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9 Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking

Transgressive Sexuality during the Colonial Encounter¹⁰ "She Was a

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Sommario/riassunto

Contact Zones locates Canadian women's history within colonial and imperial systems. As both colonizer and colonized (sometimes even simultaneously), women were uniquely positioned at the axis of the colonial encounter -- the so-called "contact zone" -- between Aboriginals and newcomers. Some women were able to transgress the bounds of social expectation, while others reluctantly conformed to them. Aboriginal women such as E. Pauline Johnson, Bernice Loft, and Ethel Brant Monture shaped identities for themselves in both worlds. By recognizing the necessity to "perform," they enchanted and educated white audiences across Canada. On the other side of the coin, newcomers imposed increasing regulation on Aboriginal women's bodies. Missionaries, for example, preached the virtues of Christian conjugality over mixed-race and polygamous marriages, especially those that hadn't been ratified by the church. The Department of Indian Affairs agents withheld treaty payments or removed the children of Aboriginal women who did not "properly" perform their duties as wives and mothers. In short, Aboriginal women were expected to consent to moral, sexual, and marital rules that white women were already beginning to contest. Contact Zones draws upon a vast array of primary sources to provide insight into the ubiquity and persistence of colonial discourse, and to demonstrate how it ultimately was an embodied experience. Above all, it shows how the colonial enterprise was about embodied contacts. What bodies belonged inside the nation, who were outsiders, and who transgressed the rules --- these are the questions at the heart of this provocative book. Jean Barman's chapter from Contact Zones, "Aboriginal Women on the Streets of Victoria: Rethinking Transgressive Sexuality during the Colonial Encounter", won the award from the Canadian Committee on the History of Sexuality. Cecilia Morgan's "Performing for 'Imperial Eyes': Bernice Loft and Ethel Brant Monture, Ontario, 1930s-60s" from Contact Zones, was awarded the Hilda Neatby Prize in Canadian Women's History.
