

## Introduction to the Translation: Translation as a tool to facilitate a global dialogue about Colonialism, Sexual Violence, and Online Resistance

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In Canada, more and more social media campaigns led by Indigenous activists (#MMIW, #IdleNoMore, #CancelCanadaDay, #LandBack, #HonorTheTreaties) successfully raise awareness about the devastating consequences of settler colonialism. Since they seriously lack visibility in mainstream media, Canada's First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are taking to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok to bring public attention to Indigenous issues.<sup>1</sup> And even when there is mainstream media coverage in a few cases, Canadian journalists tend to paint a negative picture of their communities. News coverage is heavily biased by racist, classist, and misogynist stereotypes. This is as much true for anglophone Canadian media, as shown by scholars Gilchrist,<sup>2</sup> Jiwani and Young,<sup>3</sup> as it is for their francophone counterparts, demonstrated by the study of Gagné, Walsh, and Brun.<sup>4</sup> In this context, social media platforms become useful tools to fight discrimination and offer positive representations of Indigenous peoples and their cultures.

### INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S FIGHT AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN QUEBEC

One of the most prominent issues regarding Indigenous social media activism is the pan-Canadian fight of native women against sexual violence and feminicides.<sup>5</sup> Much

like in Australia, where Indigenous women are three times more likely to be victims of violence than non-indigenous women,<sup>6</sup> the situation in Canada is alarming. A 2014 report published by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police estimated that 1,181 Indigenous women are missing or were murdered (after being sexually assaulted or raped in a majority of cases) between 1980 and 2012, a figure the Native Women's Association of Canada estimates to be much higher.<sup>7</sup> In proportion, this number represents about 30,000 Canadian and 55,000 French women.<sup>8</sup> While the report received considerable attention in Canada's anglophone provinces, francophone media coverage in Quebec was rather scarce. The issue only made national news following the 2015 "Val-d'Or scandal," which confronted officers of the Quebec Police Force with allegations of sexual assault against women from the Cree and Anichinabe nations. In the aftermath of these revelations, many Indigenous women in Quebec took to Facebook and Twitter to demand justice for the victims as well as to organise vigils and protests. Their efforts caught our attention as researchers of digital activism, but also as women and feminists committed to fight rape culture, misogyny, and racism.

## TOWARDS A GLOBAL SPACE FOR THE CAUSE OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

As research corpuses about using social media to fight sexual violence against Indigenous women are growing in the US, Australia, New Zealand, and even anglophone Canada, we could not find any scholarly documentation pertaining to Quebec.

Born out of "indignation,"<sup>9</sup> this research project made us challenge our own values, knowledge gaps, and research practices as we began to dive into literature about Indigenous women and sexual violence in Quebec. Indeed, we knew that our status as "white westerners" could imply a relationship of colonial domination. For the sake of honesty, we straightforwardly discussed these hierarchical orders with our participants, stressing that while we were "white westerners," we still remained "women" with a strong desire to listen and learn from their experiences. We think that the research ethics protocol resulting from these discussions, which we present in detail in our text, can contribute to finding ways to establish dialogues between all women, queer and gender non-conforming individuals. While our approach is certainly not flawless, we hope it will make scholars think about their privileged position and humbly contribute

to implementing more favourable “condition[s] of sharing and solidarity” that provide grounds from which “practical combinations for action can emerge.”<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, we think that making research results available in several languages contributes to a more democratic knowledge transmission within academia and beyond. In this sense, we hope that our translation helps facilitate a pan-Canadian or even global dialogue about indigenous women’s militant social media uses. We especially hope that our empirical work will find a fruitful anchorage in Australia where many scholars study internet use in indigenous contexts. The work of Tanja Dreher *et al.*,<sup>11</sup> Emma S. Rice *et al.*,<sup>12</sup> Bronwyn Lee Carlson and Ryan Frazer,<sup>13</sup> and Bronwyn Lee Carlson *et al.*<sup>14</sup> fuelled our thinking about the dialectical role—both emancipatory and alienating—technology can play when it comes to fighting colonial and patriarchal domination. In return, we hope this translation grants useful insights for Australian researchers to document, compare and expand knowledge production on this matter.

## THEORIES INFORMING OUR TRANSLATION STRATEGY

Our translation strategy is inspired by both Bonaventura De Sousa Santos’s sociology of absences and intersectional feminist translation studies.

According to De Sousa Santos,<sup>15</sup> translation “is a dialogical and political” task, thus going against common assumptions about translation being a “disinterested” act of mediation.<sup>16</sup> Instead, translation provides a “contact zone for dialogue” between two or more cultures by identifying common concerns, ambitions and actions as well as their differences.<sup>17</sup> To do so, translation can neither jeopardize socially, politically, and/or geographically situated identities by reducing them to homogenous entities, nor can it lead to fragmentation or isolationism of social justice initiatives.<sup>18</sup> To avoid either of these pitfalls, De Sousa Santos<sup>19</sup> argues for knowledge translation that allows “for mutual intelligibility” by implementing beneficial circumstances for sharing, listening, and developing solidarities, circumstances that provide a basis from which practical action can emerge. Viewed as such, translation contributes to creating “conditions for global social justice.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, we consider the translation of our own research results from French into English to be an additional form of academic social justice activism against intersecting systems of oppression.

Implementing such favourable conditions of sharing and solidarity can be tricky, especially when it comes to finding “new ways to rearticulate the source text’s

consci(enti)ous attacks on misogynistic [ed: and colonial] ... conventions.”<sup>21</sup> On the one hand, our literature on intersectionality and decolonising technologies is primarily anglophone and therefore easy to translate back into English. It was thus possible to reduce the risk of unfaithfully appropriating, whitening or depolitising these concepts through translation.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, one of our main concepts, “espace de la cause des femmes,”<sup>23</sup> (space for the cause of women) needs to be positioned in the specific context of existing power dynamics of feminist movements in La Francophonie. Therefore, the concept we referred to as “espace de la cause des femmes autochtones” (space for the cause of Indigenous women) must be interpreted in the context of our case study. Nevertheless, as the recent intersectional turn in Feminist Translation Studies shows, uprooting, displacing and transforming theory is an integral part of feminist and decolonial enquiry challenging all existing imaginaries, including our own.<sup>24</sup> According to Bracke *et al.* “the process of destabilizing one’s own cultural norms, and the words within which they are couched, and the imagining of other ones, form part of feminist experiences of self-transformation, and of wider sociocultural transformation.”<sup>25</sup>

In this sense, our translation pursues our epistemological standpoint of indignation we outlined in the text<sup>26</sup> in order to contribute to facilitating solidarities and global dialogue—perhaps a global “space for the cause of Indigenous women”—in regard to the role social media plays in fighting sexual and colonial violence in various contexts.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** We would like to thank Nanette Gobel, certified translator (ATA), who read and commented on various drafts of this translation. Without her professional and linguistic skills this translation would not have been completed. We would also like to thank our participants for their trust, for sharing their knowledge and for challenging our own beliefs. Finally, we would like to thank *Recherches féministes* for giving us permission to translate our work into English.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Éric Cardinal, “Les autochtones dans l’espace médiatique québécois” (Paper submitted to the Public Inquiry Commission on relations between Indigenous Peoples and certain public services in Québec, 2018), 24.

[https://www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers\\_clients/Documents\\_deposes\\_a\\_la\\_Commission/P-618\\_M-010.pdf](https://www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_clients/Documents_deposes_a_la_Commission/P-618_M-010.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Kirsten Gilchrist, “‘Newsworthy’ Victims? Exploring differences in Canadian local press coverage of missing/murdered Aboriginal and White women”, *Feminist Media Studies* 10, no. 4(2010), 373–390.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14680777.2010.514110>

<sup>3</sup> Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young, “Missing and Murdered Women: Reproducing Marginality in News Discourse”, *Canadian Journal of Communication* 31(2006), 895–917. <https://www.cjc-online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1825/3181>

<sup>4</sup> Geneviève Gagné, Véronique Walsh and Josette Brun, “Décoloniser le journalisme: le cas des femmes autochtones victimes d’agression sexuelles à Val-d’Or”, in *De l’exclusion à la solidarité : regards intersectionnels sur les médias*, ed. Josette Brun (Montreal: remue-ménage, 2020), 199–226.

<sup>5</sup> Julie Bruneau, “Walking with our Sisters: une commémoration artistique pour le féminicide autochtone, en marche vers la décolonisation”, *Recherches féministes* 30, no. 1(2017), 101–117.

<sup>6</sup> Marcia Langton and Kristen Smith, “Improving Family Violence Legal and Support Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women”, *Research Report, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety*, 2020. [https://20ian81kynqg38bl3l3eh8bf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AT.19.03\\_Langton\\_RR-FVsupport-Women.pdf](https://20ian81kynqg38bl3l3eh8bf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AT.19.03_Langton_RR-FVsupport-Women.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Royal Mounted Canadian Police, “Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview” (Cat. no.: PS64-115/2014E-PDF, RCMP, 2014), 3. <https://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-national-operational-overview>

<sup>8</sup> Widia Larivière, “Préface”, in *Sœurs volées: Enquête sur un féminicide au Canada*, ed. Emanuelle Walter (Montreal: Lux, 2014), 11.

<sup>9</sup> Laura Nader, “Up the Anthropologists: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up”, in *Reinventing Anthropology*, ed. Dell Hymes (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 279–293.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Tanja Dreher, Kerry McCallum & Lisa Waller, “Indigenous voices and mediatized policy-making in the digital age, Information”, *Communication & Society* 19, no. 1(2016), 23–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1093534>

<sup>12</sup> Emma S. Rice, Emma Haynes, Paul Royce and Sandra C. Thompson, “Social Media and Digital Technology Use Among Indigenous Young People in Australia: A Literature Review”, *International Journal for Equity in Health*, (2020), 15–81, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4881203/>

<sup>13</sup> Bronwyn Lee Carlson and Ryan Frazer. *Social Media Mob: Being Indigenous Online*. (Sydney: Macquarie University, 2018), <https://apo.org.au/node/234656>

<sup>14</sup> Bronwyn Lee Carlson, Lani V. Jones, Michelle Harris, Neelia Quezada, and Ryan Frazer, “Trauma, Shared Recognition and Indigenous Resistance on Social media”. *Australasian*

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*Journal of Information Systems* 21(2017), <https://doi.org/10.3127/ajis.v21i0.1570>

<sup>15</sup> Bonaventura De Sousa Santos, “The Future of the World Social Forum: The work of translation”, *Development* 48, no. 2(2005), 20, <http://doi.org10.1057/palgrave.development.1100131>.

<sup>16</sup> Mona Baker, “Translation as an Alternative Space for Political Action”, *Social Movement Studies* 12, no.1, 24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2012.685624>

<sup>17</sup> De Sousa Santos, “The Future of the World Social Forum”, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 16–17.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>21</sup> Olga Castro and Emek Ergun, “Translation and Feminism”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Politics*, ed. Jon Evans and Fruela Fernandez (London: Routledge, 2018), 127.

<sup>22</sup> Sirma Bilge, “Blanchiment de l’intersectionnalité”, *Intersectionnalités* 28, no. 2(2015), 9–32 and Kathy Davis, “Who owns intersectionality? Some reflections on feminist debates on how theories travel”, *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 27, no. 2(2020), 113–127.

<sup>23</sup> Laure Bereni, “Penser la transversalité des mobilisations féministes: l’espace de la cause des femmes”, in *Les féministes de la deuxième vague*, ed. Christine Bard (Paris: Presses des Rennes): 27–41.

<sup>24</sup> Davis, “Who owns intersectionality”, 122–123.

<sup>25</sup> Maud Anne Bracke, Penelope Morris and Emily Ryder, “Introduction. Translating feminism: Transfer, transgression, transformation (1950s–1980s)”, *Gender & History* 30, no. 1(2018), 217.

<sup>26</sup> Laura Nader, “Up the Anthropologists.”