COLONIZING MENSTRUATION: EXAMINING THE DISRUPTION AND DISTORTION OF INDIGENOUS MENSTRUAL PRACTICES

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ABSTRACT AND INTRODUCTION

The most common cultural truism associated with Indigenous menstruation in North America is the existence of "menstrual huts" (Baldy, 2017). In both popular culture and conventional scholarship, menstrual huts are conceptualized as dirty, shameful places where Indigenous menstruators bleed removed from their community.

[i]The use of the word "hut" itself implies this specific imagery and was coined by white male anthropologists who never actually saw these spaces (Buckley, 1982). The cultures that have or had designated spaces for menstruators refer to them by different names that roughly translate to women's houses or menstrual shelters, but not "hut." Moreover, they used these spaces for a range of activities, such as communal care after birth or miscarriage and connecting to the universe during menstruation. Some cultures even have similar places where the menstruators' partners simultaneously connect. The widespread conception and terminology of "menstrual huts" does not just obscure these important points about Indigenous menstrual practices. It reifies barbarism and represents the type of linguistic and epistemic violences that perpetuate settler colonialism. To address the ongoing stigmatization of Indigenous menstruation and menstruators across North America, it is imperative to investigate the settler colonial influences. In this paper, I employ decolonial and Indigenous feminist theoretical frameworks to explore the ways settler colonialism has impacted five aspects related to Indigenous menstruation.

POSITIONALITY

As someone who studies the stigmatization of menstruation within contemporary United States society, I came to this topic through a desire to challenge the idea that the stigma is inherent and has always existed. I am a white, United States-born descendent of German and Irish settlers. I have lived on the unceded and stolen lands of Indigenous groups, including Myaamia, Tséstho'e, Umo^{n}ho^{n}, and Wichita. I am finishing my undergraduate education in psychology and women's, gender, and sexuality studies from The College of New Jersey on the unceded lands of the Lenni-Lenape people. The disciplines in which I have trained (psychology, women's, gender, and sexuality studies, and academia more generally) have been used as tools of colonization both historically and currently. I am committed to improving my understanding and practice around decolonizing research, guided by Indigenous feminist perspectives and by people with lived experiences different from my own. Throughout this project, I prioritized literature from Indigenous people, or that used participatory action research methods with Indigenous communities.

TERMINOLOGY

Menstruation is the regular discharging of uterine tissue and blood through the vagina. Menstruation is a biological process, but it has social implications that are affected and influenced by a menstruator's cultural norms and expectations. The biological aspects of menstruation include the anatomy (e.g., endometrium, ovaries, uterus), physiology (e.g., hormonal fluctuation, ovulation), and disorders (e.g., dysmenorrhea, endometriosis) (Chrisler, 2008). The social aspects of menstruation include attitudes, beliefs, education, and traditions. For example, negative menstrual attitudes include viewing

menstruation as disabling, harmful, shameful, and embarrassing (e.g., Davies et al., 2022; Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013; Mondragon & Txertudi, 2019). Conversely, positive menstrual attitudes include seeing menstruation as a health indicator and feeling relief at proof of non-pregnancy (e.g., Hawkey et al., 2017; Mondragon & Txertudi, 2019). Cross-cultural research has found that negative menstrual attitudes are more commonly held and expressed than positive ones (e.g., Davies et al., 2022; Marván et al., 2006; Sveinsdóttir, 1993). However, the most common Indigenous menstrual beliefs involve the power and responsibility of menstruators and menstrual blood (e.g., Bol & Menard, 2000; Buckley, 1982; Morrow, 2002).

Indigenous refers to the people who exist in a land from the earliest record or before colonist arrival. The indigeneity spoken about in this paper is specific to groups from the areas of present-day Canada and the United States. The people Indigenous to the North American continent have different cultures, geographies, languages, and practices. The monolithic racialization, naming, and portrayals of these groups have been used intentionally as a form of universalizing the "other" (McKay, 2019). The decline in Indigenous populations after contact with Europeans had three leading causes: disease, war, and genocide. Disease is the deadliest of the three, but it is important to note that the Europeans intentionally facilitated the acquisition, spread, and nontreatment of these diseases (Snipp, 1992). According to federal governmental numbers, almost 10 million people identify as Indigenous in Canada and the United States (Sánchez-Rivera et al., 2023; Statistics Canada, 2023). The numbers of Indigenous people have been increasing in recent decades as is public awareness of their existence and legislative changes allowing Indigenous practices.

Settler colonialism refers to colonization with the goal of land ownership, management, and exploitation. Since settler colonialism redefines land as property, humans are defined by their relationship to property. This colonization exists on land that Indigenous people already inhabit, so the colonizers must divide the inhabitants from their land. This separation is both a physical relocation and a rupture in the relationship between the inhabitants and the land. In order to colonize, the people currently on the land must be differentiated from those who want it. In the United States context, European settlers used conceptualizations of indigeneity as animalistic, only existing in the past, not worthy of paid labor, and unnatural. These acts are violent and continue until the relationship with the land is restored. Additionally, settler colonialism includes specific interpersonal violence so that the land and resources remain available for exploitation by hegemonic forces. Some of the interpersonal violence is the destruction of Indigenous knowledge, lore, and tradition, including around topics like human bodily functions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Indigenous or Native feminisms reveal the interconnectedness between the systems of settler colonialism and cisheteropatriarchy (Arvin et al., 2013). Indigenous people who are not cisgender men face a double marginalization due to their indigeneity and their gender. Indigenous feminist theories allow researchers to consider the different ways indigeneity and gender each have a role, but also how they are interconnected and their relationship has a role of its own. Furthermore, Indigenous knowledges, particularly those from Indigenous women, have been disregarded for centuries. Indigenous feminisms allow the dismissed knowledges to critique and resist the colonial, white supremacist, patriarchal depictions and descriptions of indigeneity, gender, and womanhood. Indigenous feminisms examine the impacts of colonialism on their communities, but also on gender, race, kinship, and discrimination at large. Native feminists connect these systems of oppression and highlight the ways such systems are modern, colonial, and imperial, and not the only way the world has operated (Goeman & Denetdale, 2009).

Decolonization is identifying and resisting colonialism's past and present effects on a topic as well as the land on which it occurs. In terms of this project, there are several specific points that are particularly relevant. First, when looking for published research, decolonization provides a lens through which to (re)evaluate who is an expert and what is considered knowledge. Edward Said (1978) used the term "positional superiority" to refer to how cultures and knowledge are as essential to imperialism as

material and human resources. For example, when discussing "Western" research, the Indigenous foundations or contributions are usually left out (Smith, 2012). Second, decolonization calls attention to who is included in the research process, who is left out, and why. Histories and archives include specific perspectives to support a chosen narrative and maintain systems of oppression. Indigenous practices and people were and are redefined by their colonizers in ways that support domination. Finally, decolonization asks us to consider nonhuman agents, including flora, fauna, and land, as an important part of the process. This work goes beyond simply acknowledging the land on which the research takes place; it also shows how the land contributes to the research. It pays careful attention to how land is described and represented (e.g., using Indigenous names for landmarks compared to their colonized labels). Of course, while research can examine the colonial influences and highlight Indigenous agency, true decolonization means returning the land to those who cultivated and populated it before colonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

Social constructionism, another theoretical framework used in this paper, refers to the idea that knowledge, perception, and identity are defined by the society and culture an individual exists within (Burr & Dick, 2017). Socialization is the lifelong process of learning the formal and informal norms needed to be a member of society (Warner et al., 2020). Within this system, resistance to traditional roles and norms is viewed as an individual or familial failure rather than a challenge to the entire system (Ussher, 2004). Many things that people consider natural and universal are actually conceptualized by how humans within a given society agree they exist (e.g., race, nationality), and thus, these things may be conceptualized differently in different places or times. Social constructionism challenges us to consider the origins and historical developments of all aspects of the research process and its findings.

Biopower, the fourth theoretical framework used in this paper, helps emphasize the ways in which a social construction impacts an individual. Michel Foucault (1984) conceptualized biopower as the ways individuals surveil and discipline themselves and their bodies as a tool of governmental and institutional control. This biopower is not explicit, rather it is perpetuated through discourse and societal and cultural norms. The societal and cultural norms reflect patriarchal, white supremacist, capitalist, colonial, ableist institutionalized values. When the societal ideal and normative person is a white, European-descended, non-menstruating, cisgender male, all others police and discipline the parts of their identity that differ. In this way, the norm is unattainable for both menstruators and Indigenous people, and doubly so for Indigenous menstruators.

SEX AND GENDER

Sex refers to the biological aspects of a species' anatomy, physiology, genetics, and hormones. Each of these aspects has more than two variations, challenging the preconceived sex binary (Oliffe & Greaves, 2012). In humans, biological sex is a socially constructed concept that is typically defined or assigned based on an individual's genitals at birth, but the categories *male*, *female*, and *intersex* differ across time and location. Gender is also a socially created concept whose values and meaning are produced by systems and institutions. Both cisgender and transgender identity categories (*man*, *woman*, *nonbinary*) are used as shorthand for sex differences. *Cisgender* refers to an individual whose sex-assigned-at-birth aligns with their gender identity. Alternatively, *transgender* refers to an individual whose sex-assigned-at-birth does not align with their gender identity. The stereotypical gender attributes are constructed as bipolar dimensions of "masculine" and "feminine," and individuals are generally taught to fit into one category or the other, depending on their sex-assigned-at-birth.

There are many different gender identities, expressions, and norms across Indigenous groups. At least one gender in addition to male or female has been documented in eighty-eight Indigenous cultures, and many Native American languages have words for someone who is a combination of masculine and feminine (Anderson, 2016). Additionally, historical accounts from the past five hundred years document people of all genders dressing in the clothing of the opposite gender (e.g., Anderson, 2016; Dowd, 1987). Some Indigenous cultures have an even more dynamic conceptualization of gender–for example, the idea that it could be affected by your nightly dreams or the choices you make as a child (Anderson, 2016).

In many Indigenous cultures, womanhood is often associated with production and reproduction, including agriculture, weaponry, and food (e.g., Anderson, 2016; Baldy, 2017; Dowd, 1987). In a Dakota Sioux society, womanhood is associated with a caretaking responsibility, but that is not exclusive to women (Anderson, 2016). If an individual shows a proclivity to homemaking or childcare, that may be its own feminine identifier rather than just womanhood. Similarly, if a person is interested or skilled at hunting, they may be considered masculine, regardless of biological sex. In this respect, sex is dictated by gender rather than the settler-colonial definition of sex dictating gender.

In North America, the European settlers came with an understanding of biological sex as an inherent binary where male bodies have more physical strength and female bodies are better suited for domesticity. European colonizers described the Indigenous men as not taking care of their women and overworking them by “allowing” them to be in the fields, and some Indigenous cultures still tell how natural and supernatural fertility forces were disrupted when the women were forced to leave the fields (Dowd, 1987). European settlers also came with the puritanical value that female bodies are inherently sexual and tempting. In their travel logs, colonial explorers described the sexual power of the Indigenous women and the inability of the Indigenous men to control said power (Kastor & Valenčius, 2008). This continued in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when many Indigenous children were sent to residential schools to remove their indigeneity and replace it with "Western" ideals. To reduce temptation, female students were required to dress modestly, including painfully binding down their breasts, and one Sto:lo woman tells how the punishment at her school for various offenses (e.g., speaking their native language, stealing food) was exposing their naked bodies and genitals to everyone (Anderson, 2016).

Settler colonialism relies on the combination of heterosexuality and patriarchy being perceived as normal and natural with other arrangements viewed as unnatural or abnormal (Arvin et al., 2013). European traders devalued the women's diplomatic knowledge and would only trade with the men. This refusal to accept women's authority was attributed to the belief that men are more logical and economically responsible. When the Europeans insisted on meeting only with men, the Lenape sent their men in skirts to represent the women’s council (Anderson, 2016, p. 68). This demonstration was considered an honor for the men, as they resisted European gender norms and expectations. Indeed, gender conformity and regulation are important and violent instruments of forced assimilation, and the ability or inability to resist it is consequential. For example, long hair is considered feminine in a society with conservative gender rules. In many Indigenous cultures, hair has many meanings for all genders. Forced hair cutting has been described by many to be one of the most traumatic parts of their residential school or foster care experience (e.g., Little, 2018; National Museum of the American Indian, 2020), yet it continues today (Somasundaram, 2023).

INDIGENOUS MENSTRUAL MYTHOLOGIES

Various Indigenous groups have myths or stories about menstruation. Some groups have oral traditions involving the origin of menstruation. For example, the Navajo mythical figure Charging Woman was the first to menstruate and have a traditional menarcheal celebration called a kinaldaa (discussed further below; Wright, 1982). The Yurok menstrual origin story involves a coyote, the hero Pulekukʷerek, a spirit-woman, flowers, and blood, and ends with the menstruator accumulating power (Buckley, 1982). The instructions given to the menstruator to accumulate power are almost identical to a similar story about how men can accumulate spiritual wealth. Other menstrual myths involve menstrual blood and how it is dangerous but also a representation of women's power and connection to reproduction and crop production (Dowd, 1987) or even how the Raven's Daughter's menstrual blood colors the red clay the group uses for pigment (Fienup-Riordan, 1994).

Settler colonialism relies on the epistemological framework that empiricism is the only source of knowledge. Michel Foucault (1980) describes subjugated knowledges as "a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated". One way of undermining knowledge is separating people from their humanity, which is and was done to the Indigenous people (Eichler & Bauermeister, 2020). Many menstrual customs and stories were lost when these myths were portrayed as wrong, and when children were taken from the communities where these understandings

were shared. Since settler colonialism involves strict cisheteronormativity and patriarchy, nothing has replaced the myths, and menstruation is considered separate from culture.

MENSTRUAL EDUCATION

Across all genders, knowledge about menstruation and menarche influences an individual's menstrual experience and attitudes (Chrisler & Johnston-Robledo, 2018; Marván et al., 2006; Mondragon & Txertudi, 2019). Education about menstruation and customs is passed down from menopausal elders in many North American Indigenous cultures (e.g., Buckley, 1982; Wright, 1982). In both the Cree and Anishinaabek traditions, grandmothers teach menstruators about puberty and womanhood while washing their hair in cedar-infused water (Anderson, 2016, p. 54). Both menstruators and non-menstruators are educated, often when the community is preparing for a menarcheal tradition. Recently, to address stigmatization and a gap in their own education due to the effects of settler colonialism, Karuk non-menstruators are trying to teach each other and their children about menstruation (Zehtabchi & Tome, 2022).

Controlling education is an important tool of settler colonialism, and menstrual education is no different. Menstruators raised in their communities knew more about menstruation before menarche than those who were removed (Wright, 1982). Keeping education about and awareness of menstruation secret (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2020) emphasizes the settler colonial and "feminine" attributes of passivity, cleanliness, and niceness (e.g., Jack & Ali, 2010; Puzio & Best, 2020). The residential schools through which the settler colonizers controlled Indigenous children's educations were usually religious institutions. Survivors of these schools have reported that no menstrual education was provided, and as a result many menstruators would be scared and confused when they would bleed (Robertson, 2018). A Cree Elder remembers learning from the nuns that menstruation "is the time when you are the evilest" (Anderson, 2016, p. 17). A Yurok menstruator who was taken from her family as a child remembered learning about menstruation in schools and again when she returned to her family (Buckley, 1982). She reported that her family taught the positive aspects of menstruation much more than her foster family.

MENSTRUAL TRADITIONS

Indigenous cultures have traditions around menarche, or first menstruation, making the event something to publicly celebrate rather than something shameful. Many of these traditions involve the menstruator maturing and learning their responsibilities as an older member of their community. Today, the Karuk people are reclaiming their Ihuk celebration, which includes the menstruator wearing an eye covering for four days to reflect on their inner self (Zehtabchi & Tome, 2022). The entire family plays a role in preparing for the ceremony, which ends when the eye covering is removed, and the menstruator is reborn as a woman. Similarly, the Navajo celebrate the first two menstrual cycles with a four-day event called a kinaldaa, where the menstruator learns what they need to know to participate in society as an adult (Wright, 1982). The Lakota people view menarche as the time when they learn their adult roles and traditional beadwork from a postmenopausal elder (Bol & Menard, 2000). When an individual enters menopause, and their menstrual cycle ceases, they may have new roles in the traditions or responsibilities at community events.

Some cultures have menarcheal traditions that are connected to the land or natural world and affect subsequent menstrual cycles. For example, the Hupa have a ceremony called the ch'ilwa:l, where the kinahldung (first-time menstruator) bathes in a daily ritual bath (Baldy, 2017). During future menstrual phases, Hupa menstruators visit the same ritual bath they bathed in as a kinahldung for luck or reflection (Baldy, 2018). Similarly, the Yurok people tell of an old pond where one would bathe after their first menstruation. The firewood from around this pond was used to make the menstrual shelters that menstruators would later use to reflect in future menstruations. In the Lakota tradition, menstruators bathe with sage-infused water every night of their menses, often aided by the same postmenopausal elders who help the first cycle (Bol & Menard, 2000).

Some traditions were stopped due to the gendered sexual violence of settler colonialism to protect menstruators from being perceived by colonizers as women or ready for marriage. For example,

within Tsetso culture, traditionally menarche meant an individual could participate in the ceremonial drumming at the front of a group or procession. However, this tradition was ended so the young individuals could be moved to the middle or back of the group to protect them from missionaries (Giles, 2005). Other menstrual traditions ended when colonizers invaded and disrupted the relationships between the land and Indigenous people. The Karuk people stopped their menarcheal celebration for over a century when the Gold Rush brought violence and destruction to the area (Zehtabchi & Tome, 2022). Likewise, the Lakota used to have extensive puberty and menstrual rituals, but they ended due to changing environmental conditions and the forced removal of children to boarding schools off their reservations.

MENSTRUAL MANAGEMENT

Many cultures have rules for menstruators that include avoidance or isolation, but these rules are not seen as oppressive or harmful. For example, the rules for Yupik menstruators are seen more as suggestions than strict regulations (Morrow, 2002). These rules include diet modification and seclusion and are almost identical to the restrictions around other monumental occasions (e.g., a hunter's first catch). Yurok menstruators seek spiritual connection and growth in seclusion for ten days, beginning with the first day of each menstrual cycle (Buckley, 1982). Navajo menstruators are limited in their ceremonial participation as well as their contact with vulnerable others (e.g., the sick or elderly) so as not to risk their power influencing others' health (Wright, 1982). These cultures also have similar rules for non-menstruators to follow. The partners of Yupik menstruators are restricted during menses so as not to disturb the hunting productivity of the rest of the community (Morrow, 2002). Yurok non-menstruators abstain from deer hunting when their partners or children are menstruating (Buckley, 1982). The Yurok language includes a slur that translates to "worse than dogs" for non-menstruators who seduce or give attention to menstruators during menses.

Stories of menstrual regulation and management are told by many survivors of the residential schools used for forced assimilation (e.g., Child, 1998; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Menstrual cycles would be tracked to ensure no students were pregnant, as the Indigenous were hypersexualized by the staff (Robertson, 2018). The realities of pervasive sexual abuse, rape, forced abortions, and infanticide suggest a very different reason for knowing children's cycle information. Additionally, nurses, nuns, and other school staff controlled access to menstrual products and often withheld them (Robertson, 2018). Students would then be beaten or mocked for bleeding in their clothes or beds. Menstrual management is just one example of how the Indigenous children's bodies were surveilled and controlled by the adults and punished for existing.

DISCUSSION

Within settler colonialism, many Indigenous menstrual traditions, beliefs, and practices were framed as representing the "savagery" of the Indigenous people or as an illustration of their "primitivity", compared to the "civilized" settlers. Settlers could only conceive of menstruation and menstruating bodies as unfavorable, which influenced the interpretation of Indigenous menstrual attitudes and customs. The belief that menstruation is dirty or taboo became widespread alongside North American colonization during the nineteenth century (Van De Walle & Renne, 2001). Using negative language (e.g., taboo, polluting) to describe Indigenous menstrual beliefs contributed to the construction around indigeneity as past, primitive, and obsolete. Once a behavior or practice is considered taboo, an individual who participates can be stigmatized. Stigmatization refers to a mark or stain that separates a person or group from others or the expected norm (Goffman, 1963). This mark can be used to isolate or discriminate and can be contagious or transferred through association. In present-day Canada and the United States, both menstruation and indigeneity are considered stigmatized conditions, making Indigenous menstruators and menstrual practices doubly stigmatized.

Menstruation and menstrual blood are stigmatized as a result of the dominant patriarchal worldview (Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2013). This stigmatization is perpetuated through media, advertisements, and the pervasive silence around all aspects. It affects menstruators' mental and physical health and menstrual research, policies, and practices (e.g., Olson et al., 2022; Owen, 2022). The socially

acceptable discourse around menstruation is that of a medical process that needs to be controlled and managed. This social construction of menstruation as manageable is taken as universal and a more advanced, progressive version of the way it used to be. This creates a norm and expectation for menstruation, where menstruators consistently surveil themselves to ensure they are both hiding and controlling their menstruation. Regardless of the impossibility of controlling human bodily function, it is considered an individual failure when cultural menstrual standards and conventions are not met.

The practices of people indigenous to the North American continent have been stigmatized as a tool of settler colonialism and genocide. We often do not consider the ways these diverse practices were systematically disrupted, distorted, and erased. Yet, it is important to notice the ways Indigenous menstruation has been and continues to be impacted by this disruption and erasure. For example, access to affordable menstrual products is a problem across menstruators in the United States, but the increased cost of goods on Native land exacerbates the problem. In 2017, a study found that a box of tampons cost 86 percent more on the reservation than it did at an urban Walmart only 70 miles away (Goldberg, 2017). Moreover, the land where this study was conducted has the lowest per-capita income in the United States (Re-Member, 2024). While there are nonprofit organizations trying to address the availability of menstrual products, along with reproductive healthcare overall, North American policy advocacy work typically leaves out Indigenous menstruators.

Settler colonialism's harm to Indigenous menstruation is one facet of its broader devaluation of Indigenous bodies. This devaluation directly leads to the increased rates of violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit individuals. The first Indigenous Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland formed a Missing and Murdered Unit to investigate cases of missing and murdered Indigenous peoples (*Secretary Haaland Creates New Missing & Murdered Unit to Pursue Justice for Missing or Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives | U.S. Department of the Interior*, 2021). This unit is looking at data and statistics affected by systemic bias stemming from centuries of colonial disregard (MMIW — Native Womens Wilderness, 2014). Moreover, almost ninety percent of those in the United States that identified as American Indian/Alaska Native on the 2020 Census live outside of designated tribal lands (*American Indian/Alaska Native Health*, 2023). This means the current policing and legislation around gender and sex ignores some Indigenous traditions and practices (PBS NewsHour, 2023). As this paper demonstrates, menstruation cannot be separated from bodies, land, beliefs, education, and violence as each are constructed and existing in a settler colonial system.

CONCLUSION

This project is limited by a research gap around Indigenous menstruation as well as the subjugation of Indigenous knowledge. The archive and research literature have not considered Indigenous menstrual customs or practices legitimate, and most of the articles used in this project were not easily accessible through the library system. Despite these limitations, several conclusions can be drawn. Before settlers arrived in present-day Canada and the United States, a diversity of Indigenous peoples and menstrual practices existed. Menstrual practices and traditions that were positive or non-stigmatizing were completely erased as part of the settler colonial project. The Indigenous menstrual traditions and understandings that survived colonial erasure have been used as examples of "primitivity" and to perpetuate settler colonial violence. The settler colonial construction of menstruation as feminine, medical, and something to keep secret makes the "ideal menstruation" unattainable. This impossibility enables negative attitudes and stigmatization to continue and makes having positive attitudes or traditions difficult. Perhaps most significantly, the more time menstruators, Indigenous people, and Indigenous menstruators are preoccupied with trying to be the "ideal" body, the less time they are considering and challenging systems of power and the people who wield them.

This project provides a foundation for menstrual research conducted in present-day United States and Canada. Menstrual researchers, and researchers overall, should consider not just the influence of colonization on their work, but also consider what indigenizing could bring to it. Indigenization refers to the utilization of Indigenous methods and knowledge alongside colonial elements to address the imbalance of power and control (*What is decolonization? What is indigenization? | Centre for teaching and*

learning, 2020). Indigenous menstrual knowledge, beliefs, and customs should be included to challenge the universality of menstrual negativity and to create new narratives and norms. Additionally, more research is needed on Indigenous menstrual culture, without the assumption of negativity, primitivity, or taboo. Much of the work already being done around destigmatizing menstruation addresses some of the challenges, but it does not consider or apply them to Indigenous peoples. Regardless of menstrual status, all people benefit from resurfacing and recentering Indigenous menstrual knowledge.

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[i] Although typically associated with the female body, not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate identify as women; therefore, people who menstruate will be referred to as menstruators throughout the paper.