Amber, Bev, Chantel, Jazmyn, Faith, Jorgina, & Robert Henry, *Indigenous Women and Street Gangs: Survivance Narratives*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2021. 144 pages. ISBN 978-1-7721-2549-8. $24.99 USD paperback.

While scholarship focusing on Indigenous communities often over-emphasizes victimization, violence, and trauma, *Indigenous Women and Street Gangs: Survivance Narratives* balances difficult realities with "pride, resistance, and resurgence of [Indigenous women's] bodies, minds, and lives" (xiv). At the heart of this participant-led truthtelling effort is a commitment to integration of survival and resistance, or what Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor termed *survivance* in his 2008 article "Aesthetics of Survivance". This book centers survivance narratives of six Indigenous women (Amber, Bev, Chantel, Jazmyn, Faith, and Jorgina) through their own words and photographs.

As a white woman and Associate Professor at Montana State University, I have benefitted from generations of settler colonialism. I recognize that I teach, research, and live in settler-occupied spaces stolen from Indigenous Nations. While my scholarship over the past twenty years has focused on collaborating with Indigenous communities to illuminate historical counternarratives, acknowledge continued presence, and work toward anti-colonial futures, I remain a settler and learner. Given this positionality, I endeavored to engage with *Indigenous Women and Street Gangs* with humility as an aspiring partner in anti-colonial scholarship and practice.

In the introduction to *Indigenous Women and Street Gangs*, Robert Henry (Métis) overviews PhotoVoice methodology and describes partner STR8 UP as "a grassroots non-profit organization that works with people who are trying to remove themselves from street gangs and the street gang lifestyle" (p. xi). Most of the book is dedicated to the narratives of the six women, beginning with their earliest memories, progressing through their youth into the present, and finishing with their dreams of the future. The book concludes with an appendix that describes the included photographs.

The book's visual images and written stories combine to form a powerful narrative of streetlife that recognizes violence, abuse, and addiction, while also offering insight to the belonging, love, and dreams experienced by women who are part of gangs. I found myself wishing the photographic descriptions were proximal to the images, as I misinterpreted many of them. For example, my initial, deficit-oriented assumptions surrounding the photo on page 49 emphasized bleakness and loneliness. As Chantel explains in the appendix, the image represents much more nuanced understandings of survivance, relationality, happiness, and access:

This is … the "stroll" where I used to live. The graffiti represents… being happy… The line of grass is the small space that many of us have to walk, that we are told to see the happiness. But really, the only places that are open is the street. (p. 116)

While placing the photos and their descriptions together might reduce readers' superficial or inaccurate interpretations, their separation invites confrontation of such misconceptions—*if* readers flip between the photos and the descriptions and *listen*.

Perhaps the book's most important message is this need to prioritize deep listening over readers' initial, potentially biased assumptions. Chantel argues, "All I needed [others] to do was listen…" (p. 48), and Amber explains that listening makes the invisible visible: "I just wanted to be seen" (p. 10). Several of the women suggest that a "street lifestyle" offers a "family" and a "voice" (Jorgina, p. 103). However, as Bev clarifies, leaving the

gang creates space to listen to one's true self: "[I am] no longer trying to pretend that I am someone I am not" (p. 32).

Listening to these stories provides readers with opportunities to learn about the complex and continued influence of settler colonialism past, present, and future. Several of the women emphasize that formal and informal education gave them power and inspired them to learn about the world and their identities. Unfortunately, schools also often served as sites for racism and trauma. Many of the co-authors describe critical moments in their youth when they were expected to fit expectations of the "normal" society. They describe discomfort, frustration, or anger surrounding settler expectations of success, Indigeneity, and femininity.

(Re)Claiming voice or visibility proves especially challenging if truthtelling does not align with the expected "normal." Several of the co-authors describe being punished for telling the truth about abusers. As Faith explains, "nobody was going to listen to me even if I told the truth… Why tell them the truth? The truth doesn't even get you anywhere" (p. 77). Essential to survivance, then, is being able to not only have control over your story and your visibility, but to be able to trust listeners to *hear* your story.

To become more trustworthy, we aspiring listeners must examine how we engage in scholarship, teaching, and partnerships to ensure we are truly listening to communities. The book's co-authors take care to draw attention to the subtle, yet significant, distinctions between terms like "street gangs" and "street lifestyles." Similarly, the book demonstrates discursive power that writers, editors, and researchers hold in shaping stories of minoritized people. Throughout the book, sentence fragments, informal language and grammar, and profanity are often preserved as spoken. However, the co-authors elected to mask racial slurs. The combination of authentic language and masked slurs elevates attention to the power of discursive decision-making in this book, and in all written representations.

In most research, academics have extensive control, thereby maintaining the "expert gaze" and suggesting participants lack knowledge needed to understand research phenomena. However, as demonstrated through *Indigenous Women and Street Gangs*, anti-colonial participatory scholarship requires an expansive and equitable partnership that informs all phases of research process. Central to this work is reciprocal learning and criticality that, as Robert notes, allows "researchers and participants [to] come to understand not only their roles and responsibilities with the research, but also how racism, classism, and sexism impact the research process" (p. xiii).

Robert's introduction further challenges the "expert gaze" of scholars by confronting the "tendency of researchers to 'speak for' … Indigenous Peoples" (xiii). Too often, researchers—including participatory researchers—claim to "empower" minoritized peoples instead of recognizing the power within participants. Robert acknowledges the women as co-authors in charge of their own self-empowerment, rather than characters with "supporting roles" (xv). This attention to authorship, voice, and agency is particularly important given the focus of the book, as most street gang representations center experiences of men.

If facilitated with integrity and comprehensiveness, participatory research, such as that engaged in *Indigenous Women and Street Gangs*, can support critical and anti-colonial self-reflection for scholars, readers, and participants. In this book, participation as co-researchers creates space for the women to better understand their own survivance. As

Jorgina explains, sharing their stories can make it possible for Indigenous women to see that they have "had this [cultural] protection all along" (p. 106).

As we readers witness the written and visual narratives of the six women co-authors, we learn about growing up on the streets, confronting addiction and trauma, being a good mother and partner, seeking education and healing, and persisting on a journey of self-discovery, self-authorship, and survivance. The book is not an ending—it is the beginning for the co-authors, and it inspires continued anti-colonial research and practice. Several questions can guide us as we move forward in this shared effort. First, how are we influencing, editing, translating, and/or transforming words and ideas of research participants? How can we encourage scholarship and storytelling that recognizes both individual and collective identity and authorship? How do we make space for and "reference" this book, and those like it, within our current structures and systems?

Second, how can we support truthtelling that simultaneously confronts trauma and recognizes strengths, beauty, resistance, and resilience? This is a particularly important question for those of us engaged in work that strives to address inequities caused by centuries of trauma. In such efforts, reopening wounds can be a necessary healing step to "fix yourself inside your heart" (Jazmyn, p. 68). However, over-emphasizing problems can reinforce deficit thinking and may neglect community-generated solutions. How can we encourage strengths-based and survivance-oriented scholarship in a systemic climate that privileges deficit thinking?

Indigenous Women and Street Gangs engages in truthtelling that honors both the difficult realities of streetlife *and* the often-ignored strength, resilience, resurgence, purpose, and power—the survivance—of Indigenous women. As Chantel explains: "I have love and I have hope. I have a story" (p. 4). The book consists of powerful individual narratives that cannot be synthesized effectively in a brief review by an outsider—this is a book filled with stories meant to be read, reread, heard, reflected upon, engaged with, shared, and remembered.

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