of education, the roles of children in the family circle have been disrupted, and must be restored for the vitality of future generations. Understanding the role of children as integral to the health and wellbeing of families and communities requires the use of culturally-specific Indigenous models of family and community.

**Service provision models**

A number of the participants were front-line workers or practitioners involved in providing social services in a range of community settings. Disconnection between various aspects of peoples’ lives are institutionalized in policies that focus only on one aspect of a person’s identity, making them incapable of using holistic approaches and potentially creating harm. Examples included rules that a person can’t access a service if they’ve been drinking alcohol or using drugs, services that do not allow children to attend with their adult caregivers, or services only available to people living on reserve. Participants emphasized the need for spiritual support as they navigate, and attempt to make sense of, these uni-focused systems, both as professionals and as clients. Programs that focus only on one segment of the population, such as gender-based programs using a feminist framework, might make sense for some clients or for specific types of support needs, but are not necessarily suitable for supporting Indigenous families and communities as a whole. Often, programs are designed to work in an urban setting and
are then expected to be transported to a rural area without consideration for the different needs of these communities. Overall, service provision models would be more effective if they were designed within holistic models of family and community that are adaptable across a diversity of Indigenous systems of knowledge.

Realistically, funding for Indigenous organizations, community programs, and research is often divided along distinct segments of the community or is focused on specific issues defined in terms that make sense to government funders. How useful might intersectional frameworks be for Indigenous communities, given that they are already trying to make room for Indigenous systems of thought and knowledge, which do not neatly fit into these frameworks, in their engagements with government and other funding bodies? There may be a practical need to adhere to normative categories of identity or social location while navigating these systems, while at the same time working to reinvigorate Indigenous worldviews. How might intersectional frameworks, analyses or research tools aid in these efforts, and what might their limitations be?

**Self-determination, sovereignty, self-sufficiency, activism**

Running throughout the dialogue were themes of self-determination, sovereignty, self-sufficiency and activism emerging from our focus on indigeneity. Indigeneity was diversely understood as being related to the relational nature of land-based knowledge, overlapping and interrelated uses of Indigenous peoples’ territories (which extend outside of and beyond state-defined borders), and the fundamental rights of Indigenous peoples to access a diversity of land-based practices. These aspects of indigeneity were seen as vital to self-sufficiency and the strength of Indigenous communities across diverse urban and rural geographic settings. Indigenous knowledge emerges within a set of relationships based in territorial networks and reciprocal obligations that extend back for generations. Giving back to the land and honoring these ancestral connections were discussed by some participants as central to fulfilling our obligations as Indigenous people, and are key to understanding indigeneity itself. These aspects of indigeneity may not map easily within existing intersectional frameworks, which are developed as a strategy for making sense of colonial systems of power, privilege and oppression. The act of building alliances across axes of difference (among settlers and indigenous communities) was mentioned as a potential form of intersectionality in action.

**Academic roots of the term ‘intersectionality’ and its application to colonialism**

While the goal of the dialogue was for participants to share their own perspectives and experiences, it was requested that this summary include some information on the academic roots of intersectionality. It is hoped that future workshops or gatherings will provide an opportunity to work more closely with these frameworks, along with Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, a critical race legal scholar at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) who has written about civil rights, black feminist legal theory and racism and the law, is credited with coining the term ‘intersectionality’. In her 1989 article “Demarginalizing the intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”, Crenshaw
underscores the ‘multidimensionality’ of marginalized peoples’ lived experiences. Patricia Hill Collins was also instrumental in popularizing the term, using it to replace the phrase “black feminist thought”, which she had previously coined to talk about race and gender in the US context. Collins, Crenshaw and other critical race theorists used intersectionality to illuminate intersections of race and gender, particularly in the context of US history, law and politics, such as in areas of violence against women, affirmative action, and structural racial inequality. They argued that cultural patterns of oppression are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of race, gender, class, and ethnicity (Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 2000).

However, beyond its official roots in US critical race legal theory, some argue the origins of intersectionality go much further back in histories of black feminist scholarship, queer and postcolonial theory, indigenous feminism, and other academic work addressing issues of race, class, gender and power. Intersectional and interlocking approaches seek to move beyond examinations of singular aspects of identity and power, although not all approaches use these terms explicitly.

Intersectionality is used in diverse fields, including public policy, public health, feminist studies, indigenous studies, sexuality studies, law, psychology, critical race theory, and sociology. In addition to work focused on the structural nature of systems of power, some intersectional approaches investigate these axes of social location at the level of individual identity, as the embodiment of these axes of difference are lived simultaneously, informing and empowering one another, rather than being lived as distinct categories.

**Future explorations of Indigeneity and intersectionality**

Although some indigenous scholars have written about intersecting axes of power as they relate to the lives of Indigenous peoples (such as work by Indigenous feminist scholars, as seen in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, edited by Joyce Green, 2007), few Indigenous scholars have explicitly used the term ‘intersectionality’ in their work. There has yet to be much theorizing about the use of intersectional approaches in understanding colonialism in the lives of Indigenous people, and its applicability given the roots of intersectionality in US black feminism. This dialogue has provided a starting point for what we hope to be a much more in-depth examination of the complexities of extending this analysis in the context of colonial relations and the possibilities, and limitations, of accounting for indigenous systems of knowledge using these frameworks.

The dialogue included people working in a diversity of contexts on a range of issues in both academic and community contexts. The applicability of intersectionality in non-academic settings was of key concern to some participants. As outlined above, the roots of intersectionality are firmly located in academia, and although many community members are working simultaneously on issues of class, geographic location, gender and sexuality, and so on, the language of intersectionality may discourage some people from naming their work in this way. These concerns, and others, need to be addressed by Indigenous people working across academic and community spaces, in order for intersectionality to be made relevant to understanding the ongoing dynamics of
colonialism alongside distinct systems of Indigenous knowledge and diverse individual and community experiences.

**Questions for continuing dialogue**

Participants in the dialogue, and others who could not attend, expressed interested in further exploring points of connection that might be made between intersectionality and indigeneity. Although indigeneity and colonialism are already being developed in some areas of intersectional scholarship, it could be argued that it is not enough to include colonialism as one axis of oppression, but that colonialism conditions the whole matrix of intersecting systems of power in colonized spaces, such as North America. As the themes in this summary make clear, Indigenous peoples’ experiences, cultural knowledge and practices, and modes of decolonization require approaches that can take both indigenous knowledge, and the impacts of colonialism, into account.

Thus, the original questions that informed the dialogue are still in need of further discussion, along with additional questions that arose during this initial exploration:

- Is intersectionality, as it is currently understood, truly a good fit for understanding Indigenous lives and worldviews under neo-colonialism?
- How do Indigenous understandings of colonization, and its hegemonic ideologies and practices, mesh with intersectional theory?
- How can the enactment and resurgence of Indigenous laws, cultural practices and worldviews find a central place in intersectional frameworks?
- How can colonial oppression be voiced along with the agency of Indigenous peoples and the active nature of their/our ongoing cultural, spiritual, political and legal practices?
- What approaches are being used in Indigenous communities and by Indigenous scholars that share similarities with intersectionality without using the language of intersectionality?
- How might we begin to talk about indigenous intersectional frameworks? Is this appropriate or desirable?