GLOBAL FEMICIDE: INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS TORN FROM OUR MIDST



Brenda Anderson, Shauneen Pete, Wendee Kubik, and Mary Rucklos-Hampton
University of Regina

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Global Femicide: Indigenous Women and Girls Torn from Our Midst

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contributing Authors

Licensing

1: Introduction

- 1.1: Introduction

2: Epistemic Erasure Rejected

- 2.1: The Construction of Indigenous Identity- A Healing Journey
- 2.2: Video of Keynote Address by Maria Campbell at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
- 2.3: Video of Keynote Address by Morningstar Mercredi at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

3: Global History of Femicide

- 3.1: A Message from Amnesty International
- 3.2: Stolen Sisters- The Politics, Policies, and Travesty of Missing and Murdered Women in Canada
- 3.3: Resistance, Resilience, and Remembering- Juárenses Surviving Feminicide and the 'Great Violence' in Ciudad Juárez
- 3.4: Global Capitalism's Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous Daughters
- 3.5: Update- Global Capitalism's Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous Daughters
- 3.6: Video of Keynote Address by Marta Perez at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
- 3.7: From Genocide to Femicide- An Ongoing History of Terror, Hate and Apathy
- 3.8: The Role of Government Policies and Drug Cartels in Violence Against Indigenous Women in Guatemala

4: Family Stories of Trauma and Resistance

- 4.1: Sinews Torn and Sinews Strong- Stories from Three Generations
- 4.2: The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia Flores
- 4.3: Update- The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia Flores

5: Organizational Resistance

- 5.1: Interpersonal Violence in Northern Saskatchewan Communities- A Case Study
- 5.2: Saskatchewan Response and National Developments regarding Missing Persons and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

6: Resistance Through Art

- 6.1: Project of Heart Can Work for All of Us

7: Decolonizing Postsecondary Institutions

- 7.1: Troubling Curricula- Teaching and Learning about MMIW
- 7.2: Pedagogical Considerations on Teaching "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women from a Global Perspective"
- 7.3: Indigenous Women's Literature- The Power and Truth of our Words
- 7.4: Indigenous Masculinities- A Reflection
- 7.5: Afterword

Index

Glossary

Detailed Licensing

Contributing Authors Contributing AuthorsEdit Update titlecancel

A. Brenda Anderson grew up on Treaty 4 land without knowledge of her Canadian history. She speaks from an ally position whose responsibility it is to use the privilege she was given at the expense of others to stand alongside, to listen and to make space for change to happen. Brenda is an associate professor in the department of Gender, Religion and Critical Studies at Luther College at The University of Regina. Her work focuses largely on the intersections of racism and sexism in colonialism both past and present, specifically Muslim women and Indigenous women globally. The work of resistance and advocacy amongst and between groups of women, and the role that spirituality/religions play in these responses, is of particular interest to her research. Brenda was co-editor of the first edition of this book, *Torn from our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Conference, 2008*, a conference which Brenda co-chaired with Rev. Carla Blakley.

Barbara Tomporowski is the Director of Restorative & Indigenous Justice with Saskatchewan Integrated Justice Services, serving the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General and the Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. She is passionate about communities and the possibility of change. She co-chairs the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Restorative Justice, and previously taught classes for the University of Regina Department of Justice Studies. Barbara is the Chair of the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership Committee. She has volunteered with local, provincial, and national organizations, and is honoured to have received the John Howard Society of Canada Award for Community Service in 2013, and the National Ron Wiebe Restorative Justice Award in 2018.

Betty McKenna, our Guiding Elder, is Anishnabae from the Shoal River Band #366 who, with her husband Ken, has had three children. Elder Betty lent her wisdom to the 2008 Conference and subsequent book, and continues to care for all of us on these difficult topics. She is an Elder for First Nations and Métis education at the Regina Public School Board, a lecturer of Indigenous Health Studies in social work and biology, and guiding Elder for many research projects, including Elder for IAPH and Research and Education for Solutions to violence and abuse. She has co-authored several peer-reviewed publications and is an editor of the book, *Listening To The Beat Of Our Drum*. She has served on the College of Physicians and Surgeons and National Elders Advisory Corrections Canada. Elder Betty was the recipient of the Queen's Gold and Diamond Jubilee medals and Excellence in Health award.

Betty Ann Pottruff graduated from the College of Law, University of Saskatchewan in 1977 and worked until June 2018 in a range of positions with Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, including Executive Director of Strategic Initiatives/Policy from 1987-2014, Children's Counsel from 2014-2018, and Senior Advisor in 2018. Betty Ann was a co-chair of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons. In 2019 she was awarded the Lieutenant Governor's Award of the Saskatchewan Regional Group of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada. She also received the Premier's Award for Innovation in 2011 for leadership of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, the 2007 Saskatchewan Healthcare Excellence award to acknowledge her role in creating the Regina Drug Treatment Court, and the 2003 Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal from the federal government for service to communities and families. She is currently appointed to the National Parole Board, Prairie Region, as a part-time Parole Board Member.

Carrie Bourassa, B.A., M.A., PhD is the Scientific Director of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research – Institute of Indigenous Peoples' Health (CIHR-IIPH) and aProfessor, Community Health & Epidemiology, University of Saskatchewan. She is the Principal Investigator for the Canada Foundation for Innovation funded Morning Star Lodge as well as the Cultural Safety, Evaluation, Training and Research lab. Dr. Bourassa has nearly 20 years' experience as a professor in the field of Indigenous health studies. Through her role as Scientific Director of IIPH, she leads the advancement of a national health research agenda to improve and promote the health of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples in Canada.

Crystal Giesbrecht is a volunteer fieldworker with Amnesty International Canada and members of Regina's Amnesty International Community Group (Group 91).

Cynthia Berajano, a native of the southern New Mexico border, received her BA and MA from New Mexico State University and her Ph.D. from Arizona State University in 2001. She joined the Department of Criminal Justice at New Mexico State University, where she was a professor until 2014, and then joined the Interdisciplinary Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies Department as a Regents Professor. She is the Stan Fulton College of Arts and Sciences Endowed Chair since 2010 and the 2021-2022 College of Arts and Sciences Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellow. Cynthia's research focuses on border violence, youth cultures, immigration and migration issues, and gender-based violence at the U.S.-Mexico border. She is the author of the book "*Qué Onda?" Urban Youth Cultures and Border Identity*, published by the University of Arizona Press (2005) and the co-editor of an interdisciplinary anthology with Rosa-Linda Fregoso titled, *Terrorizing Women: A Cartography of Feminicide in the Américas*

published by Duke University Press (2010), and in Spanish by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico. She has numerous single and co-authored articles, essays, and chapters in journals and books like *Aztlan*, *Race and Ethnic Studies*, and recently in the *Handbook on Human Security, Borders, and Migration.* She was the co-founder of *Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez*, an organization that worked to end violence against women in Chihuahua, Mexico, and the borderlands. In 2014, she served as one of five tribunal judges specializing in international human rights and gender-based violence for the *Tribunal Permanente de los Pueblos* in Chihuahua City, Chihuahua, Mexico. Her current research projects include two co-edited books tentatively titled, "*Mothering while Brown: The Everyday Challenges of Child-Rearing in Militarized Spaces*" with Cristina Morales, and *GATHERING TOGETHER, WE DECIDE: Dene Nde', Dispossession Memories, and Resistance Methodologies, 2007-2017* with Margo Tamez and Jeffrey Shepherd.

Danielle Jeancart is originally from northern Saskatchewan, Treaty 6 Territory, and is of French-Métis, nehiyaw, and Ukrainian ancestry. She holds a BA in English Literature from the University of Regina and an MA in Indigenous Studies and Canadian Studies from Trent University. Her graduate work focused on Indigenous history and conceptions of Indigenous masculinity in Canada. Passionate about Indigenous education, Danielle has worked as an Instructor, curriculum developer, and program coordinator for over a decade. Since January 2019, she has been working in Education and Training with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres – a non-profit organization based in Toronto that advocates for urban Indigenous peoples across Ontario.

Darlene M. Juschka is an associate professor in the Department of Gender, Religious and Critical studies. Her areas of interest are semiotics, critical theory, feminisms, and posthumanism. Some of her more recent work includes: The Construction of Gendered Identities in Myth and Ritual. In Companion to Global Gender History (2nd edition). 2020; Feminisms and the study of religion in the 21st century. Berlin Journal of Critical Theory. Vol. 3, No. 2 (April, 2019); Faller, Y. N., Wuerch, M. A., Hampton, M. R., Barton, S., Fraehlich, C., Hungler, K., Juschka, D., Moffitt, P., Zederayko, A. (2018). A web of disheartenment with hope on the horizon: Intimate partner violence in rural and northern communities. Journal of Interpersonal Violence; Feminist approaches to the study of religion. In Richard King, (ed.), Religion, Theory, Critique: Classic and Contemporary Approaches, 2017; Indigenous women and reproductive justice – A narrative. In Carrie Bourassa, Betty McKenna and Darlene Juschka (eds.) Listening to the beat of our drum, 2017; "Feminism and Gender". In Steven Engler and Michael Stausberg (eds.), The (Oxford) handbook of the study of religion, 2016. She has also published four books, Contours of the Flesh: The Semiotics of Pain (2021); with Carrie Bourassa, Betty McKenna (eds.) (2017). Listening to the beat of our drum: Stories in Indigenous parenting in contemporary society, Political Bodies, Body Politic: The Semiotics of Gender (2009) (Translated and published in Chinese in 2015) and Feminism in the study of religion: A reader (2001).

Gordon Barnes is a volunteer fieldworker with Amnesty International Canada and members of Regina's Amnesty International Community Group (Group 91).

Jennifer Brant, (She/Her) Kanien'keh:ka (Mohawk Nation) is a mother-scholar and assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. Jennifer writes and teaches about Indigenous maternal pedagogies and Indigenous literatures as liberatory praxis. Jennifer is the co-editor of "Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada." Jennifer positions Indigenous literatures as educational tools to foster sociopolitical action and calls for immediate responses to racialized, sexualized, and gender-based violences.

Boozhoo, Aniin Keesis Sagay Egette Kwe nindiznikaaz (greetings,my name is First Shining Rays of Sunlight Woman). **Dr. Jennifer Leason** is a member of Pine Creek Indian Band, Manitoba, and the proud mother of Lucas and Lucy. Dr. Leason is a Canadian Institute of Health Research(CIHR), Canada Research Chair, Tier II, Indigenous Maternal Child Wellness, and an Associate Professor at the University of Calgary. Dr. Leason is an Associate Member of the CIHR College of Reviewers and Associate Editor of the Canadian Journal of Public Health. She is the recipient of a CIHR New Investigator Award (2017-2020); New Frontiers in Research Fund Award (2019-2021); and CIHR Operating Grant (2020-2023), among other Patient-Oriented Research grants and partnerships. Her research aims to address perinatal and maternal-child health disparities and inequities by examining maternity experiences, healthcare utilization, and social-cultural contexts of Indigenous maternal-child wellness. The editors are grateful to Jennifer who is the artist of our book cover and has included curatorial notes on the image.

Kim Erno is an ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). He has over 20 years of parish ministry experience that include the formation of a Latino ministry in the Washington, D.C. area inspired by the base ecclesial communities of Latin America and the worker-priest movement. For eight years Kim was the director of a global studies program in Mexico for the ELCA. He is the producer of a documentary film on the U.S./Mexico border and immigration called "El Muro y El Desierto"

(The Wall and the Desert). Kim has many years of solidarity activity in Latin America that include human rights work in El Salvador. He recently retired after serving as director of the Franklin Alliance for Rural Ministries (FARM) an ecumenical ministry in northwestern Vermont that serves migrant farm workers. In Mexico Kim continues to collaborate with a collective, CREAR, to create global solidarity through experiential education, critical analysis and cross-border organizing.

Leonzo Barreno, **PhD**, an Indigenous K'iche-Mayan from Guatemala, is a Sociology Assistant Professor at Mount Royal University, Calgary, AB. He came to Canada in 1989. His research and teaching experience focuses on Mayan Studies, Indigenous Sociology, International Indigenous Studies, Justice, Genocide, Colonization and Decolonization Studies. Leonzo's work experience include coordinating and directing international Indigenous programs and an International Indigenous Center (1994-2005). In 1999, with the guidance of an Indigenous Elders Council, he developed the concept, goal and activities of the Aboriginal Youth Leadership Development Program (AYLDP). Leonzo taught the Course "International Indigenous Issues" from 1997 to 2004 at the SIFC Regina and Prince Albert campuses and two First Nations communities. From 2003 to 2019, he served on various terms (part-time) as the "CanGlobal Television Chair" (now the Asper Chair in Journalism) for the School of Journalism, University of Regina. Leonzo has given presentations about Indigenous related topics in Chile, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, and Mexico and to the Inter American Development Bank in Washington. He authored *Higher Education for Indigenous people in Latin America* (2003) used as a working document by IESALC-UNESCO/Latin America during the gathering of experts in Guatemala in April 2002. In May 2016 he moderated the workshop "Global Citizens as Stewards of the Planet: Energy, Environment and Climate Change," during the Sixty-sixth United Nations/Non-Governmental Organizations Conference, United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI)/Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in Gyeongju, Republic of South Korea.

Maria Campbell

Marta Perez

Mary Rucklos Hampton recently retired as a professor and renowned researcher at Luther College at The University of Regina. Mary was the Provincial Academic Research Coordinator for RESOLVE Saskatchewan and a registered clinical psychologist. She had a career of tender and gentle caring for all who experienced trauma, especially sexual violence, in their lives. We are honoured that Mary rounded out her career with work on this book. Mary was instrumental in the 2008 Conference and a co-editor of the first edition, *Torn from our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Conference, 2008*, as well as numerous other publications. Despite grave health restrictions, Mary continues to inspire us with her love and grace and witty zingers. A woman of immense strength and fortitude, she reflects the warrior spirit we wish for ourselves and for all our readers.

Melissa Wuerch, PhD, is a clinical psychologist (supervised practice) in Ontario, Canada. Her clinical focus includes working with children, adolescents, and adults coping with mental health concerns. She graduated from the clinical psychology doctoral program at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, Canada in October 2020 and continues to focus on research examining intimate partner violence in rural and northern communities. **Morningstar Mercredi** is an author, poet, artist, researcher, social activist, producer and actress. She authored ***Morningstar: A Warrior's Spirit***, and ***Fort Chipewyan Homecoming*** and is launching her new book in the fall of 2021, ***Sacred Bundles Unborn***. Her background is in multimedia communications. She produced and hosted a half hour radio program on CKUA Radio, in Edmonton Alberta. "First Voices", explored and celebrated Indigenous artists throughout Turtle Island. Her documentary, ***Sacred Spirit of Water***, premiered at the United Nations Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples in New York in 2013. She is an ACFN member in Treaty 8 Territory. Morningstar's advocacy work expands over forty years, as a frontline worker raising awareness on MMIW, girls, and the LGBTQ community. She continues to advocate to criminalize forced coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada. **Paula Florés Bonilla** was born in El Salto, Pueblo Nuevo, Durango, in 1957. She emigrated to Ciudad Juárez in 1995 with her husband, a son and six daughters. Following the disappearance and murder of her 17-year-old daughter, María Sagrario González Flores in 1998, Paula and her eldest daughter, Guillermina, organized with several mothers who were in the same situation to initiate the first group of mothers: *Voces sin Eco*, Voices without Eco in Ciudad Juárez. Paula remains active in the fight so that crimes against women aren't forgotten. For two decades, Paula and her family and supporters have painted black crosses on pink backgrounds across wooden posts and light posts in Ciudad Juarez, and each year Paula and her family touch up the crosses that are on the main avenues and in the downtown area of Ciudad Juarez. This iconic image has come to symbolize feminicides/femicides in Chihuahua, Mexico and beyond. Paula continues to collaborate with other families whose daughters have disappeared or who have been found murdered in Ciudad Juarez and with women's rights and human rights defenders across Mexico. For years, she has helped to lead protests against femicide, she has placed missing fliers of girls and women across the City and has planted trees with other mothers representing their daughters at government offices. She has given her testimony before entities as varied as Amnesty International, members of the Mexican and U.S. Congress, UN Special Rapporteurs, international and national organizations. She also founded the Fundacion

Sagrario, a neighborhood association to help improve the lives of others in her community of Lomas de Poleo where she helped to open a local kindergarten that carries her daughter's name, Jardin de Ninos Ma. Sagrario. She has also attended the Marcela Lagarde y de los Ríos Cátedra. Paula was one of the mothers who brought her story and offered her leadership at the 2008 Conference in Regina, Saskatchewan, and her story in this book updates us on her tireless efforts for justice.

Rhonda Kronyk is a Dene/settler research, writing and editing consultant. A member of the Tsay Keh Dene Nation (Treaty 8), she calls amiskwaciwâskahikan on Treaty 6 lands home. As a founding member of the Indigenous Editors Association and an editor who specializes in manuscripts by and about Indigenous Peoples, Rhonda works from within the Canadian publishing industry to advocate for the publication of culturally respectful stories by and about Indigenous Peoples. As a community consultant, Rhonda works with arts and heritage organizations to ensure that diverse peoples from traditionally underrepresented communities are included in community research in a meaningful way. She currently sits on the Grand Council of the Lodgepole Arts Alliance and the Indigenous Advisory Circle of the ArtsHab Community Infrastructure Project. Rhonda has worked on manuscripts by some of Canada's best known Indigenous authors, including Rene Meshake, Blair Stonechild, Monique Gray Smith, Richard Van Camp, and Buffy Ste. Marie. The editing team thanks Rhonda for her copyediting work on this book.

Shauneen Pete, B.Ed, M.Ed, PhD is a professor (1-year term) in Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria. She is on leave from her role as Indigenous Resurgence Coordinator in the Indigenous Education Department, Faculty of Education (UVic). Dr. Pete has worked as a professor and university administrator for over 20 years. She served as Executive Lead: Indigenization at the University of Regina. She also served as both Vice-President (Academic) and Interim President at First Nations University of Canada. Dr. Pete continues to provide consulting services that advance both indigenization and decolonization in Canadian higher education.

Sylvia Smith is an educator with over three decades of classroom experience. The major focus of her pedagogy is to elicit authentic student engagement, with the goal of turning knowledge into action in the vital area of social justice. In recognition of her educational approach, she was awarded a Governor General's Award for Teaching Excellence in History in 2011. In 2015, Sylvia was inducted as an Honorary Witness to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for her work in developing and popularising Project of Heart, a Canada-wide teaching module dedicated to teaching the truth about the Indian Residential School era. Sylvia believes it is essential for education to be responsive to the concerns of the original people upon whose territory the learning takes place and that they be part of the reform so badly needed. Sylvia makes her home in Ottawa, on unceded, unsurrendered Algonquin territory. She lives with her partner, two adult daughters, and one very special grandson.

Tracey George Heese (B. Ed.) is a First Nations designer, artist, and entrepreneur of Timeless Shadows from Ochapowace First Nation in Saskatchewan. As an artist and volunteer, Tracey submitted fully-beaded moccasin vamps in a national art exhibit honouring the murdered and missing women of Canada to Christi Belcourt in honour of her late murdered mother Winnifred George. Her personal family experience of missing and murdered women was featured in an interview with Sheila Coles of CBC Radio Saskatchewan's The Morning Edition that aired on November 26, 2013. Also, as one of the contributors to the pre-inquiry phase of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, George was invited to speak to Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, her local MP, and Jody Wilson-Raybould, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. As an accomplished designer, Tracey has focused on the plight of Indigenous women and girls. She explains, "I do this fundraiser and that demonstration and I wonder if any of it will make a difference." Tracey is also a mother to three sons and a daughter. She is also an elementary school teacher, adult facilitator, and cultural consultant. Tracey is the founder of "A Proud Generation," an Aboriginal youth calendar project. Most recently, she has served as an artist and co-lead of the Balfour Ribbon Campaign, an artistic ribbon promise to commemorate residential school survivors that is based on the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's calls to action.

Wendee Kubik is a retired professor of Women's and Gender Studies. She is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Regina and Brock University and The Environmental Sustainability Research Centre at Brock University. Wendee was co-editor of the first edition of this book, *Torn from our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Conference, 2008*.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Introduction 1: IntroductionEdit Update titlecancel

1.1: Introduction

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Brenda Anderson

In 2008, a Regina collective of academics, community workers, spiritual leaders, and family members held a conference titled "Missing Women: Decolonization, Third Wave Feminisms and Indigenous People of Canada and Mexico." The proceedings and reflections were subsequently published as *Torn from our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing Indigenous Women Conference, 2008***.** Ten years have passed to our decision to create a second edition that not only provides updated and new material but is also a retrospective of what, if anything, has changed in the national and global context of violence against Indigenous women. This edition offers a decade-long snapshot of the national timeline of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships within which the Canadian National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) was conducted. We are situated at a critical moment in history, a liminal door frame from which we gaze back at the interminable cries for justice and forward to the implementation of the 231 Calls to Justice from the commissioners of the 2019 MMIWG inquiry. Laying our Canadian stories alongside the global phenomenon of femicide[1] in other colonized countries such as Mexico and Guatemala, this book underscores the common and interlocking effects of racism and sexism on Indigenous women. The first report from the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability confirms that the term femicide is every bit as applicable to Canada, where being female and being an Indigenous female makes you vulnerable to violence. "Indigenous women and girls were overrepresented as victims, comprising about five percent of the population in Canada, but 36 percent of those women and girls . . . were killed by violence" (*#CallItFemicide,* 7). This book provides testimony and evidence that sexualized and racialized violence is not only a product of colonization but continues to be used as a deliberate tool of colonization[2].

The process of redressing violence against Indigenous women begins with a two-pronged approach to education and relationship-building. Such an approach was affirmed by the 300 participants of the 2008 conference and, a decade later, remains the framework of the National Inquiry. In this book, you find everything from personal stories to historic narratives to theoretical positionings to concrete political and public policy changes. In this way, we implore all Canadians to actively engage in knowledgeably redressing the vulnerability of brown-skinned women.

The rapidity of new developments, new stories, or new controversies on MMIWG is not what we can address specifically through the medium of a fixed book. What we can offer, and what we think is important, is the evolutionary, historic meta-narrative of the national discourse within which the specifics arise. Whether it is the documentation and analysis of violence against Indigenous women in northern Saskatchewan or the use of the word femicide rather than genocide[3] in classrooms, the authors are commenting on the issues as they relate to the time of writing. What readers have, then, is a re-creation of the conversation within the framework of a decade or more. The hope of the editing team is that, by lending a decade-long retrospective, one that includes links to the global as well as the national context, we may contribute to the education and growing will of a nation to reconcile its past by committing to a new and safer future. And ultimately, throughout the book runs our desire to make our research matter, done in memory of those torn from our midst and in support of remaining family members.

Our editing team includes women who identify as Indigenous and women who identify as being of white settler descent. We note how our positionality affects our responses to current events, thereby modeling the need for all voices to be included at the table. Without all perspectives, we cannot fully redress colonialism nor hope to decolonize our hearts and institutions. Our hopes for the future reflect our status as women who actively work to eliminate all forms of violence against Indigenous women.

My Hope, **Shauneen Pete**

I am from Little Pine First Nation in Treaty 6 territory. I am the Indigenous Resurgence Coordinator in Indigenous Education at University of Victoria. I was a full professor in the Faculty of Education and served as the Executive Lead: Indigenization at the University of Regina. I was also the Interim President and Vice-President (Academic) at First Nations University of Canada. My research supports the promotion of Indigenization in higher education.

During the closing of the 2008 conference, my youngest daughter Tara, who was 14 at the time, asked to share some of her reflections on the speakers. She called on all of us adults to help Indigenous girls to know security from violence. Her plea resonated deeply in all of us that day. As a survivor myself, as someone who has actively worked to expose patriarchal violence in its many forms (colonization, heteronormativity, sexism, etc.) and as a single mother who attempts to shield my own children from violence, I've taken seriously the issues of violence. It became a topic of study in my undergraduate teaching, my informal writing for *REZX* magazine, and for a video blog for REZX TV. I believe we have a responsibility to use our agency to expose violence, and to do so in a variety of ways to reach a larger audience. Our hope is that this revised edition will serve that purpose.

My Hope, Carrie Bourassa

Building on Dr. Pete's hope for the future, I too remember Tara's powerful words. I feel that young women have much to say to us, and we, in turn, much to learn. The Elders and Knowledge Keepers tell us that children are gifts from Creator and are here to teach us. I truly believe this. I have been blessed with two amazing daughters who teach me every day. One is twenty and one is nine and the lessons I receive from each are profoundly different, yet each are vital to my learning and healing journey. Violence became a norm for me growing up and, I think, for many Métis, First Nations, and Inuit families. There are reasons for this, of course, which this collection deftly unpacks. It is, however, important to note that colonization affects First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities in vastly different ways and there is purpose, intent behind it. Yet we are still here, and while we may still be struggling with inter-generational trauma, disease, addictions—we are purposely here. We are resilient, strong, and our generations are behind us and ahead of us. We are still here.

My Hope, Brenda Anderson

Anyone who puts pen to paper understands the potential agony of reading one's writing from over a decade ago. For me, reading the original introduction to *Torn from Our Midst* shows a shift in my own thinking; it also represents an important national shift in the conversation about MMIWG. As an ally, it has never been my intention to speak for or on behalf of Indigenous women. In the original introduction, I emphasised two mantras that continue to serve me well: 'to make space for things to happen,' and to 'learn how to stand alongside.' Yet, it is painfully evident to me that, in that introduction, I continued to unconsciously imagine my readers to be largely a non-Indigenous community. And why wouldn't I? When I had sought out very few Indigenous professional colleagues or friends, when I had yet to participate in many ceremonial opportunities, when my institution was just barely beginning to understand, let alone acknowledge the ways in which we perpetuate colonialist structures, systems, and ideologies. I was largely operating from a protected ghetto of privilege. The fact that our original editing team was comprised entirely of non-Indigenous researchers speaks volumes, as does the fact that our current team has the wisdom from Shauneen and Carrie to help us see what privilege keeps from us. This slow process of decolonization is being replicated nation wide.

Ten years ago, I wrote of that chilling moment in Fort Qu'Appelle when, after seeing what seemed like the hundredth poster of a missing Indigenous woman, this one asking for help in locating Amber Redman[4], it finally dawned on me that there was a profound dissonance between how I understood Canada and what was really happening. At that time, I did know I had the pleasure of white privilege; on another level, I was still learning how deeply my assumptions are grounded in the very fabric of colonialist privilege. If truth be told, it continues to be my privilege to decide whether, or when, or how to acknowledge the crisis of MMIWG; this privilege is not extended to those who live that 'high-risk lifestyle' of being an Indigenous woman. Accepting this uncomfortable reality is the first step towards decolonization and reconciliation. To those who are non-Indigenous and are reading this book, I see this as a first stage before concrete change that will keep Indigenous women safe can occur. The authors in this book bring that awareness forward.

As I write this, I have just watched a white ally speak during a live feed of the National Inquiry commissioners discussing their findings. The audience member described the absolute silence on Indigenous history and colonialism that he experienced throughout his childhood and right through his post-secondary education. He thanked the commissioners for the work that was transforming his life and expressed the hope that he could change certain practices in his field. Head Commissioner Marion Buller thanked him by responding, "Canada will be a great country as long as it has an open mind, an open heart, and an open spirit."

I believe those from white settler backgrounds have a key role to play as allies, but that role is not so much one of speaking as it is of listening and then acting upon what we hear. In a university course I teach on MMIWG in the Global Context, a student from a white settler background commented on how grateful she was that she lived in Canada where we could trust our police force. She said this after watching the film *Senorita Extraviada* which details investigations into women disappearing from *maquiladoras* (sweatshops) in Ciudad Juarez. The student's comment raised numerous responses from Indigenous students in the classroom who could give detailed accounts of being racially profiled by police simply for walking down the street, while others commented on how terrified they were of the police. In that exchange, it was absolutely clear how imperative it is for allies and Indigenous people to address this issue collaboratively. Non-Indigenous Canadians have not had to remove the very thick blinders put on them since birth, and this has resulted in a framework of genocide of Indigenous peoples, customs, experiences, and spirit. Through these types of conversations that teach and build relationships, allies will be amazed for years to come at the layers of assumptions and ignorance that have built up because our systems—governments, media, education, healthcare, etc.—chose to look away, or did not even know what to look at. Just as the young white student listened carefully and learned from that dissonant moment, I look forward to uncovering more of my colonialist assumptions so that when I read this book ten years from now, I will see yet again what I have missed so far. I will seek that open mind, heart, and spirit of hope for transformation that Indigenous women so justly

deserve. I would add a further question to non-Indigenous Canadians: what insights or gifts are we resisting when we ignore the rich teachings from Indigenous Peoples in Canada? I want to thank the Indigenous Elders and Knowledge-Keepers and my friends and colleagues who generously gave me guidance and celebrate the hope that comes from their leadership and the many Indigenous teachings on relationships, the environment, and the spiritual that they have shared with me. Miigwich.

Theorising Our Collective National Trauma

Whether we recognize it or not, all Canadians share a common narrative that is inextricably rooted in our history—trauma. Whether our ancestors instigated the trauma or had it forced on them by colonial policies, we have lived for well over a century in a warped and inaccurate telling of our national story that influences how we respond to issues like MMIWG. We come to the table with pre-conceived notions of "sides." Whenever sides are drawn, trauma continues[5]. In Canada, that trauma is concentrated on Indigenous Peoples.

"Trauma narratives are deep-seated, intergenerational streams of thoughts and behaviours clustered around experiences of violence and expectations for further violence to occur" (Rosen). Regardless of whether we are Indigenous, settlers, or recent immigrants or refugees, we are shaped by recurring themes of colonialism and immigration—displacement, dislocation, unsafe spaces—juxtaposed with our public image of multicultural acceptance, growth, and success. Two dissonant realities jostling up against one another. As a nation, we cannot escape the narrative of trauma because we are all Treaty people who live on Indigenous lands. Treaties are official documents signed between sovereign nations on behalf of their peoples. Today, we are those people, the inheritors of those treaties and of intentional genocide; in other words, all Canadians live within a national context of trauma. Just as a family is affected by a single member who has experienced trauma so, too, are non-Indigenous Canadians affected by the impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples. The trauma has not remained in the past, as the statistics on MMIWG show us so clearly. But we are often blind to the ongoing, deep colonization of current practices and policies: even when statistics or personal stories confront those who have not experienced the trauma firsthand, they often choose to deny or ignore its reality.

As non-Indigenous allies, it is up to us to move this ubiquitous divide-and-conquer motif of colonization to one of finding the path forward to healing our national family. And we must disrupt the narrative that assumes a sum total of health, that when one "side" is compensated for injustice, the other side somehow loses. Tragically, this discourse of trauma continues because we have not healed, we have not dealt with the root causes of our trauma. In *Torn from our Midst*, Anglican priest and organizer of the sacred space at the 2008 MMIW conference, Cheryl Toth, reminds us of how difficult it is to heal when the bodies of our loved ones have not been found. She writes, "We need to remind ourselves that they are missing to us but not to the Creator. The One who birthed them to the earth knows where on the earth their bodies lay. Their spirits, too, have a home with the Holy One. It is we who cannot rest" (*Torn*, 21). In order to heal, we need to understand how current systems—education, health, justice, social services—protect some Canadians and violate others, and we need to understand why Indigenous Peoples and allies frequently run up against a wall of silence or backlash for speaking up.

It is not an intellectual understanding alone that is needed. Healing is heart work. Lori Campbell, a participant and leader in the 2008 MMIW conference, wrote of the courage it took for her to speak about violence in lesbian relationships; her courage was rewarded with understanding nods from the audience (*Torn*, 234). She wrote of the heart connection that heals, and how her participation as a woman drummer in the Rainwater Singers, led by Elder Betty McKenna, is part of her healing: "Women walk towards the drum. They sit with us . . . the energy is strong . . . it is the powerful, healing energy of the united heartbeat of women connecting with the universal heartbeat—the heartbeat of Mother Earth" (235). Connections between education and relationship-building, understanding, and heart work bring hope and healing.

Hope: A Decade of Connecting the Dots

Since 2008, Canadians are more aware of, and even more accepting of, what the stories and statistics tell us about MMIWG. Slowly, the national discourse is connecting the dots, making the connections between historic realities and current social crises[6]. In broad strokes, we see shifts in universities as more Indigenous scholars are hired, as penetrating scholarship deepens our knowledge base, as meaningful land and treaty acknowledgements are more frequently used in many public spaces, and as the media begins to better represent Indigenous communities and concerns. Admittedly, while there is hope, there is also backlash, but that should not overshadow such shifts. Below are some further examples of the hopeful developments in Canada over the past decade.

- The completion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that listened to and documented over 6,000 survivor's testimonies of residential schools, resulting in the TRC's 94 Calls to Action that are actively being implemented across the broad public sector (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada).

- Cindy Blackstock wins her case and secures the Supreme Court of Canada's ruling that the federal government has failed in its responsibilities to children on reserves. The ruling that the government does not provide adequate housing, education, health, water, and more, resulted in the implementation of Jordan's Principle (First Nations Child & Family Caring Society).
- Four prairie women, three of them Indigenous, create the Idle No More movement as a response to a federal government omnibus bill that threatened Indigenous sovereignty over land and water (Coates, x). The movement has continued to evolve and respond to ever-broadening issues such as the housing crisis on reserves (CBC).
- Increasing emphasis and a deepening discourse in media representation, including APTN's mini-series *First Contact* that records the impact of exposing non-Indigenous Canadians to Indigenous realities.
- Growing debates on how we memorialize our national history, including controversies around the removal of the first Prime Minister's statue from public spaces (CBC).
- The recognition that two-spirit and transgender Indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to violence and require attention designed for their needs (Rainbow Health Ontario).
- The completion of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls with its report, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. The Report calls for a National Action Plan, an Ombudsperson, and a Tribunal to continue to respond to new cases of MMIWG (National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls).

From a historic perspective, even though such developments may continue to be ignored or resisted, the fact that such change has occurred within *only ten years* should not be overlooked.

Academic research has solidified our connections between historic colonizing practices and current colonialist systems and has surely influenced the general population as well in this shift. Of notable mention are James Daschuk's multi-award winning book, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Indigenous Life*; Colleen Cardinal's work on mapping the displacement of Indigenous and Métis children during the '60s Scoop; and better educational practices such as Sylvia Smith's development of Project of Heart. Canadian Roots Exchange, a "community of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth committed to building honest and equitable relationships" is yet another example of the integration of academic research into frontline advocacy work.

Concurrently, we have witnessed a growth in publications specifically establishing the connection between the crisis of MMIWG and colonialism, past and present. Of particular mention is *Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada* (Lavell-Harvard and Brant), *Violence Against Indigenous women: Literature, Activism, Resistance* (Hargreaves), and *Keetsahnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*, (Anderson, Campbell, and Belcourt). Each of these books builds on the last, deepening our knowledge with the stories and perspectives of Indigenous women and families of missing and murdered loved ones. Each emphasises the significance of storytelling and art activism like the *Walking with our Sisters* exhibit of moccasin vamps that travelled across Canada, and each, repeatedly, seeks action-specific responses from all Canadians.

In certain spaces, particularly where Indigenous journalists are involved, the media's response to violence against Indigenous women and its reporting on MMIWG has generally improved in the last decade. Connie Walker and her team's intensive research at the Canadian Broadcasting Company in profiling the individual stories of women who have been murdered or who are still missing from their families and communities is a notable resource (The Current). Journalism students at the University of Regina are encouraged to connect the dots on sexualized and racialized violence (Alwani); they will be able to respond to stories of MMIWG meaningfully in their careers[7].

It is predictable that resistance and backlash will get uglier in response to these incremental shifts. Bronwyn Eyre, the Saskatchewan Party's Minister of Education, told the Saskatchewan legislature how her son's education about residential schools was questionable and caused discomfort at the family's Thanksgiving dinner conversation. In response, Thunderchild First Nation's Chief, Delbert Wapass, said that Minister Eyre had missed an educational opportunity to contribute to her own son's education when she "defaulted to misguided ideological tendencies and an easy way out rather than telling the truth" (Wapass).

Sometimes that resistance seems insurmountable. A 2018 survey by Angus Reid suggests "deep fractures" between "divergent yet entrenched attitudes on both symbolic and existential questions" (Hutchins) regarding Indigenization. Fifty-three percent of respondents indicated that enough apologies had been made regarding residential schools, while 47 percent connected the dots between historic colonialism and present-day language, policies, attitudes, and so on. While this MacLean's article uses these statistics to question the effectiveness of the Liberal government's efforts towards Indigenization, I would equally argue that a divide of 6 percent between the "entrenched attitudes" would have been significantly larger even ten years ago. Whether your glass

is half empty or half full, the fact remains that, because of the work of the TRC, Idle No More, the MMIWG Inquiry, individuals like Cindy Blackstock and Colleen Cardinal, because of the academic research and activism such as is found within the pages of this book, the conversations around the dining room table are taking place in a way I believe they never have before. At least when we converse, we uncover the ugliness through which the hope for reconciliation becomes possible.

Morningstar Mercredi said in her speech at our 2008 conference on MMIW, "Hearing the truths sometimes makes people feel uncomfortable. Well, get uncomfortable."[8] If Mercredi's challenge to non-Indigenous people to "get uncomfortable" is taken seriously, reconciliation is not about feeling good about ourselves and our nation. What it might be about is staying hopeful, despite the dissonance, by listening to the stories of resiliency of Indigenous peoples, forming relationships amongst those we don't know, and eradicating systems and structures that make Indigenous people vulnerable. To do so means a historic shift away from Canada envisioned as a white British project, a project fraught with intergenerational trauma, to a nation that can reconcile its past by changing its trajectory.

Layout of Book

This book began with ceremony. Tobacco and cloth were offered with a request for the blessing of our book and for all its readers. Our guiding Elder, Betty McKenna, First Nation Anishnabae, prayed for the duration of the tobacco and tied the cloth to her prayer bush as she prayed. To begin the book in a spiritual way not only honours traditional Indigenous practices, it reminds us that, without building our relationships between one another, creation, and our spirits, we cannot heal from the pain and loss we suffer when violence occurs.

Section Two, "Epistemic Erasure Rejected," contextualizes the issue with retrospection and updates. Carrie Bourassa weaves the personal and political together in her story of reclaiming her Métis identity and heritage through her post-secondary education on Indigenous health and governmental policies in Canada. As a stand-alone chapter in a section, this story represents the growing number of Indigenous women who have become thoughtful and inspirational leaders in our midst.

The following section relates the global history of femicide, beginning with a chapter by Amnesty International fieldworkers Crystal Geisbrecht and Gordon Barnes providing us with a national and international perspective on femicide. As the original initiator who brought global attention to the stolen sisters from our nation, Amnesty continues to provide global support to holding people and institutions accountable for their negligence towards Indigenous women. Wendee Kubik and Carrie Bourassa's following chapter documents the sequence of events that eventually resulted in the Canadian government forming the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. If readers sense some impatience with this timeline, you are not wrong!

An updated chapter on the political realities of Indigenous women in Mexico follows. Cynthia Bejarano captures the tragedy of femicide in Mexico, specifically on the U.S. border in Ciudad Juarez. Now infamous as a place where maquiladora factory workers are most vulnerable to being stolen, Cynthia clearly analyzes the stages of resistance that families and activists have engineered to bring justice for their missing women. Following Bejarano's chapter, readers receive another update from the original edition from Kim Erno. In *Torn from our Midst*, Kim Erno explained how direct violence against Indigenous women is used by the Mexican government and police to serve global neoliberal economics in removing Indigenous people from the public space. We include this chapter, accompanied by a timely reflection from Kim on the connection between violence against Indigenous women and violence against our environment and Mother Earth. Similarly, Leonzo Barreno's chapter shows how women are directly targeted in Guatemala through state violence and drug cartels. Readers might wish to connect this story to the upsurge in refugees from Latin America seeking refuge in the U.S. and Canada and to Canada's mining companies in countries from this region. The connection demonstrates the vulnerability of women and girls in those caravans of displaced persons as they seek asylum from femicide in their countries of origin.

One of the unique features of the first edition was that we included stories of family members, and we continue this in our Section Four, "Family Stories of Trauma and Resistance." In 2008, very little time or attention was given to these important stories. Through the work and publications by NWAC and Sisters in Spirit, digital platforms run by family members, and activist events run by Amnesty and innumerable local communities, these voices have created their own public space. The MMIWG Inquiry listened to 2,380 family members, and stories are still being collected (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls). Increasingly, the issue is less one of representation than it is one of national response. That is, best practices now rest with Indigenous consultation and leadership on implementing changes. Wherever there is a victim, there is a story, and it will always be the responsibility of the entire nation to listen, to believe, and to act. In the second section of this edition, we include one new story and one updated one.

Tracey George Hearse speaks from her perspective as a daughter whose mother was stolen from her. She threads her story alongside the stories of her mother and grandmother to create a three-generational perspective of how colonialism catastrophically affects Indigenous women in Canada. Similarly, Paula Flores updates us on the story of her daughter who disappeared in Ciudad Juarez. By placing these stories alongside one another, we hear two things: how global femicide is the result of colonialist practices and beliefs and how the spirit of resistance refuses to allow women to be dehumanized or erased. We especially thank and recognize Tracey and Paula for their courage in sharing their stories in spite of the pain we know it brings. We ask readers to honour these family members by bearing witness to their stories.

Section Five, called "Organizational Resistance: Action from Within" challenges us to think about the systems and institutions within which we work and live. Academic researchers and social fieldworkers from RESOLVE bring sharp attention to the particulars of interpersonal violence and the vulnerability of Indigenous women who lack social safety nets in Northern Saskatchewan. They map our ongoing national failure to provide safety and health for Indigenous women, each of them a citizen of Canada. What it also shows is a clear path forward within social services, one that depends entirely upon the will of governments, both provincially and nationally. Will they meet the challenge?

From the implementation perspective, we read Betty Ann Pottruff and Barbara Tomparowski's report from Saskatchewan's Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons. This report shows both the challenges and successes of a governmental body that relies upon the direction of family members, Elders, and community leaders.

Torn from our Midst contained a lengthy section on the role that art activism played in generating interest and providing education in the 2008 conference. We continue in this book to recognize that the heart must be moved before change is possible. Sylvia Smith, creator of an intergenerational, relationship-building, educational, art activism program called Project of Heart provides us with an example of what transformation looks and feels like. It is hopefulness in the context of our national dissonance!

The section "Decolonizing Postsecondary Institutions" focusses on the question of institutional and pedagogical decolonization. The chapters provide numerous examples of how academics are decolonizing their methodologies—who is the expert, how do we teach—as well as their data—what resources can we rely on? Speaking from her experiences as the first Director of Indigenization at the University of Regina, Shauneen Pete uses her administrative perspective to reflect on the challenges and potentiality of Indigenization programs on university campuses. As a storyteller, Shauneen equally brings the matter straight to the heart of individual will.

Brenda Anderson provides reflections from over a decade of teaching a third level Women's and Gender Studies course on missing and murdered Indigenous women. It is hoped the chapter, along with a sample syllabus in Appendix A, will generate ideas for similar kinds of work in campuses across the country. Jennifer Brant's chapter documents Indigenous women's literatures to note how personal stories are used to transform student awareness and build empathy, while Danielle Jeancart's chapter introduces a newer discourse in Canada on Indigenous masculinities. Each of these chapters illustrates a rich and growing base of information that is being used at the postsecondary level. Increasingly, the resiliency of Indigenous peoples and the leadership of Indigenous women are emphasized in academia over and above the prevalence of victimhood messaging. This is yet another signifier of decolonization as non-Indigenous scholars learn how to stand meaningfully alongside Indigenous peers. In this way, we see shifts and fractures in the mirrors of academia that have for far too long privileged the perspectives of white settler education and European modes of learning. So much more remains to be done, yet the signs of change are clearly there to see.

The two videos below set a context for this book. All films included in this book come from a dvd of videos taken from a dvd that was part of the first edition of *Torn from our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Conference of 2008.* Appreciation goes to the conference videographer and creator of the dvd, John Hampton. The first video below is a trailer that contains scenes and voices from the conference, and the second video is a slideshow of pictures. All of these and all other videos that follow in this book are copyright to the editors, and are not to be used outside the context of this book.

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1. The terms femicide and feminicide are used interchangeably in this book by different authors, reflecting the changing nature of new language, as well as the usage of different terms in different countries. The differences have been maintained to reflect how contemporary this issue is, and to honour the choice of the authors in the terms they wish to use. Canadian resources appear to have adopted ‘femicide’ as the preferred term. ↵
2. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women stated that “violence against women in Canada remains a ‘serious, pervasive and systematic problem,’ and that ‘Indigenous women . . . are overtly disadvantaged. . . . (Indigenous women) face marginalization, exclusion and poverty because of institutional, systemic, multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination” (#CallItFemicide, 54). See also Chapter 15 in this book where I identify the common elements of colonialism in Australia, Mexico, Guatemala, and Canada in relation to MMIWG. ↵
3. Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls uses the word genocide to describe violence against Indigenous women and girls as deliberate and ongoing tools of colonization. A supplementary report, A Legal Analysis of Genocide, was simultaneously released. Media and politicians immediately latched onto questioning the usage of the term in what can only be seen as rhetoric designed to divert those for whom the facts and evidence are new and seemingly incredulous. Indigenous women’s voices are yet again questioned and risk being lost amongst the voices of the privileged (The Star, June 10, 2019). ↵
4. The poster was seeking information on the disappearance of Amber Redman. Her mother tells her story in “Wicanhpi Duta Win/Red Star Woman: Amber Redman’s Story” (Hampton, Anderson, Kubik 2010, 40). ↵
5. We need only think of the trial of Gerald Stanley, a Saskatchewan farmer who was acquitted for the fatal shooting of a young Indigenous man, Colten Boushie. The trial was followed by a deeply disturbing level of entitled racist comments and actions across the country. Sides were not just drawn; they had long existed (Deranger). ↵
6. A poll taken within a week of the release of the MMIWG Inquiry report showed that 53 percent of Canadians believed the word genocide should be used in relation to MMIWG. What was understood by that word varied: “As to who is responsible for the genocide, 32 percent blamed Canada's British and French founders and 25 percent blamed Catholic and Protestant churches. Another 21 percent said all Canadians share responsibility for the injustice while just one per cent blamed government . . . .71 percent said they're proud of Canada's history, including 53 percent of those who strongly agreed with the finding that Indigenous women have been victims of genocide” (Bryden). ↵
7. Even the language used in reporting news is shifting. Mathieu Landriault documents the impact that politician’s language has on mainstream media’s significant shift from using the term ‘Aboriginal’ to ‘Indigenous’ (Landriault). ↵
8. Torn from our Midst DVD. ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Epistemic Erasure Rejected

2.1: The Construction of Indigenous Identity- A Healing Journey

2.2: Video of Keynote Address by Maria Campbell at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

2.3: Video of Keynote Address by Morningstar Mercredi at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

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2.1: The Construction of Indigenous Identity- A Healing Journey 2.1: The Construction of Indigenous Identity- A Healing JourneyEdit Update titlecancel

Dr. Carrie Bourassa[1]

As a scholar, I write about the construction of Indigenous[2] identity and the effects on the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples and, in particular, Indigenous women. I was honoured to present at the Missing Women's Conference hosted by the University of Regina and First Nations University of Canada in August 2008. I was asked to provide a written submission for the conference report, and I do so not only as a scholar, but as a Métis woman who is on her own healing journey. I will speak first-hand about the effects that the social construction of my identity has had on me with the hope that readers will understand that colonization still lingers in our country and that colonial legislation continues to affect the daily lives of Indigenous Peoples and, in particular, Indigenous women.

I will begin with a quote from my Kookum (grandmother), Elder Betty McKenna.

> "We are like trees. Our roots are put down very deep. And we take things from the four directions and we take them into our lives. And if you pull us up by the roots, we are lost. We have to go back and find those roots, find those beginnings that are strong so that we can live a good life."

I believe identity is something that many people take for granted. If you grew up secure in who you are with a strong value system and a sense of pride, then likely you haven't ever had to examine the concept of identity. However, for Indigenous Peoples and, indeed, for any people who have experienced colonization, identity becomes a very important issue and one that affects our health and well-being. There are reasons that Indigenous Peoples have the highest rates of chronic and infectious disease, the highest levels of poverty, the lowest levels of education and the highest incarceration rates in Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). The experience of colonization has contributed to the various maladies that we face. One central concept of colonization in Canada was the policy of assimilation. Assimilation was official government policy from 1876 to 1973 (Elias 2002) and the goal was to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and, more specifically, First Nations People would cease to exist. In essence, they would be stripped of their identities.

Canada is the only nation in the world to formally define, in legislation, Aboriginal people (Armitage 1995). The formal definition began originally by defining "Indian" in 1876 via the *Indian Act.* With its passage in 1876, the *Indian Act* would become the primary tool of assimilation used by the new Dominion government. The intent was to absorb Indian people into the body politic of Canada so that there would be no "Indian problem" and, in the words of Sir John A. Macdonald, "to wean them by slow degrees from their nomadic habits, which have become almost an instinct, and by slow degrees absorb them on the land" (Wotherspoon and Satzewich 2000).

The *Indian Act's* three central goals were to:

1. define who Indians were and were not;
2. manage and protect Indian lands;
3. concentrate authority over Indian people (Indians were to be civilized and Christianized) (Wotherspoon and Satzewich 2000)

A central element of the *Act* was to advance the government's assimilation policy through the process of enfranchisement or losing one's Indian status under the *Act*. For example, under Section 12(1)(b) of the *Act*, an Indian woman could lose her status if she married a non-Indian man. Women could not own property, and once a woman left the reserve to marry, she could not return because non-Indians could not reside on the reserve. This also applied to her children. However, if an Indian man married a non-Indian woman, he not only retained his Indian status, but the non-Indian woman would gain status under the *Act* and so would their children. This legislation stood until 1985, when revisions to the *Act* occurred as a result of the repatriated Constitution and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender. There were other ways for Indian people to lose their status—for example, if they received a university or college education, became clergy, or acquired any professional designation, lived outside of the country for five years or more, or if they wanted to vote (Bourassa, Hampton, McKay-McNabb 2005).

Because of the sexist specification inherent in this legislation, ramifications of the *Indian Act* were more severe for Indigenous women than men, ramifications that continue to have severe impacts on our life chances today. Bonita Lawrence (2000) notes that the *Act* ordered how Indigenous Peoples were to think of all things "Indian" and created classifications that have become normalized as "cultural differences." She argues that the differences between Métis (or other mixed ancestry people), non-status

Indians, Inuit, and status Indians were created by the *Act*, and those differences became accepted in Canada as being cultural in nature when, in fact, they were social constructions imposed by legislation. It should be acknowledged that cultural distinctions did and do exist within and amongst Indigenous Peoples; however, those cultural distinctions were never categorized nor embedded in legislation prior to 1876 and did not have the same impact until commencement of the *Act*. Indigenous scholars agree that the *Indian Act* has controlled Indigenous identity by creating legal and non-legal categories that have consequences for rights and privileges both within and beyond Indigenous communities (Lawrence 2000; Mihesuah 1998).

One important consequence of the *Indian Act* is that status Indian women (hereafter referred to as Indian women) who married non-Indian men lost their Indian status and their band membership under this *Act*. Prior to 1869, the definition of Indian was fairly broad and generally referred to "all persons of Indian blood, their spouses and their descendents" (Voyageur 2000, 88) After 1869, Indian women who married non-Indians were banished from their communities, since non-Indians were not allowed on reserves; this was true even if a divorce occurred (McIvor 1995). From the government's perspective, these women had assimilated and had no use for their Indian status. The goal of assimilation was a central element of the *Indian Act 1876* because it would advance the government's policy of genocide through the process of enfranchisement: the removal of Indian status from an individual. Further, Indian women could not own property, and once a woman left the reserve to marry, she could not return to her reserve, so she lost all property rights. This legacy of disenfranchisement was passed on to her children (Wotherspoon and Satzewich 2000). In contrast, an Indian man who married a non-Indian woman not only retained his Indian status, but the non-Indian woman would gain status under the *Act*, as would their children. Even upon divorce or the death of her husband, a non-Indian woman who gained status under the *Act* through marriage retained her status and band membership as did her children (Voyageur 2000). In contrast, an Indian woman's identity was defined by her husband and could be taken away. The imposition of this Eurocentric, sexist ideology on Indigenous families was a direct disruption of traditional Indigenous definitions of family. Under *Indian Act* legislation, enfranchised Indians were to become Canadian citizens and, as a result, they relinquished their collective ties to their Indian communities (Lawrence 1999). However, Indian women were not granted the benefit of full Canadian citizenship. Lawrence notes that, until 1884, Indian women who had lost their status could not inherit any portion of their husband's land or assets after his death. After 1884, a widow was allowed to inherit one-third of her husband's land(s) and assets if she "was living with her husband at his time of death and was determined by the Indian Agent to be 'of good moral character'" (Lawrence 1999, 56). Furthermore, if a woman married an Indian from another reserve, the *Act* stated that she must follow her husband and relinquish her band membership to become a member of his band. If her husband died or if she divorced him, she could not return to her reserve, as she was no longer a member. These policies governing marriage and divorce were just a few of several ways that Indigenous women were stripped of their rights and privileges. For example, from 1876 to 1951, women who married Indian men and remained on the reserve were denied the right to vote in band elections, to hold elected office, or to participate in public meetings. However, Indian men were eligible to take part in all these activities (Voyageur 2000). Therefore, colonization was an instrument by which sexism and racism were created and reinforced on and off reserve lands, converging in diminishing power and resources available to Indigenous women in Canada.

The passage of The *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* made gender discrimination illegal and opened the door for Indigenous women to challenge the *Indian Act*. In 1967, Indigenous women lobbied both the federal government and Indian bands for an amendment to the *Act*. Sharon McIvor (1995) notes that in *Lavell v. Her Majesty (1974)* Indigenous women challenged the government based on the argument that the government had been discriminating against Indian women for over 100 years via the *Indian Act*. The Supreme Court of Canada, however, ruled that since Canada had jurisdiction over Indians it could decide who was an Indian and that the *Act* was not discriminatory. Continual lobbying by Indigenous women finally resulted in action and the *Act* was amended in 1985 through passage of *Bill C-31*.

However, despite the amendment, long-standing implications of the *Indian Act* for Indigenous women in Canada are still evident. As Lawrence notes, the government's "social engineering process" (1999, 58) via the *Act* ensured that between 1876 and 1985 over 25,000 women lost their status and were forced to leave their communities. Lawrence states: "Taking into account that for every woman who lost status and had to leave her community, all of her descendants also lost status and for the most part were permanently alienated from Native culture, the scale of cultural genocide caused by gender discrimination becomes massive" (Lawrence 1999, 59). She notes that when *Bill C-31* was passed in 1985, there were only 350,000 female and male status Indians left in Canada. *Bill C-31* allowed individuals who had lost status and their children to apply for reinstatement. Approximately 100,000 individuals had regained status by 1995, but many individuals were unable to regain status. Under *Bill C-31*, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were not recognized as having Indian status and, in many cases, no longer identified as Indian (Lawrence 1999; Voyageur 2000). In addition, legislative decisions still blocked Indigenous women from full participation in their communities. For example, the Corbiere decision in 1999 *(John Corbiere et al. v. the Batchewana Indian Band and Her Majesty*

the Queen) specified that Indian women living off-reserve could not vote in band elections because the *Indian Act* stated that Indian members must "ordinarily live on reserve" in order to vote. Thus, reinstated Indian women and their children were still at a disadvantage despite having legal recognition under the *Act*. In the end, the amendments did not repair the damage of previous legislation. Kinship ties, cultural ties and participation in governance were significantly disrupted. Long-term consequences for these women and their children would include the erosion of connections and rights that may have enabled them to work collectively to address social disparities.

Lawrence's reference to social engineering is an important one. The construction of Indigenous identity continues based on *Bill C-31* and the revisions to the *Indian Act.* While blatant discrimination based on gender has been removed, identities are still shaped based on who one decides to have children with. Today, there are 6(1) and 6(2) status Indians; 6(1) Indians are those who had status before 1985 and 6(2) Indians are, for the most part, reinstated Indians. Consider the following.

6(1) + Non-status = 6(2) child

6(2) + Non-status = non-status child

6(1) + 6(2) = 6(1)

6(2) + 6(2) = 6(1)

Thus, once again, depending on who you have a child or children with you may or may not retain status within the family. This "contemporary" legislation is clearly still racist and colonial in nature and continues to affect Indigenous people's everyday lived experiences.

It is ironic that the only recourse Indigenous women have is to appeal to the federal government and judicial system—the same government and system that instituted and upheld the sexist, discriminatory and oppressive legislation for over 100 years. This government holds different principles of justice than traditional Indigenous government, leaving women once again vulnerable to multiple oppressions. As Jan Langford writes, "If First Nations governments are built on the traditional Indigenous way of governing where equity is built into the system, there wouldn't be a need for the 'white' ways of protecting rights" (1995, 35). However, band governing bodies are not working according to the traditional Indigenous way, instead using legislation to exclude women and protect male privilege.

After fighting for the recognition of "Aboriginal rights" as per *S. 35 of the Canadian Constitution, 1982*, Indigenous women have found themselves at odds with some of their own community leaders. First Nations women and their children have not been welcomed back to their communities. Since the 1980s, when the federal government began the process of devolution of control to Indian bands, band governments have been able to refuse band membership. It should be noted that there has been an influx of status First Nations men and women going to their bands to seek membership. However, the government has consistently refused to increase funding to those bands. Cora Voyageur notes that some bands have not given band membership to people given status by the federal government because they do not have the resources or the land base to do so. Most reserves are already overcrowded, and many indicate that conditions will worsen if a rush of reinstated status First Nations people want to return to the reserve. Some reinstated status First Nations people are referred to as "C-31s," "paper Indians" or "new Indians" (Voyageur 2000). In addition, many of these individuals may have previously been identifying with Métis or non-status Indian communities and were rejected not only by their First Nations communities but also by the communities with which they had identified. As Lawrence (1999) reports, that resistance to acknowledging the renewed status of those reinstated under *Bill C-31* has been expressed throughout the Indigenous press.

Furthermore, women have been formally excluded from constitutional negotiations as a result of patriarchal legislation that was applied in the federal government's decision to exclude them. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has argued that the interests of individual Indigenous women should not be overshadowed by collective social values and operational mandates that may be enshrined in customary law (Jackson 2000). However, Indigenous women find themselves caught between bands who appeal to traditional practices to avoid action and a federal government that avoids involvement in deference to self-governance (Green 2001). In this way, government intrusion has succeeded in ensuring that divisions among Indigenous people are maintained, if not more firmly entrenched.

Finally, as Lawrence (1999) argues, "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" are common questions among what she calls "people of mixed-race Native heritage." She examines the impact of the *Indian Act* and *Bill C-31* on Métis people in addition to status First Nations people and argues that the *Act* has externalised mixed-race Indigenous Peoples from "Indian-ness" and that this has implications for Indigenous empowerment. What this discussion reveals is that other Indigenous peoples have also been affected by these policies and this has likely had consequences for identity, empowerment, and quality of life of all Canada's Indigenous

peoples. Indeed, S. 35.1 of the *Canadian Constitution* (1982) states that "Aboriginal" is defined as "Indian, Inuit and Métis people of Canada." The term "Aboriginal" or Indigenous that is now being used by some as it includes First Nations, Inuit, Metis and non-status First Nations Peoples in Canada might lead one to think that we are a homogenous group; however, we are very diverse and, as demonstrated above, the construction of our identities through colonial policy and legislation has led many to question their identity.

A review of the post-contact history of Indigenous people in Canada clearly demonstrates that direct practices of genocide have transformed into legislated control of Indigenous identity and colonization-based economic, social, and political disadvantage that disproportionately affects Indigenous women. The government's definition of who can be called First Nations, who cannot, and who must exist in liminal spaces where they are outsiders both on and off reserve lands clearly has implications for citizenship, but it also has implications for access to health services and for the ability to maintain health and well-being. With this knowledge, we must re-examine data that suggests Indigenous women are excessively vulnerable to cerebrovascular disease, coronary heart disease, diabetes, suicide, cancer, depression, substance use, HIV/AIDS and violence/abuse in light of how colonization and post-colonial processes have conferred risks to the health of Indigenous women, and barriers to accessing quality health care. These risks and barriers contribute to rates of morbidity and mortality that are well above those of the average Canadian woman.

At a fundamental level, we understand that the colonization processes that began many years ago and continue today have material and social consequences that diminish access to social determinants of health for both Indigenous women and men. Yet, as we have discussed, women have been especially marginalized through these processes and their lower social status is reflected in diminished resources and poor health. Health consequences for women have been identified, but largely within a western model of equating health with the absence of disease or illness (Newbold 1998). The wounds that result from the cultural ambiguity imposed on Indigenous women are harder to catalogue. They are perhaps demonstrated to us in the plight of the Indigenous women of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. This neighbourhood is home to thousands of Indigenous women who have been displaced from their reserve communities and extended families (Benoit, Carroll and Chaudhry 2003). They are socially and culturally isolated; live in poverty; and are often driven to substance use, violent relationships, and the street sex trade to survive and provide for their children (Benoit et al. 2003). Their material circumstances force acts of desperation, but the damage that has been done to their cultural identities can leave them without the foundation to cultivate health and well-being in their lives. Recent initiatives that have arisen out of results from the First Nations and Inuit Regional Health Survey (National Steering Committee) may offer some hope for these women, but they are still disadvantaged in benefiting from them. First, the development of culturally appropriate services will not be useful for women who have been excluded from the definition of that culture and excluded from the decision-making structures that will determine how Indigenous health resources are to be designed and distributed (Benoit et al. 2003; Grace 2003). Second, the research that serves as the foundation of these initiatives has not included many Indigenous women, both because women and children have been overlooked in the work (Young 2003), and because women who do not fit into research-defined categories of "Indian" or First Nations (derived from Federal categories) have not been included in the data collections.

My Personal Healing Journey—Finding My Roots

I began this paper with a quote from my Kookum who tells us to find our roots, our beginnings, so we can live a good life . . . so that we can be well. I have been on that journey since I was a child. The colonial policies and legislation stripped my family of our identity. It has taken me many years to find my roots and, I must admit, I am still on my healing journey. I would like to share what has assisted me to reclaim my identity . . . an identity that was taken, not given willingly. It began in earnest with the beat of a drum . . . *ba boom, ba boom, ba boom* . . .

Some time ago, my Kookum began talking about different traditional methods of facilitating healing. So many Indigenous people experience ongoing loss and trauma and do not know how to grieve. They don't know how to heal. I can relate to that. Loss of identity through assimilation policy (a polite term for genocide) remains one of the most difficult issues facing Indigenous Peoples. Like many other families, my family suffered identity loss and dealt with inter-generational pain, trauma and grief through addictions which often led to violence . . . which caused more pain, trauma and grief . . . and so the cycle goes. I have been trying to find a way to deal with trauma I experienced as a child for many years. Although I am proud to say I have reclaimed my identity and my culture, I have not been able to let go of the trauma. I decided that Kookum was right . . . if I didn't know how to heal, then I had to at least try to learn how, and since what I had been doing wasn't working, I began to embark on a healing journey with her help. I started to attend sweats and received my traditional name, Morningstar Bear. I earned my first feather and would go out on Mother Earth and pick medicines. One day I was out with Kookum, my eldest daughter, and my friend on the medicine wheel. We were having a great day just observing nature and picking medicine. We were walking up a hill when I heard singing and the beat of a drum. I was excited! I turned to the others and said, "Do you hear that? Where is it coming from?" I was sure that Kookum

would lead us over the hill to see people singing at a drum. However, no one else heard it. I stopped and could hear the song—"way hi oh way oh way way oh"—and the drumbeat was strong . . . ba boom ba boom ba boom ba boom—I looked at Kookum in bewilderment. "My girl," she said, "those are your ancestors calling to you." It was one of the most profound moments of my life, yet I still didn't fully understand her meaning . . . though it would become clear in time.

> Ba boom ba boom ba boom ba boom . . . you will be a strong child! Kicking your mama so hard . . . I was musing to myself as I let myself feel the vibrations of the drum. I closed my eyes to feel my baby kicking . . . not just kicking randomly but methodically to the beat of the drum. The first song ended . . . my baby stopped kicking. I laughed to myself . . . must be a coincidence . . . the second honour song starts . . . ba boom ba boom ba boom ba boom . . . My unborn child kicking to the beat of the drum.

It was a good day . . . a day of celebration. We had just finished a sweat with Kookum and many of my students were there. Some were graduating and others were just starting out, but it was a good sweat and a beautiful night. My eldest daughter, who had received her name a year before, sweated with us and she sat on my knee as we feasted and visited with our friends and extended family. Then four of the women got out their hand drums and stood in front of the fire. One of them, a wonderful, strong Métis woman, said that they were singing a song in honour of my recent accomplishment . . . obtaining my Ph.D. They sang "Strong Woman" and, although I hadn't heard it before, when they started singing to their drums it was like I had known it my whole life. I sang it with them, as did my daughter. I felt energy as I had never felt course through my body. My daughter held Kookum's drum and beat in rhythm with the women as if it were the most natural thing in the world . . . and perhaps it was. She asked if I wanted to drum: "no, my girl, you drum."

I was blessed with a second daughter, my Lillie, the second miracle. I have lupus and having two children was something that was almost unimaginable. I had two very premature babies on the very same day—January 2nd—eleven years apart. I was in the midst of dealing with some terrible trauma from childhood. Abuse that no child should ever endure, but it was a beautiful distraction to feel my child moving within me. I was so happy but also never so worried as my disease had progressed since I had my eldest Victoria. I was warned that so much could go wrong. But I sought out prayers and my Kookum told me this child, whom we had already named Lillie, would be everything I could not be. Say the things I could not say, do the things I could not do. I reflected on that throughout my pregnancy. You see, I don't share the details of my trauma often, but having Lillie, who is now nine years old, has helped me speak up. To have a voice and not be ashamed. I was sexually abused and, to be clear, I have not told her. But she has given me the courage to speak my truth and one day I know she will hear the truth, when the time is right. She will also know that it was she who helped me. Kookum was right. Lillie is a strong, feisty, truthful gift from Creator. When I was a child, I was scared all the time. I know I would not be here without my gramps who was my rock and, thankfully my protector until he passed when I was nineteen. I did not disclose that a female relative violated me in the most heinous way until I was thirty-five years old. I did not have a voice as a child. I was not courageous. I was lonely, confused, shy, trusted very few people, and I felt unloved. I yearned for love and affection. I prayed so hard for it. I felt lost and had no sense of identity. I often asked my gramps if I was adopted. I knew I wasn't, but I asked it because that is how I felt. I didn't feel part of my family with the one exception—my gramps.

I honestly never thought I would have children. I couldn't imagine that I had the skills to be a mother. The Elders that have come into my life have taught me that children are gifts and that they teach us. How true this is. Both of my girls have taught me so much. While it is certainly not their job to do so, both of my girls have helped me to heal and continue to do so in many ways because healing is not something that just ends. It will be a lifelong process. It really is a journey. Lillie has been drawn to ceremony from the time she could speak. I can remember her reminding me to put out "bacco" as we were rushing out the door and believe me, even if we were halfway to the babysitter, we were going back to put out prayers. She received her spirit name when she was five years old and fasted the entire day. She has many gifts and I know that she will never have to wonder who she is, and even if she is struggling in the rapids, which is bound to happen, she is being raised in ceremony and has a community of support surrounding her.

Thinking back, I have been called to the drum many times yet was unaware of it . . . or maybe I was. Perhaps I wasn't ready to let go of the pain. Maybe I was too comfortable with it. When you carry pain around with you your entire life it sometimes becomes so familiar that you wonder how you will feel if it's gone. So, either consciously or unconsciously, I avoided the repeated calls to the drum until one day not long ago when my Kookum introduced the drum to a group of grieving women. We gather in friendship and we lay our burdens down. I've never felt such energy as I do when I am at the drum. This group of women, wounded warriors, gather often, and although we've never shared our hurts and loss in words, we share it at the drum as we lay down our burdens. I know that I cannot change history and I also know that I cannot stay in a place of anger and resentment. No one can heal for me . . .

it is my responsibility. So, I am thankful for my women warriors, my sisters, my children, and for Kookum and for the strength I get from that drum. The drum is a gift from Creator, and it has allowed me to move forward. I am learning to grieve and that is the first step to being whole.

Miigwetch, Kookum and all my warrior sisters.

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1. This essay was originally published in Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada and is published here with the permission of Demeter Press. ↵
2. While there is no generally accepted definition of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, we assert that the term Indigenous Peoples refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples including non-status First Nations Peoples. These are the original inhabitants of

Turtle Island, or what is now Canada. ↵

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2.2: Video of Keynote Address by Maria Campbell at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women 2.2: Video of Keynote Address by Maria Campbell at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous WomenEdit Update titlecancel

Dr. Shauneen Pete, m.c. at the conference, introduces Maria Campbell. She briefly reflects on the impact Maria's work has had on Indigenous women, the hope and courage it has inspired in so many.

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2.3: Video of Keynote Address by Morningstar Mercredi at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women 2.3: Video of Keynote Address by Morningstar Mercredi at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous WomenEdit Update titlecancel

Morningstar Mercredi is introduced by Rev. Carla Blakley, m.c. at the 2008 conference. Carla was also co-chair of the conference along with Brenda Anderson.

Part One

Part Two

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Global History of Femicide

3.1: A Message from Amnesty International
3.2: Stolen Sisters- The Politics, Policies, and Travesty of Missing and Murdered Women in Canada
3.3: Resistance, Resilience, and Remembering- Juárenses Surviving Feminicide and the ‘Great Violence’ in Ciudad Juárez
3.4: Global Capitalism’s Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous Daughters
3.5: Update- Global Capitalism’s Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous Daughters
3.6: Video of Keynote Address by Marta Perez at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
3.7: From Genocide to Femicide- An Ongoing History of Terror, Hate and Apathy
3.8: The Role of Government Policies and Drug Cartels in Violence Against Indigenous Women in Guatemala

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3.1: A Message from Amnesty International 3.1: A Message from Amnesty InternationalEdit Update titlecancel

Crystal J. Giesbrecht & Gordon Barnes[1]

Amnesty International's research illustrates the connection between violence against Indigenous women in Canada and in Mexico. In 2003, Amnesty International published *Intolerable Killings: 10 Years of Abductions and Murders of Women in Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua*, focusing on a ten-year cycle of abductions and femicides—gender-based murders of girls and women—in northern Mexico. The report documented more than 370 cases of women killed in Ciudad Juárez and the city of Chihuahua. Of those cases, research indicated that at least 137 of the victims suffered some form of sexual violence and at least seventy of the total number of women murdered remained unidentified. At least seventy other women or girls also remained unaccounted for after having been officially reported missing.

At that time, Amnesty International called on representatives of the Mexican federal and state governments for an immediate and decisive intervention to ensure justice in Ciudad Juárez and the city of Chihuahua and for the state and municipal authorities to cooperate fully with these steps. In addition, Amnesty International called for an independent judicial review of the cases investigated by the Chihuahua Procuraduría General de Justicia del Estado (PGJE), State Prosecutor's Office, or brought before the courts. The goals of calling for a review were to:

- correct miscarriages of justice;
- investigate and punish any official responsible for abuses;
- set in motion substantive reform of the system of administration and procuration of justice in the state of Chihuahua;
- demonstrate respect for the dignity of relatives and the organizations working for women's rights;
- prevent, investigate, and punish intimidation or harassment against relatives and the organizations working for women's rights; and
- publicly recognize the legitimacy of their struggle.

Soon after beginning work on the issue of missing and murdered women in Mexico, Amnesty International began examining disappearances and killings of Indigenous women in Canada. In 2004, Amnesty International released its research report titled *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada*, documenting the thousands of Indigenous women who have been murdered or are missing. A follow-up to this report titled *No More Stolen Sisters: The Need for a Comprehensive Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* was issued in 2009.

Stolen Sisters linked high levels of violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls across Canada to deeply rooted patterns of social and economic marginalization and discrimination. This discrimination has put large numbers of Indigenous women and girls in situations of heightened vulnerability to violence, has helped fuel violent acts of hatred against them, and has denied Indigenous women and girls adequate protection under the law and in society as a whole. The report notes that similar concerns have been repeatedly brought to the attention of Canadian officials by Indigenous Peoples' organizations and by official inquiries.

In 2004, Amnesty International issued the following recommendations for all levels of government in Canada, based on the recommendations made by the families of missing women, frontline organizations working for Indigenous women's welfare and safety, official government inquiries and commissions, and standard interpretations of the human rights obligations of governments:

- acknowledge the seriousness of the problem;
- support research into the extent and causes of violence against Indigenous women;
- take immediate action to protect women at greatest risk;
- provide training and resources for police to make prevention of violence against women a genuine priority;
- address the social and economic factors that lead to Indigenous women's extreme vulnerability to violence; and
- end the marginalization of Indigenous women in Canadian society.

In *No More Stolen Sisters*, Amnesty provided revised recommendations for the federal government including:

- working in partnership with Indigenous women, representative organizations, and provincial and territorial officials to develop a comprehensive, coordinated national plan of action. The plan should include:
- the collection and publication of data on health, social, and economic conditions for Indigenous women in Canada;

- standardized police protocols for investigating missing persons cases including tools for fair and effective risk assessment for missing individuals;
- an improved system of transitioning initial missing persons cases into long-term missing persons cases or unsolved murders involving Indigenous women and other women at risk; and
- adequate, sustained, long-term funding to ensure the provision of culturally relevant services to meet the needs of Indigenous women and girls at risk of violence or who are in contact with the police and justice systems, including emergency shelters, court workers, victim services, and specific programs to assist women who have been trafficked within Canada.
- ensuring that funding for programs for Indigenous women, children, and families is equitable to those available to non-Indigenous people in Canada and is sufficient to ensure effective protection and full enjoyment of their rights, with particular priority being given to eliminating discrimination in funding for Indigenous child welfare;
- fulfilling the commitment set out in the Kelowna Accord to end inequalities in health, housing, education, and other services for Indigenous peoples;
- implementing the recommendations of the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Human Rights Committee concerning the treatment of women prisoners, including the creation of a new security risk assessment system; and
- implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Over a decade later, most of these recommendations have not been implemented. Data collected by the Canadian government and academic and community-based researchers shows that First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women and girls face much higher rates of violence than all other women and girls in Canada combined (Conroy, 2018; Dawson, Sutton, Carrigan, Grand'Maison, 2018). Large gaps in government support for services to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities deny Indigenous women and girls supports they need to escape and recover from this violence. In 2015, newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau promised a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples. That renewed relationship must also be firmly rooted in the federal government's commitment to gender equality for all women in Canada. The federal government has announced increases in funding for violence prevention programs for Indigenous women and girls, but the measures taken to date are not enough to close the gap in safety and support and to achieve equality.

In 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) issued ninety-four Calls to Action, including increasing permanent funding to programs for Indigenous Peoples, addressing the problems within the child welfare system, and opening a national public inquiry into "the causes of, and remedies for, the disproportionate victimization of Aboriginal women and girls" (4). Also in 2015, The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) investigated the situation of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada and provided recommendations to address the issue of missing and murdered women as well as the ongoing and systemic violence that Indigenous women in Canada face. Comprehensive recommendations were provided in the areas of combatting violence, improving socioeconomic conditions, overcoming the legacy of colonialism, ending discrimination against Indigenous women, and implementing a national inquiry and plan of action. CEDAW advised that these recommendations "should be considered and implemented as a whole" by the Government of Canada to effectively address the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women (54).

Recognizing the impacts of resource development on Indigenous women and girls, Amnesty conducted research in northeast BC and published *Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Gender, Indigenous Rights, and Energy Development in Northeast British Columbia, Canada* in 2016. The report explores how resource development benefits some people but further marginalizes and impoverishes others—overwhelmingly Indigenous women and girls. The report found that the industry both fuels violence and increases vulnerability to violence, leading to disproportionately high rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and a lack of culturally relevant services for Indigenous women and girls experiencing marginalization and violence.

In 2016, the federal government launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Amnesty urged the government to immediately take concrete action to implement the many outstanding recommendations from previous inquiries and Parliamentary committee studies to prevent further violence against Indigenous women and girls during the Inquiry. In June 2019, the National Inquiry released its final report which included 231 Calls for Justice to end the severe levels of violence experienced by First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women, girls, and two-spirit persons in Canada. The National Inquiry illustrated a clear link between the history of harmful government programs and policies and the ongoing failure to address the continuing legacy of those harms and the pervasive violence against Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit persons. The federal government has committed to developing a National Action Plan to prevent and address the violence, but at this time, details on how this commitment will translate into action are unclear. Following the National Inquiry, Amnesty International and other organizations called on Canada's Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs to provide a comprehensive response to the

Inquiry's final report before Parliament rose in June. This did not happen, and Amnesty continues to advocate for a coordinated and comprehensive National Action Plan on violence against women involving all levels of government.

In Regina, Amnesty International continues to partner with the Saskatchewan Sisters in Spirit group for an annual vigil on October 4, the National Day of Remembrance of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Canada. At a provincial Amnesty conference in 2014, attendees wrote the names of over 150 Indigenous women and girls from Saskatchewan who have been murdered or gone missing on a large banner. Names were obtained from a list compiled by Maryanne Pearce (2013). This banner continues to be used at public events, and new names continue to be added as ever more Indigenous women and girls lose their lives to violence. At events, Amnesty members are approached by a family member who asks if their loved one's name is on the banner. At times, it is a name that was not included in the original list (which speaks to the lack of a comprehensive database on missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada), and the family member adds their cousin's or sister's or daughter's or mother's or grandmother's name to the banner. We continue to add names to honour and remember the women while we await the year that there are no more names to add.

The tragic reality is that Indigenous women and girls continue to be murdered and are missing in communities here in Saskatchewan and in other parts of Canada. We are reminded of the urgent need for a comprehensive response almost daily. No one should suffer the grief of having a sister, mother, daughter, friend, family, or community member suddenly disappear, never to be seen again. No one should have to live in fear that she will be the next woman or girl to go missing. "There is not one cause of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and likewise, there is not one single solution. A comprehensive, coordinated, well-resourced national response, developed with Indigenous women and girls, is needed to end the violence" (Amnesty International Canada 2019). Canadian officials have a clear and inescapable obligation to ensure the safety of Indigenous women and girls, to bring those responsible for violence against them to justice, and to address the deeper systemic issues that have placed so many Indigenous women and girls in harm's way. Amnesty will continue to echo the calls for justice issued by Indigenous women and girls, Indigenous women's organizations, and affected families and communities until liberty, security, and the protection of human rights is a reality for all Indigenous women and girls.

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1. This chapter is dedicated to the women who have been stolen and to their families and communities. ↵

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3.2: Stolen Sisters- The Politics, Policies, and Travesty of Missing and Murdered Women in Canada 3.2: Stolen Sisters- The Politics, Policies, and Travesty of Missing and Murdered Women in CanadaEdit Update titlecancel

Wendee Kubik and Carrie Bourassa

In 2004, Amnesty International, in partnership with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), released a report documenting how the economic and social marginalization of Aboriginal women in Canada has led to a significant higher risk of violence against Aboriginal women. *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* told several of the stories of Aboriginal women and girls who had gone missing or were murdered in Canada. This groundbreaking report also documented how the violence was often met with official government indifference and systematic prejudice from various police forces. Prior to the *Stolen Sisters* report, government commissions and official inquiries such as the Manitoba Justice Inquiry, the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and a number of United Nations human rights bodies had already noted these problems. In addition, many of these previous inquiries and commissions presented concrete recommendations for reforms.

Since Amnesty International's 2004 report was released, several other investigations have been undertaken. Numerous recommendations have been presented to various governments and government bodies recommending measures to be taken to end these deaths and ameliorate the dire circumstances causing many Aboriginal women to go missing. However, the numbers of missing and murdered women continues to rise (Human Rights Watch, 2013a, 7). In this chapter, we offer a historical timeline relating to missing and murdered women, a critical analysis of why women continue to be victims of violence, and why Canada's federal Conservative government ignored the issue.

Historical Overview

In March 2004, in tandem with Amnesty's *Stolen Sisters* report, the NWAC launched the Sisters in Spirit (SIS) campaign to raise awareness of the extremely high rates of violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women in Canada. In November 2005, the federal government acknowledged the problem of violence against Aboriginal women and signed a five-year contribution agreement with the NWAC to address this racialized and sexualized violence. Sisters in Spirit received $5 million dollars over five years and used the money for research. They also recommended a number of actions to address some of the causes of violence against Aboriginal women (Hughes, 208). The main goals and objectives of the Sisters in Spirit initiative were to:

1. reduce the risks and increase the safety and security of all Aboriginal women and girls in Canada;
2. address the high incidence of violence against Aboriginal women, particularly racialized, sexualized violence, that is, violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women because of their sex and Aboriginal identity; and
3. increase gender equality and improve the participation of Aboriginal women in the economic, social, cultural, and political realms of Canadian society (209).

Two other events created a significant impact during this time period. The first was the Robert Pickton case in Vancouver, the second was the continuing reports of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls along Northern British Columbia's Highway 16, referred to as the Highway of Tears. Robert Pickton, a Port Coquitlam pig farmer and Canada's most notorious serial killer, was charged with the murder of women in more than twenty-six cases (although he confessed to an undercover officer that he killed forty-nine women in total). Pickton was convicted of the second-degree murder of only six of the twenty-seven women (twenty of the charges were stayed by the crown), and in 2007 he was sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for twenty-five years. The Pickton murder case, and the numerous incidents of missing and murdered women along Highway 16, substantially increased public attention to the violence Aboriginal women face. Because of these ghastly occurrences and the resulting media focus, knowledge about missing and murdered women, particularly Aboriginal women, was forefront in the media.

There were numerous calls for action and connections were made to the root causes, the reasons why these murders and disappearances were occurring. The government was criticized, not only about this issue but about a number of other problems facing Aboriginal people (e.g., inadequate housing on reserves, poverty, unemployment, and health issues). The government's reaction was to point out the funding that was given to the Sisters in Spirit initiative.

However, when the Sisters in Spirit's five-year funding agreement ended in 2010, the Conservative Government of Canada informed the NWAC that it would no longer fund Sisters In Spirit. The NWAC was also told that the Status of Women's Community Fund did not fund research, policy development, or advocacy so there would be no further consideration for Sisters In

Spirit (Barrera; Jackson). Like Sisters In Spirit, a number of other non-profit women's and advocacy groups lost funding and many disbanded.

In the March 2010 federal budget, the Conservative government allocated $10 million dollars to combat violence against Aboriginal women. The money was purportedly to address the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and to take action so that law enforcement and the justice system would meet the needs of Aboriginal women and their families (Government of Canada). This sounded hopeful; however, the Federal Government subsequently clarified that the $10 million would be spent over two years, and instead of directing funds to Aboriginal women's organizations, it would be distributed as follows: $4 million for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to establish a National Police Support Centre for Missing Persons, $1.5 million to Public Safety Canada to develop community safety plans to improve the safety of Aboriginal women within Aboriginal communities, $2.15 million to the Department of Justice Victims Fund, and $1 million to support the development of school- and community-based pilot projects (FAFIA, 14).

The allocation of funds was decided without consulting the NWAC, and it was not specifically designed to address violence against Aboriginal women, nor would it address the more serious forms of violence, such as murder. The Conservative government felt that there was no need for Sisters in Spirit to continue its research or maintain a database of information on missing and murdered Aboriginal women because the RCMP would receive funds to collect information on all missing persons (not just Aboriginal women). There was no mention of any of the underlying issues that contribute to the high rates of violence against Aboriginal women and girls such as poverty and racism. When the funding for Sisters in Spirit ended, the NWAC established a new program called Evidence to Action. The three-year project would receive $1.89 million in funding from the Status of Women for violence prevention beginning in February 2011. However, in a clear effort to silence growing criticism on this issue, one of the conditions of this new money was that the NWAC could no longer conduct any research into missing and murdered Indigenous women (Jackson).

In September 2010, the Government of British Columbia established the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry into the facts, decisions, and police investigations involved in the Pickton case. The Attorney General of British Columbia provided funding for one lawyer to represent some of the families of women murdered by Robert Pickton but did not provide funding to any of the civil society groups granted standing by the Commissioner. As a result, many of the groups that could have provided expert testimony on root causes and systemic issues were unable to participate in the inquiry's fact-finding process because they could not afford to.

In March 2011, the House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women (composed of Members of Parliament from all parties) released an interim report on violence against Aboriginal Women. This report recognized the need for a comprehensive approach to eliminating violence against Aboriginal women and girls. The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) noted that this report was particularly significant because it recognized that "poverty, racism, Canada's colonial history and systemic police failures are root causes of the violence and contributing factors to it" (19). Between April 2010 and February 2011, the Committee heard from over 150 witnesses from across Canada and subsequently concluded "that it is impossible to deal with violence against Aboriginal women without dealing with all of the other systems which make women vulnerable to violence and make it difficult for them to escape violence" (17). The Standing Committee found that poverty was repeatedly cited by witnesses as a root cause of the violence against Aboriginal women (18). Meanwhile, parliament was prorogued for the 2011 election, and in April the Conservative Party of Canada was re-elected. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women was reconstituted with only two of the previous members who had heard the testimony of the Aboriginal women and civil society organizations (19).

On December 12, 2011, the newly composed Standing Committee issued a Final Report on violence against Aboriginal women. This report abandoned the root cause approach that had previously identified poverty as one of the main causes of the violence experienced by Aboriginal women. The Conservative government refused to even consider implementing a national action plan to address the disappearances and murders or deal with the underlying causes of the violence against missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Because of the government's lack of action, FAFIA an alliance of more than eighty Canadian women's organizations, took up the case of the murdered and missing women. One of their central goals was to ensure that Canadian governments respect, protect, and fulfill the commitments they have made to women as a signatory to international human rights treaties and agreements, including the United Nations' *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination*. In December 2011, The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women announced that it was opening an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada. In 2008, the committee had called on the government "to examine the reasons for the

failure to investigate the cases of missing and murdered aboriginal women and to take the necessary steps to remedy the deficiencies in the system" (Human Rights Watch 2013b).

The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action submitted that Canada was in violation of Article 2 of the *Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.* In January 2011, a submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was prepared by Shelagh Day of FAFIA and Sharon McIvor outlining the case against Canada (Aboriginal Multi-Media Society). In February 2012, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) committee initiated an inquiry under Article 8 of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women. "FAFIA and NWAC requested this Inquiry because violence against Aboriginal women and girls is a national tragedy that demands immediate and concerted action," said Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, then President of NWAC (Aboriginal Multi-Media Society).

During this same time period, Human Rights Watch, the New York based international non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy on human rights, also began investigating the incidences of missing and murdered women. On February 13, 2013, Human Rights Watch released an eighty-nine page report titled "Those who take us away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada." This report documented not only the ongoing failure of police to protect Indigenous women and girls, but also the violent acts perpetrated by police officers themselves. Human Rights Watch stated that the RCMP failed to properly investigate a series of disappearances and suspected murders of Aboriginal women and called for the Canadian government to establish a national commission of inquiry into the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls, including the examination of the impact of police misconduct in communities along Highway 16, the Highway of Tears. Human Rights Watch stated: "With leadership from indigenous communities, [the government must] develop and implement a national action plan to address violence against indigenous women and girls that addresses the structural roots of the violence as well as the accountability and coordination of government bodies charged with preventing and responding to violence" (15). Human Rights Watch is clear that "unless the systematic problems of poverty, racism and sexism, the underlying social and economic problems, are dealt with we will continue to have missing and murdered women" (2013b). Meghan Rhoad, women's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch, argues that "The threat of domestic and random violence on one side and mistreatment by RCMP officers on the other leaves indigenous women in a constant state of insecurity." She asks, "Where can they turn for help when the police are known to be unresponsive and, in some cases, abusive" (Human Rights Watch, 2013b).

The UN Secretary General, in combination with the United Nations' *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), said that national action and national strategies are needed worldwide to end violence against Aboriginal women and girls (NWAC media release March 8, 2013). On the same day, NWAC again requested a national inquiry for missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations renewed their own call for a National Public Commission of Inquiry. Opposition parties and Aboriginal leaders such as Shawn Atleo, then National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, called for a public commission inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada.

In April 2013, Canada's provincial Aboriginal Affairs minister said they believe a national inquiry is needed to examine why Aboriginal women are seven times more likely to die of violence than other Canadian women (Winnipeg Free Press). On April 17, 2013, nine of Canada's provinces called for a national inquiry. The provinces also asked that Ottawa consult with them, the territories, and Canada's five national Aboriginal organizations to set the terms of reference for an inquiry (Paul). Parliament agreed to appoint a special committee on the matter of missing and murdered Aboriginal women but resisted calls for a national inquiry. Then on May 1, 2014, the RCMP released statistics that indicated nearly 1200 Aboriginal women had been murdered or gone missing in Canada in the previous 30 years; about 1000 murder victims, and approximately 186 disappearances (LeBlanc). RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson stated, "I think there's 4 per cent of aboriginal women in Canada; I think there's 16 per cent of the murdered women are aboriginal, 12 per cent of the missing women are aboriginal. So clearly an overrepresentation" (LeBlanc).

Conservative Prime Minister Steven Harper in 2014 continued to dismiss the calls for a national inquiry, arguing that the deaths should be viewed as individual crimes and not as a "sociological phenomenon" (Singh), thus denying the links to poverty, racism, the colonial past, lack of housing, and the dire living conditions that Aboriginal people in Canada face every day. In August 2014, the outcome of a meeting between provincial premiers and national Aboriginal groups was the decision to hold a National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Ottawa in February 2015. It included the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, and the Native Women's Association of Canada as well as Federal Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt, Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch, and representatives from each of the provinces and territories. The limited outcome was a commitment to keep talking and begin nationwide prevention and awareness campaigns. There was also an agreement to hold another meeting at the end of 2016 (Smith).

Again, in February 2015, the Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence against Aboriginal Women, a national coalition of advocacy groups including Amnesty International, released a report critical of the RCMP's report "Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: Operational Overview." The report concluded that the federal government had ignored most of the more than 700 recommendations contained in fifty-eight reports on violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. Forty of the studies were from the federal government. The study also showed that only a handful of the 700 recommendations had been acted on. Numerous groups continued to call for a national inquiry and the Conservative government steadfastly refused to agree, stating that there had already been numerous reports documenting the issues. Yet, few of those reports had been acted on.

Moreover, while the RCMP's report factually highlighted that Aboriginal women are a marginalized population who experience higher rates of violence, unemployment, substance abuse, and over-representation in the sex trade, there were concerns with how these facts were reported. In what amounts to clear victim blaming and pointing to supposedly high-risk lifestyles, the often dire circumstances faced by many Aboriginal women were presented as risk factors (Bourgeois, 2018). Similarly, by positioning the homicides as a result of relationship violence, highlighting the fact that Aboriginal women, for the most part, knew their perpetrators, not only are the victims blamed, so too are Aboriginal men and Aboriginal families. The report failed to point out that the risk factors are linked to much deeper systemic issues including the history of colonization and the resulting pervasive poverty in most communities. The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) noted that the risk factors raised in the report such as alcoholism/drug abuse, sex trade work, and intimate partner violence are all linked to the lack of safe access to transportation and housing and the continued legacy of settler colonialism, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping (Hodge). Moreover, colonization has not ended and continues in new forms through Indian Act policy and legislation.

In fact, on October 7, 2015, despite several Aboriginal women having gone missing along the Highway of Tears (Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George, BC), Bob Zimmer, the Conservative MP for the region, said that the violence was a result of unemployment: "One of the major drivers of missing and murdered aboriginal women is lack of economic activity or, simply put, a lack of a job" (CBC News). Zimmer went on to say that many women don't want to leave the reserve and that puts them at risk because little employment can be found on reserve; in essence, again blaming the women for their own victimization.

What is of particular concern is how Indigenous women and men are being stigmatized through the reporting of high rates of intimate partner violence. The 2014 RCMP report indicated that 62 percent of murders of Indigenous women and girls reported by the RCMP were acts of domestic violence committed by a spouse, former spouse, family member, or intimate partner (Amnesty International, 2015). What was not highlighted in the report or in the media was that this rate is significantly lower than the rate of domestic violence reported in the general population: 74 percent of the murders of non-Aboriginal women are committed by intimate partners and family members (Amnesty International, 2015). While the report demonstrates that most female homicide victims had a previous relationship to the perpetrators, Amnesty points out the fact that Aboriginal women were more likely than non-aboriginal women to be murdered by a casual acquaintance (including neighbors, employers, and what police call authority figures) or a total stranger was largely ignored. In the twenty-two-year period covered by the RCMP report, acquaintances were responsible for the murder of 300 Indigenous women and attacks by strangers account for almost 10 percent of homicides—eighty-one murders of Indigenous women or girls (Amnesty International, 2015).

While no one is denying that intimate partner violence (IPV) is an issue in Indigenous communities, these are not unique situations. We know IPV occurs in homes across Canada, yet in the RCMP report, Indigenous women are stigmatized and marginalized. As Amnesty International (2015) notes:

> It's generally understood that the majority of acts of violence against women and girls are committed by someone from the same ethnic group or background. As many commentators have pointed out, the unique significance that the government is attaching to the Indigenous identity of many of the perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women and girls is part of a wider social narrative that places the responsibility for violence against Indigenous women and girls solely on Indigenous communities themselves.

Although the RCMP Commissioner has the ability to release comparative figures so that Indigenous people would not be further stigmatized and marginalized, to date that has not happened.

Underlying Structural Problems to be Addressed

Calls for change and action have been reiterated time and time again since Amnesty's *Stolen Sisters* paper was published in 2004. The focus for change has been on the *structural* components that cause and enable violence against women. In order to help stop violence against Aboriginal women, these factors must be addressed. Amnesty International's 2009 report, *No More Stolen Sisters* noted that poverty, racism, Canada's colonial history, and systemic police failures are both the root causes of the violence and

contributing factors to it (2). By ignoring the structural components of violence against women, it is not only allowed to continue but simultaneously encouraged through lack of accountability. Two facets of the problem identified by Aboriginal families and non-government organizations, including NWAC, Amnesty International, and the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action are:

1. the failure of police to protect Aboriginal women and girls from violence and to investigate promptly and thoroughly when they are missing or murdered, and
2. the disadvantaged social and economic conditions in which Aboriginal women and girls live that makes them vulnerable to violence and unable to escape it (Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, 2012).

These two issues were highlighted by United Nations treaty bodies including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2006 and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2007. Canada accepted the underlying principles in these recommendations; however, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in reviewing Canada's compliance, acknowledged that, although a working group had been established, there were still many cases of murdered or missing Aboriginal women that had not been fully investigated (Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action 2012).

CEDAW recommended that Canada "develop a plan for addressing the particular conditions affecting aboriginal women, both on and off reserves," which include "poverty, poor health, inadequate housing, low school completion rates, low employment rates, low income and high rates of violence" (9). Canada was to report back in 2009 and did so; however, FAFIA, the British Columbia CEDAW group, and Amnesty indicated that Canada had taken no adequate action to address the problems.

Analysis: Colonial, Systematic Racist, and Sexist Attitudes Still Occurring

It has been more than a decade since "Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada" was released by Amnesty International and NWAC. The issue of missing and murdered women has been forefront in the news, and awareness has been raised across Canada. Pressure has been put on governments, agencies and police forces asking them to deal with this national problem. The government of Canada has taken a few steps to address the murders and disappearances, but the persistence of the violence indicates a need for a comprehensive plan of action.

The federal Conservative government did agree to establish a parliamentary committee to study the issue, but Aboriginal women's lives remain at risk, in part because of the failure of Canadian officials to implement critical measures needed to reduce the marginalization of Aboriginal women in Canada. Economic, social, and health problems caused by systemic poverty among Aboriginal populations have time and again been demonstrated and linked as causes of violence. One of the most recent examples is the poverty and inadequate housing on the Attawapiskat reserve in northern Ontario. This was one of the reasons for Theresa Spence's hunger strike and the start of the Idle No More Movement. Time and again, Canada's Conservative government has demonstrated a lack of will to make the changes that would stop these incidents from occurring. Neo-liberal policies have cut funding and curbed the voices calling for action and change. There have been changes in mandates of organizations and government policy so the focus can only be on what the government agenda has deemed acceptable. For example, under the federal Conservative government, strict procedures were put in place delineating how scientists can speak about and publish their research (Manasan). Why was there so much resistance to addressing this problem by the federal Conservatives? It is widely understood that the roots of the on-going patterns of violence experienced by too many Aboriginal women in Canada are to be found in the processes and dynamics of colonialism (Bourgeois). In the case of Canada, there was a dual process of colonialism, first involving European powers and then internally by the Canadian state. The situation of Aboriginal people in these processes varies, in some cases being incorporated into commercial networks only to be cast aside at the whim of unfavourable market conditions. In other cases, they were deemed irrelevant or even problematic to economic development and were treated accordingly (Daschuk; Carter).

A patriarchal gender order accompanied and informed the activities of the European external colonizers and internal colonization by the Canadian state. Patriarchy is a gender hierarchy in which men are dominant and masculinity tends to be esteemed, and in which major social institutions, practices, and ideological frameworks support, legitimize, and facilitate male and masculine domination and the oppression and exploitation of women, many other men and the concomitant devaluation of femininity.

The role of racism in the operation and justification of colonialism has been well documented, as have the intersections of racism and patriarchy. The fact is that, having lost their land, political independence, cultural and social institutions, and entire way of life, many Indigenous people in Canada face increasing rates of poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, and declining heath statuses. In order to avoid the negative effects inherent in racist patriarchal colonialism, federal governments in Canada would have had to engage in systematic deliberate sustained alliances with First Nations to support mutual actions and policies to address and

redress this deleterious impact of the centuries. This did not (and could not have) happen under the federal Conservative government. In order to address the multiple root causes of the high rates of missing and murdered Aboriginal women, they would have needed to spend money to rectify numerous issues. This would not resonate with its traditional base of conservative voters who would not see it as a good investment. The current manifestation of this ideology of extreme individualism is marked by a denigration of the common good and any notion of the commonweal.

In October 2015, a federal election brought the Liberal government of Justin Trudeau to power. Trudeau had campaigned on promises to call an inquiry into missing and murdered women and a promise of more funding to First Nations for health and education. On December 8, 2015, the federal government called for an inquiry and cross-country consultations have been initiated with First Nations groups, organizations, and the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women. The Federal budget brought down on March 22, 2016 included funding for Aboriginal communities and a renewed relationship with Indigenous Peoples, so there is hope for change.

Conclusions

Over the past years, the political will to implement change and address the structural problems and violence Aboriginal women face in Canada has been lacking. The roots of this violence are inextricably linked to Canada's colonial past, the racism perpetrated against First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, and the resulting poverty, food insecurity, and sexism and misogyny that women, particularly Aboriginal women, experience. During the Conservative government of Steven Harper, there was a lack of political will to address the problems faced by marginalized groups, particularly Indigenous women because, by conservative logic, it is not up to the government to fight racism, sexism, poverty, health disparities, inadequate housing, or even to support NGOs that might address these issues. Stephen Harper was crass enough to say MMIW were "not on the radar". The role of the government was seen as supporting and reinforcing the operation of the market and ensuring that private individuals were left free to fend for themselves. This system resulted in over 1200 missing or murdered Aboriginal women.

Canada claims to be a democratic country that values equality and fairness. Clearly, for equality to exist, the persistent underlying causes of inequality need to be addressed. Advocacy and people who advocate for justice need to be allowed to speak. The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has designated October 4 as a day to remember and honour the lives of the many missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada as well as to offer support to families who have been tragically touched by the loss of a loved one to violence. In 2014, there were a record breaking 264 Sisters In Spirit Vigils registered across Canada with most major media outlets covering the stories. Walk 4 Justice, which has carried out a walk across Canada each summer since 2006 to talk with Aboriginal families and communities about missing women, believes that there are many cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls that have gone undocumented by police or media. The large numbers of missing and murdered women have deep roots in the structures of our society, roots that must be addressed in a systematic manner so justice for Indigenous women and girls can prevail. This call has been echoed by the United Nations and numerous international and global human rights organizations. Until the murders stop, the shame is Canada's.

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3.3: Resistance, Resilience, and Remembering- Juárenses Surviving Feminicide and the 'Great Violence' in Ciudad Juárez 3.3: Resistance, Resilience, and Remembering- Juárenses Surviving Feminicide and the 'Great Violence' in Ciudad JuárezEdit Update titlecancel

Cynthia Bejarano, Ph.D.

Introduction: The 'Great Violence' and a Community's Determination to Resist

During moments of grave adversity, communities demonstrate their resilience by engaging in acts of civil disobedience to protect themselves. Extraordinary displays of resistance and courage take place in Juárez every day[1]. Since the 2008 conference, "Missing Women: Decolonization, Third Wave Feminism, and Indigenous People of Canada and Mexico," at the First Nations University of Canada and the University of Regina, violence has overwhelmed Juárez and forever changed it. Fear, death, and devastation characterized the city and surrounding region from 2006 to roughly 2012, in what journalist Kent Patterson has simply called the 'Great Violence.' Although the feminicides[2] that made Juárez infamous continued across the state of Chihuahua, they were overshadowed by this greater violence, as headlines of macabre killings linked to cartel violence made international headlines. The fighting was principally fueled by drug violence as feuding Mexican rivals—the Juárez and Sinaloa cartels—fought for control of the plazas, the lucrative clandestine corridors used to transport drugs across the U.S. border.

Then Mexican President Felipe Calderón launched a war on drugs that mirrored the failing war on drugs that the U.S. has fought and defended for over forty years. The U.S. enthusiastically supported Calderón's drug war in Mexico but failed to take a critical stance, outside of progressive circles, on the colossal U.S. consumer drug market that contributes to an estimated $426 to $652 billion worldwide drug industry (Tharook 2017). The appetite for drugs in the U.S. has driven much of the bloodshed that came to broadly depict life in Juárez and across regions of Mexico. It directly led to the now more than 100,000 deaths and over 30,000 disappearances that have resulted from the Mexican war on drugs and its lingering aftermath (www.mileno.com). Many experts argue that the carnage has not dissipated since 2006 and that the above numbers should be doubled to accurately depict the total number of deaths. Since 2006, violence ensued at a feverish pace and government officials responded with an unbridled military and policing force that only exacerbated human rights atrocities, assaults, disappearances, kidnappings, and deaths. Chihuahua state authorities, along with the Mexican military, were accused of large-scale systemic corruption, impunity, and human rights violations. For example, between 2007 and 2009, in an operation called Operativo Conjunto Chihuahua, President Calderón deployed 5,000 troops to fight drug cartels and street violence, such as kidnappings, car jackings, extortion schemes, robberies, and drug cartel murders (Bejarano and Morales 2011).

During the 'Great Violence,' people were equally fearful of cartels and corrupt law enforcement at both the federal and state level, and they remained terrified of the rising tide of street level crimes. The uptick in everyday violence that impacted ordinary citizens included *narco* deaths[3], and the subsequent impunity for criminals whose crimes went unresolved or were not investigated. The Mexican criminal justice system was overwhelmed. Any references to feminicides were ancillary to the anxieties and violence of the everyday. From 2006 to 2012, murder victims were popularly portrayed as active participants in the drug trade. Murdered women were unfairly characterized as drug mules, extortionists, or drug traffickers. Debates as to which murders constituted feminicides erupted with arguments as to the accuracy of the number of deaths, the reason for the deaths, and whose deaths were over- or undervalued. Men's deaths also suffered from the same judgement; the death toll for men was ten times that of women.

Investigations into feminicides nearly halted when the Mexican criminal justice system, especially its medical examiner's offices and criminal investigations unit, was saturated with assassination investigations. Bodies arrived at the morgue faster than personnel could work to preserve and/or work to identify corpses or remains. Over this period, approximately 13,000 people were killed in Juárez; 2010 marked the deadliest year with 3,075 murders (Villagran, 2014 as cited in Prieto, Morales, and Bejarano 2014). This number does not include statewide deaths, disappearances or bodily harm suffered across the state of Chihuahua due to Calderón's drug war. Ordinary people fell victim to extortion, random and targeted kidnappings, and street-level violence.

This violence dramatically altered socio-cultural practices across the city. Juárenses curtailed their evening activities and outings, retreating to their homes before dark and relegating social activities to house parties or other intimate gatherings. Warnings to go home before dark were no longer restricted to young women for fear of feminicide; this message was relayed to all citizens. I remember friends sharing that house parties would at times turn into sleepovers, so that people would not have to return home late at night. Some gatherings were restricted to only small circles of friends or family. When driving, people were on their guard at

stop signs and stop lights. Many carried only the minimum amount of cash needed. Others carried only one or no forms of identification for fear of being robbed or later extorted. Some women journalists I know carried a purse with nominal cash and lay it on the passenger seat of their cars. If accosted, they could hand their assailant that purse, while hiding their identification and other items elsewhere in their vehicles or on their bodies. People learned to maneuver themselves strategically. Physical and psychological fears remained stark features of daily life acutely embedded in one's psyche.

I continued to travel to Juárez and Chihuahua during all but two years (2010 to 2012) of this 'Great Violence.'[4] In 2008, I remember the arrival of an unparalleled military presence. I was in Chihuahua City during my sabbatical volunteering with the Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (Center for Women's Human Rights). Witnessing soldiers atop military vehicles driving down the streets of Chihuahua City was terrifying; people across the city felt a profound change in how everyday life functioned. Soldiers also inundated Juárez, and the number of military checkpoints grew. Bogus checkpoints staged by cartels and other criminal entities appeared throughout Juárez and across Chihuahua. When approaching a checkpoint across the state of Chihuahua, one did not know who they would encounter: military, law enforcement, or *narcos.* At times, it seemed as if all three were in collusion with each other.

Gunshots were common in some segments of Juárez. For instance, in one account of violence retold to me by a sister of a feminicide victim, she once heard gunshots as someone was executed across the street while she sat in traffic. Her children asked if they were fireworks, and she said 'yes.' As they drove down the road, she told them to duck in the backseat because the fireworks were so powerful that they might get hurt; it was midday. Stories like this were common. The same family once called on me to contribute to a monetary collection; an extended family member had been kidnapped in a *secuestro express*, a common practice at the time, where criminals would kidnap an arbitrary person for ransom. The family desperately worked with the police kidnapping unit to negotiate with kidnappers for their loved one's safe return. People paid what they could, as kidnapping units instantly sprouted from local police departments because of the proliferation of kidnappings. Virtually anyone could be a target; people with businesses were usually at greater risk. At the time, *secuestros express* and other forms of extortion and violence were in part due to the greater decay of the city associated with cartel wars and economic recession (Morales, Prieto, Bejarano 2014).

The Exodus from Juárez and the Paso del Norte Region's Transformation

Over this challenging period, victimization was boundless. The affluent and poor of Juárez received menacing phone calls from mysterious callers demanding a *cuota*, an extortion fee to protect their businesses or homes. If people did not pay the *cuota*, they were beaten, kidnapped, or even killed. According to Juárez sociologist Alberto Ochoa-Zezatti, roughly 450,000 people fled Juárez from 2007 to 2011 (Cave 2013 as cited in Prieto, Morales, and Bejarano 2014). By 2008, between 30,000 and 125,000 Juárenses had relocated across the international border to El Paso, Texas, and over 10,000 businesses closed from 2007 to 2011 (Martinez et al. 2011; O'Rourke and Byrd 2011 as cited in Morales, Prieto, and Bejarano 2014). The number of people that returned to Juárez is unknown. At one point, the Juárez mayor had also relocated to El Paso for his safety and crossed into Juárez daily for work. He received sharp criticism by Juárenses who remained in Juárez (Sanchez 2009).

The binational region was transformed with the affluent moving to El Paso and the surrounding area and re-establishing businesses from Juárez like popular restaurants that El Pasoans would frequent when visiting Mexico (Prieto, Morales, and Bejarano 2014). One symbolic development was a *mercado*, an open-air market akin to the famous *mercados* of Juárez. It was built in the downtown El Paso district, the Segundo Barrio, only a few city-blocks from one of the international bridges linking the two cities. These popular simulacra of Juárez in El Paso continued for some years. They seemed to indicate to El Pasoans and tourists that it was no longer necessary to cross into Mexico to enjoy the culture and cuisine of Juárez. The simulacra were widespread.

As a border person who has crossed into Juárez throughout my life, I was saddened and dismayed at these changes. At the same time, I sympathized with the Mexican diaspora relocating across the international boundary, often asking myself if I would do the same to safeguard my family. The reverberating message in the region was that safety in Juárez was dubious, and despite efforts to live routine lives, El Pasoans and others curtailed visits to Juárez or visited with trepidation. Some applied the tactics that frequent border crossers used of walking across the international bridge to Juárez rather than driving, or visitors only carried identification with the absolute minimum amount of cash. For people engaged in writing about human rights and social justice as journalists, or who were directly working against *narco* violence, gender-based violence, and state violence, or the culmination of all three, fleeing Mexico was their only option.

The Activist Diaspora, Political Asylum and Chronic Threats

Some people sought political asylum across the border in the U.S. while seeking refuge with relatives or other potential sponsors[5]. Those with no U.S. contacts were forced into the infamous immigrant detention center in El Paso, popularly known as *El Corralon*

(large yard) to await their asylum hearings. Some activist women and their families, such as Cipriana Jurado and Marisela Ortiz, who were involved in the anti-feminicidio movement and in fighting cartel and military violence, were forced to flee the city.

Cipriana, a well-known labor rights activist turned anti-feminicide activist in the 1990s, fled Juárez in June 2010. Prior to her leaving Juárez, she was apprehended by plainclothesmen claiming to be federal police officers in 2008. She was placed in police custody but was ultimately released the following day after immense local pressure by a well-known Mexican congressman and local activists (Rivas 2011). Cipriana continued to confront tremendous scrutiny and received threats to her life, which led her to make the painful decision of fleeing Mexico during this time and to seek political asylum in the U.S.

Another prominent activist, Marisela Ortiz, a journalist and schoolteacher turned anti-feminicide activist, fled Juárez because she feared for her life after her daughter's fiancée (and later her brother) were killed in Juárez (Rivas 2011). Marisela began her activist work when her 17-year-old student, Lilia Alejandra Garcia Andrade, was killed on February 14, 2001. Marisela, Norma Andrade (Lilia Alejandra's mother) and Maria Luisa Andrade (Lilia Alejandra's sister) co-founded the well-known Juárez non-profit Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (May our Daughters Return Home). All three women fled Juárez after their lives were threatened.

Others, like Mexican journalists and even Mexican law enforcement, sought asylum in the U.S. Journalists have systemically been targeted for their coverage of *narco* violence, state corruption and impunity, and the feminicides. Journalists with Reporters without Borders claim that Mexico ranked the deadliest country for the news media in the western hemisphere (Borunda 2017). It is safe to say that threats to journalists come from numerous places, and the threat of violence to journalists is ubiquitous. In March 2017, Miroslava Breach Velducea, a Chihuahua City based journalist and editor of the *El Norte* newspaper in Juárez and a correspondent for the national Mexican newspaper, *La Jornada*, was gunned down in the driveway of her home as she was taking her son to school. Some accounts of Miroslava's death claimed that she was reporting on cartel activity in Chihuahua City and was killed because of this. Overwhelmingly, and despite unrelenting violence, most people remained in Juárez, as all of Mexico was ravaged by the drug war.

Fear continued to dominate people's lives. A life-long activist and key organizer in the anti-feminicide movement in Chihuahua City told me that, "he would leave his house not knowing if he would return home that evening." He and others made statements like this often. I still cringe when thinking of it. This sentiment was also echoed by activists and ordinary citizens. Local authorities and law enforcement could not, with any great success, protect the citizens of Chihuahua. Justice systems were, and still are, beleaguered with criminal cases or are void of any real ability or resolve to fight crime. Justice remains arbitrary with approximately 93.7 percent of criminal cases in 2015 going unsolvedthroughout Mexico. The Mexican National Institute of Geographic Statistics has referred to this number as "the black statistic," since few criminal cases are solved; they noted a slight increase in resolved cases in 2015 by less than one percentage point from 92.8 percent in 2014 (INEGI 2016). Citizens justifiably have lost faith in their justice system.

Responding to the 'Great Violence,' an Insistence to Resist

Throughout the 'Great Violence,' people did not call the police for assistance; instead, they relied on each other for protection as a form of community security. When taken to an extreme, however, this mutual protection was akin to vigilante justice. One unforgettable story is of a small Chihuahua agricultural community named Ascension that took justice into their own hands in 2010. Locals did not typically call police due to their mistrust of authorities, so the people from Ascension took guards' shifts around their small town.

During a botched kidnapping attempt by local young men operating as a self-made kidnapping unit, violence unfolded. The adolescents attempted to abduct a seventeen-year-old girl from a restaurant where she worked, but they failed when community members chased their get-away vehicles. Police and military personnel and family and friends were called by the girl's father to search for her. The girl was rescued and several of the kidnappers were arrested by local police; two were apprehended by community members.

Some of the kidnappers were transferred to Juárez, but two of the youth were beaten by community members. Fearful that police would take the kidnappers to Juárez and release them without a trial, people blocked the police and paramedics from reaching the two young assailants. They eventually suffocated inside the police car where temperatures reached 100 degrees with the windows rolled up. Ironically, the police had kept the windows rolled up for the kidnappers' own safety (Sierra 2010). Although this is an extreme case, for local authorities and the international community, it reinforced that legitimate government involvement was needed to curtail the violence. It also illustrated how people were willing to take matters into their own hands if the police were

unwilling to. People were exhausted and outraged from the continuing violence. Their efforts to protect their beloved city and families weighed heavily on everyone.

The family and friends of Juárenses on the northern side of the international line were also perpetually warned about the violence. A local El Paso, Texas news station covering the Paso Del Norte region (Chihuahua, Mexico; Texas; and New Mexico), initiated a daily segment exclusively on the death toll and violence in Juárez. Juárez was represented as a danger zone, with discussions of sending the U.S. National Guard to 'protect' the U.S. side of the border in case violence spilled into the States (Estrada, Keck, Rodriguez, and Starr 2009). The issue of spillover violence was perpetually exaggerated in this region, but it gained momentum along major drug routes into the U.S., especially in border regions like Juárez-El Paso and in south Texas/south eastern Mexico's Laredo-Nuevo Laredo border region. This era personified social fears, scapegoating, and the criminalization of an entire nation, despite the rationale for so much of the violence pointing to U.S. drug demand and consumption.

Families were destroyed, businesses and homes were abandoned, and the traumatic series of deadly events over so many years seemed to continue without end. Still, life went on for Juárenses and people across the state of Chihuahua determined to live ordinary lives, despite the adjustments to regular street routes and routines, and the curtailment of daily schedules. Embedded in this history was a dogged refusal to accept this conflict and carnage. This refusal to succumb to violence is the most significant of narratives.

Reminiscent of the cries for justice that mothers of feminicide victims have demanded for over twenty years, people organized against this large-scale violence. Youth, civic-society, and anti-feminicide groups were at the helm of activist work. Sizeable protests took place early in the 'Great Violence' period where thousands of people marched on the streets of Juárez demanding a stop to the random and targeted cartel and street violence. During one protest, Juárez youth lay symbolically on a street in the protest's path as if they had been assassinated. One impromptu protest took place in May 2009, after the random death of Manual Arroyo Galván, a professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Júarez. He was shot several times en route to El Paso, Texas, when he refused to surrender his car during a carjacking. His students and others took to the streets, drawing inspiration from the Argentine-based artist, Fernando Traverso, who used a bicycle to "represent the disappeared and missing from Argentina's Dirty War" (Driver 2015, 41). The region exploded in anger as people fiercely mobilized in response to these acts of violence, determined to take their communities back.

People throughout the U.S. borderlands were similarly outraged since the violence had reverberating effects across the region. Families and friends in the U.S. also lost loved ones to the violence. People in El Paso and southern New Mexico held several protests in solidarity with activists in Juárez. During a protest in 2009 in a desolate, sandy spot in Sunland Park, New Mexico, across from Juárez, people on both sides of the border joined to protest the bloodshed (Figure 1). In this picture, children from Lomas de Poleo, a neighborhood on the edge of Juárez abutting the international border fence, play volleyball with U.S. protestors[6]. While Paula Flores[7] and I visited with each other through the international fence, the U.S. border patrol watched from nearby, as armed Mexican *federales* on the opposite side of the fence watched the protest unfold (Figure 2).



Figure 1: Paula Flores and I talking through the U.S.–Mexico border fence during an Anti-Violence Protest in 2009. Photo courtesy of Jeff Shepherd.



Figure 2: U.S. Border Patrol watching protestors as Mexican federales surveilled Mexican protestors at the international fence. Photo courtesy of author.

I remember feeling inept and anxious at the thought of Paula, or the other activists I admire and love being arrested, because the border fence barred those of us on the U.S. side from being able to do anything. I imagine Paula and others would have felt the same if the U.S. border patrol would have sprung on us as well. Authorities on both sides warily looked at the peaceful assembly of people as they sat in their SUVs or trucks. Some of them stood near their vehicles closely watching the crowd, more annoyed at the assembly then concerned over children playing volleyball across the fence, or activists demanding action from the uniformed men that represented Mexican and U.S. nation-states.

Mothers of the missing and murdered, anti-feminicide activists, clergy, journalists, and other community members congregated on both sides of the border chanting anti-violence slogans with hopes that our collective voices would be heard. Lucha Castro and Gabino Gomez (Figure 3), two anti-feminicide activists from Chihuahua City and co-founders with others of the Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (CEDEHM) (Center for Women's Human Rights), and Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas (Justice for Our Daughters), stood on the Mexican side of the international fence during this same protest. We visited and talked, touching hands through the fence. Handshakes through the fence had to replace the warm embraces of solidarity that typically accompanied visits. As a member of the Chihuahua based Mujeres de Negro (Women in Black), Lucha was wearing the group's ubiquitous pink hat that stated, "Ni Una Mas" (Not one More). Both were looking through the international fence with banners and images denouncing the violence.



Figure 3. Lucha Castro and Gabino Gomez looking at U.S. protestors during the Anti-Violence Protest in 2009. Photo courtesy of author.

Lucha and Gabino launched leaflets over the fence to me to distribute to protestors on the U.S. side of the border (Figure 4). The leaflets included information on Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas and statistical information on the violence in Chihuahua. I caught the leaflets as they fell from the sky, like protest messages from heaven. I waited for the U.S. border patrol to confiscate them, but they did not.



Figure 4 Gabino Gomez in Juárez leaning on a ladder propped against the international fence dropping leaflets at me to distribute on the U.S. side. Photo courtesy of author.

Although the visual representations and rallying cries of the many protests were uniquely different, they suggested that the anti-feminicide movement was a constant tide against turbulent political, economic, and social unrest. At the border protest, one activist mother, Olga Esparza, mother of Mónica Janet Alanís Esparza, an eighteen-year-old university student attending the Universidad Autónoma de Juárez, who went missing in 2009, spoke to journalists. Standing on a platform on the Juárez side of the border, Olga spoke into a microphone about her missing daughter and desperately relayed her daughter's story of disappearance, while hoping to still find her alive.

Since approximately 1993, several women and girls' bodies have been found. In some instances, three to eight victims were found in the same location (Candia et. al. 1999; Washington Valdez 2006; Fregoso and Bejarano 2010; Staudt and Mendez 2015; Lozano 2019). Some of the geographic locations were near or in the vast desert area close to Juárez: the Lote Bravo, the Cerro del Cristo Negro, the Loma Blanca, the Campo Algodonero, and the Arroyo Navajo in 2012[8]. According to Lozano, in June 2016, eight women's bodies were found over one week in a river canal near the El Paso/Juárez border (2019). One of the most well-documented cases of feminicide was the finding of eight young women (some only girls) in the Campo Algodonero in 2001, which later helped set legal precedent on the murders of women and girls in Mexico through the inter-American court system.

The **Campo Algodonero as Legal Framework for Future Feminicide Cases**

The discovery of the women's bodies on November 5 and 6, 2001 became an iconic story. Irma Monreal, Josefina González, and Benita Monárrez were the lead petitioners in the case of González et al. ("Campo Algodonero") v. México, which was decided by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) on December 10, 2009. The case was admitted to the IACHR in 2007 and tried in Santiago, Chile (Bejarano 2013). The Court's ruling condemned the Mexican state for human rights violations and ordered various forms of reparation and redress, which have not entirely been fulfilled. Even so, the case was a landmark decision, providing "legal precedent for cases of gender violence in a non-war context and for enumerating feminicide in international law" (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 6). It also "establish[ed] a solid framework for legal interpretation with a gender perspective from which further development of the legal doctrine can take place" (Red Mesa and CLADEM 2010, 53 as cited in Bejarano 2013, 2). The case signified critical advances in exposing the impunity, corruption, and apathy that was rampant in criminal investigations. Moreover, it was a historic victory for the victims' families and their advocates.

The Court's ruling mandated that the Mexican government make a public apology; hold a memorial service for the women and girls; create a public monument to the girls and young women killed at the Campo Algodonero; establish an electronic database of all missing women; and implement a DNA database; among other demands (Bejarano 2013). It took two years for the state to give the apology, and on November 7, 2011, the Mexican government inaugurated the monument to Laura Berenice (Benita Monárrez's daughter), Claudia Ivette (Josefina Gonzalez's daughter), and Brenda Esmeralda (Irma Monreal's daughter) at the cotton field site, just blocks away from the U.S. Consulate in Mexico.

Today, the area is enclosed by a pink metal fence and a large pink wall that hides it from a busy street intersection and renders it indiscernible from the car traffic. It is also inaccessible to visitors in vehicles, since there are only two or three parking spaces available to park in front of the monument. The transformed campo algodonero which was a popular site of resistance, is rendered 'visitless' through its inhospitable design and obtuse vehicle and foot traffic. One could easily argue that the design is intentional. Inside the pink gates, a marbled tile half-circle wall serves as the monument, with a large pink cross at the center. The monument is criticized for its sterilized appearance. It is no longer the sacred space that came to represent the site for incalculable protests and memorials remembering all the feminicide victims.

The discoveries of mass graves did not cease with the Campo Algodonero case, however. Three teenage girls were discovered at the Cerro del Cristo Negro on the outskirts of Juárez near Rancho De Anapra. They were found by girls playing nearby on February 17, 2003. The victims were all girls themselves: Esmeralda Juárez Alarcon (sixteen years old), Juanita Sandoval Reina (seventeen years old), and Violeta Mabel Alvidrez Barrios (eighteen years old). This incomprehensible loss of life remains painful

to remember and recount, even though I never knew these families or their young daughters. The citizens of Juárez and the tireless efforts of advocates and families of feminicide victims persist in their vigilance, even moreso that girls, women, and now boys and men continue to disappear as the Arroyo Navajo case exemplifies.

The **Arroyo Navajo Case, the Consequence of Unchecked Violence**

In 2012, another gruesome discovery was made by passersby who stumbled onto a large group of human remains in the Valle de Juárez in a dry riverbed called the Arroyo Navajo. The remains were tested by several units including the Crime and Forensic Science labs in Juárez, the U.S.–based BODE lab, and the world-renowned Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF) for DNA evidence. Of the remains tested, seventeen girls who had gone missing between 2008 and 2010 were identified; they ranged in age from fifteen to twenty-two. It is unclear how many other missing have been identified—biologically male or female.

Several *rastreos*[9] have taken place in the Valle de Juárez's Arroyo Navajo. Several *rastreos* found more remains, more victims' clothing, or other pertinent items that offered insight into what happened to the missing. It is still unclear how many remains have been discovered and how many victims identified. The desert's vastness makes it impossible to know how many bodies are hidden there and how many bodies were swallowed by its infinite sands. One report indicates that fifty-three remains have been found and twenty-three have been identified, although it is uncertain whether all twenty-three victims were women and girls (Figure 1). Some of those victims included girls missing since 2008[10]. These girls were forced into prostitution and eventually killed (Carmona 2017).

Identified Woman/Girl	Age	Date Missing
Brenda Berenice Castillo García	seventeen	January 6, 2009
María Guadalupe Pérez Montes	seventeen	January 31, 2009
Marisela Ávila Hernández	twenty-two	March 18, 2009
Mónica Alanís Esparza	eighteen	March 26, 2009
Lizbeth Aviles García	seventeen	April 22, 2009
Perla Ivonne Aguirre González	fifteen	October 11, 2009
Idalí Juache Laguna	nineteen	February 24, 2010
Yasmin Taylen Celis Murillo	seventeen	April 4, 2010
Beatriz Alejandra Hernández Trejo	twenty	April 27, 2010
Jessica Leticia Peña García	fifteen	June 16, 2010
Yanira Frayre Jaquez	fifteen	June 16, 2010
Deysi Ramírez Muñoz	sixteen	July 28, 2010
Andrea Guerrero Venzor	fifteen	August 19, 2010
Jessica Terrazas Ortega eighteen	eighteen	December 20, 2010
Monica Liliana Delgado Castillo	eighteen	October 18, 2010
Jazmin Salazar Ponce	seventeen	December 27, 2010

Figure 5. Women and girls found in the 2012 Arroyo Navajo case.

On July 2015, five men were convicted of murder, drug trafficking, and forced prostitution and were sentenced to 697 years and six months each in prison for the murder of the girls and young women whose names appear above (Frontera Norte Sur 2015). Authorities used this case as putative proof that they were taking feminicides seriously, even though the men would never live long enough to fulfill their almost seven-hundred-year sentences.

I keep thinking about the image of Olga Esparza at the 2009 cross-border protest imploring people to search for her daughter. It was reminiscent of the numerous times I had witnessed other activist mothers plead with authorities, journalists, foreigners, locals, or anyone willing to listen to them to help "bring their daughters back home." The horrifying discovery at the Arroyo Navajo, like

every feminicide, defies reality. The resilience and hope that activists inspire is what reminds us of our humanity and the need for solidarity across borders.

The Teachings and Resiliency of the Anti-Feminicide Movement

The visibility of anti-feminicide activists vigorously participating in and at times, leading protests, or serving as plaintiffs in legal cases, or leading *rastreos*, demonstrates how significant a role the anti-feminicide movement has played for over twenty years in addressing widespread violence. Their coalition-building demonstrates the strength, continuity, and vitality of the movement that began in 1993, and continued during the 'Great Violence' and even beyond. I heard activists, journalists, and family members repeatedly state that if authorities had investigated and put a stop to the feminicides, perhaps the large-scale violence would not have erupted as it did. It is hard to predict whether the death toll would have taken a turn for the better, or if authorities would have or even could have stopped such bloodshed from occurring. Despite it all, efforts to combat the violence continued by civic society and others.

One prominent yet controversial campaign that was launched by government officials, along with some well-known members of Juárense civic society, was called Todos Somos Juárez (We are all Juárez). The campaign aptly promoted the logo "Amor por Juárez" (Love for Juárez), which grew in popularity and was visibly displayed on bumper stickers and t-shirts across the borderlands (Mesa de Seguridad y Justicia 2017). This initiative reminded me of phrases that I had heard in the anti-feminicide movement, like "todas son nuestras hijas" (they are all our daughters) referencing the feminicide victims of Juárez and Chihuahua City. Images dedicated to protesting feminicides had a dual meaning and exemplified the large volume of overall deaths in the city.

Since 2002, an image of a massive cross made of railroad ties sits in one of the most visible and traveled crossing points from El Paso, Texas into Juárez. This iconic image has represented Chihuahua's feminicides for over fifteen years and was permanently cemented into place by activist mothers, activist groups, and their supporters. At one point, metal nails hammered into the wooden cross held the names of feminicide victims written on white strips of paper tied with ribbon.

During the sweeping violence from 2006 to 2012, the monument not only came to represent feminicides in Chihuahua but also the demise of so many others, as Figures 6 and 7 depict. At some point during the 'Great Violence,' a massive black cloth with the word, Justicia written above a blood-stained Mexican flag was draped over the feminicide cross, assumedly by activists. Above the flag, one can still read the popular slogan "Ni Una Mas" that came to personify the feminicides across Chihuahua.



Figure 6. The cross representing feminicide victims at the Juárez Santa Fe Bridge Crossing, circa 2003. (Photo courtesy of author.)



Figure 7. The same cross representing feminicide victims, but with a blood-stained Mexican flag, 2009. (Photo courtesy of author.)

Much of the imagery and phrases of the anti-feminicide movement, I would argue, significantly inspired the larger anti-violence manifestations that gained traction for so long in Chihuahua. For more than twenty years, the anti-feminicide movement and its waves of activism have remained the clarion call for justice by demanding a response from those in positions of power. Staudt and Mendez (2015) have referred to the mothers of the feminicide victims as "game changers," crediting them for inspiring the struggle against *narco* violence, disappearances, and the widespread bloodshed that took hold of Mexico.

Mendez and Staudt (2015) describe the first wave of the anti-feminicide movement as stemming from the early 1990s to the early 2000s when a large-scale national and international presence by families of feminicide victims, activist groups, civic-society, academics, legal scholars, and international allies was collectively built. The second wave of the anti-feminicide movement remained less visible than the first, but was part of international coalition-building from 2010 to 2012. Finally, the third wave of the anti-feminicide movement witnessed a lull due to large-scale *narco* violence, and the threats against activists that resulted in the deaths of prominent figures in the anti-feminicide and anti-militarization movement. All the while, Juárez and Chihuahua City groups remained vigilant in the anti-feminicide movement, protesting the deaths of so many and risking their lives in the process. This third wave, as described by Staudt and Mendez (2015), was coupled with anti-militarization grassroots and civic-society alliances that raised awareness of the role that militarizing Chihuahua and subsequent Mexican states had on the uptick in violence against all citizens. Hector Delgado Padilla poignantly called the militarization advent, the "*maquinaria del miedo*" (machinery of fear) where "*la fuerza habla*" (force talks) (2009, 309 as cited in Staudt and Mendez 2015).

Nina Lozano (2019) adds a fourth wave to the anti-femicide movement. Like Staudt and Mendez, Lozano also discusses in her work, "waves of feminicidio" that include four waves. Her discussion is similar to what Staudt and Mendez argue about the over twenty-year movement. However, Lozano expands her analysis to include a fourth wave that covers the years 2015 to the present. Lozano calls this fourth wave, the "Movement and Feminicidio Resurgences" and chronicles a new era of young activists who collectively call themselves, "the daughters of feminicidio" (2019). Similar to Staudt and Mendez (2015), Lozano (2019) points to social media and the larger growth of activist men and fathers, like José Luis Castillo, whose fourteen year-old daughter Esmeralda was killed, as new indicators in the perpetually moving and dynamic evolution of the anti-feminicide movement.

Despite the ongoing fear and violence that continues to plague Mexico, the resilience of people remains intact. The lasting presence in Juárez and Chihuahua of groups like Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas, the CEDEHM, the Mesa de Mujeres and the Centro para el Desarollo Integral de la Mujer (CEDIMAC), continue to play significant roles in the anti-feminicide movement by remaining the proverbial 'pebble in the shoe' of the Mexican government—always vigilant, visible, and loud. Community observatories on feminicide[11] and the issue of the 'greater violence' were established (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010; Staudt and Mendez 2015), and groups' uses of social technology like Facebook, Twitter and listservs to maintain solidarity ties with international efforts were prominent (Staudt and Mendez 2015). Young people and on the ground activists like, Rosas de Juárez (Roses of Juárez), Frenté Marginal (Marginal Front), Pink Nopál (Pink Cactus), and the Grupo de Acción por los Derechos Hermanos y la Justicia Social (Action Group for Human Rights and Social Justice) (Lozano 2019), use new strategies in the growing anti-militarization/anti-violence movements in protest of the disappearances, killings, and overall calamity occurring.

Countless protests marked these years of struggle. Of those that I attended, one was an anti-feminicide march that took place with mothers from Chihuahua City and Juárez, and activists from the Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres (CEDEHM) called

La Campana de Justicia (the Bell of Justice). Families marched or caravanned from Juárez to Mexico City and back, ringing a large bell made of melted donated keys that symbolized the calls for justice by families of the disappeared or feminicide victims. The massive bell sat on the back of Gabino Gomez's truck, a member of the CEDEHM, as it made its trek from Juárez to Mexico City and back again. La Campana de Justicia stopped in cities, small and large, along the way to Juárez, where activists and families of the murdered gathered together behind the downtown *Catedral* across the street from the Centro Municipal de las Artes. The activist mothers at the event would ring the bell and say a few words, often denouncing the government's unreliable investigations into their daughter's cases.



Figure 8: The Bell of Justice campaign demanding an end to feminicide in 2009 outside the Governor's Palace in Chihuahua City, the main government offices for the State. Photo courtesy of author.

Just weeks after the Bell for Justice protest, I traveled to Albuquerque, New Mexico with Paula Flores (Sagrario Gonzalez's mother) and Irma Monreal (Esmeralda Hererra's mother)[12] at the request of U.S. mothers whose daughters were found in 2011 in the west mesa of Albuquerque. The finding of eleven bodies on the west mesa of Albuquerque's high desert was eerily like the grisly discovery at the Campo Algodonero in 2001. Like Juárez, these women's remains were found by passersby walking their dog in a newly cleared, empty lot primed for suburban development.

I visited the location of the west mesa murders in 2012. I had flashbacks of walking irrigation canals and a dry cotton field at the Campo Algodonero in Juárez during a rastreo I was involved with in 2002. A few short years after the Campo Algodonero rastreo in 2002, I went to Chihuahua City with Eva Arce, mother of Sylvia Arce who disappeared in 1998 to meet with the human rights attorney, Adriana Carmona and motherist activist, Norma Ledezma. Norma took us to the site where her daughter's body, Paloma was found in 2002. In Chihuahua City, we walked an arroyo that like the west mesa was at the time being prepared for a neighborhood development in 2005. We walked in the Chihuahua City arroyo, on the edge of the city, still searching for any clue of what happened to Paloma. Each time I searched empty lots or fields where girls' bodies were discarded, I realized that I was not only chasing mothers' memories, but I was also chasing my own ghost memories of walking from desert to desert looking for traces of who these girls were, wishing I could recall a memory of knowing them when they were alive, rather than recognizing them from a picture or memory book.

During a 2009 Albuquerque trip with Paula and Irma, Paula was interested in taking la Campana de Justicia across the international border to New Mexico, but we were unable to. Instead, I traveled with Paula and Irma to meet with one New Mexico mother whose sixteen-year-old daughter was found on the west mesa. The three women consoled each other as they shared similar stories of searching for their daughters, pleading with law enforcement to search for their daughters, and ultimately distrusting authorities' abilities or their veiled interests to investigate their cases.



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Mothers of West Mesa victims find support from across the border

Luis Sarmiento

MUJER EMPLEO

Figure 9: Irma Monreal and Paula Flores behind Jane Perea, mother of Jamie Barela. The event was organized by the Albuquerque Peace and Justice Center and Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez (Más New Mexico newspaper).

Maternal Feminicide, the Other Story

Activists and the families of feminicide victims remained extremely vulnerable despite: the advances made through the Inter-American Court ruling in the Campo Algodonero case; the countless developments in making feminicides visible worldwide; and their overall work to end violence. The assassination of Marisela Escobedo, the mother of sixteen-year-old feminicide victim, Rubi Marisol Fraye, on December 10, 2010 proved that violence against women has no end. Marisela Escobedo was one of the most vocal and recognized of activist mothers. She was known for walking daily from her home to the state attorney general's office in Juárez, wearing only her undergarments and a large placard of her daughter that reached down to her knees. When interests in feminicides waned, her brazen strategy caught the attention of the media and kept her daughter's case in the spotlight. She was courageous in her actions to make her daughter's case known widely after a Mexican court found Rubi's boyfriend, Sergio Rafael Barraza, guilty of the murder. The court subsequently acquitted him after an appeal, so Marisela began her own investigation. She tracked Barraza to Zacatecas, Mexico after he was released, determined to bring him to justice by notifying authorities of his whereabouts, despite the cartel protection that he allegedly had.



Figure 10: A plaque placed at the site of Marisela's assassination in front of the Governor's offices in the historic downtown of Chihuahua City, the state's capitol. Photo courtesy of author.

Demanding that authorities return her daughter's murderer to Chihuahua for a retrial, Marisela staged a permanent protest in front of the government offices in Chihuahua City, proclaiming that she would remain there until her daughter's murderer was arrested.

Marisela also shared publicly that she feared for her life, stating that if something were to happen to her, then governor Cesar Duarte would be to blame[13]. It was clear that, “The protection racket called the state [would] no longer protect women activists” (Staudt and Mendez 2009, 15). The government seemed slow to investigate Marisela’s case, even though surveillance footage from the governor’s office caught her assassination on camera. Marisela’s murder emboldened activists because it made everyone both fearful and determined to continue their activist work.

Like so many others, Marisela’s loved ones were forced to flee Juárez. Days after Marisela was killed in Chihuahua City, her brother-in-law was murdered in Juárez and his lumber business was burned to the ground; some reports claim extortionists did this pointing to the confluence of the feminicides and overall criminal activity plaguing Chihuahua. Figures 11 and 12 are of her son, Juan Manuel Frayre Escobedo, protesting with others in front of the Mexican Consulate’s office in El Paso, Texas in 2011. He too received death threats, even in the U.S., but remains vocal about the crimes in Juárez and the corruption and cover-up they experienced with his sister and mother’s deaths. Like his mother, he directly attributed his mother’s death to the then Governor. In the images below, he is holding posters of his murdered younger sister, Rubi, and his mother, with the words ‘Crime of the State’ in bold print under Marisela’s photograph.



Figure 10 and 11: Juan Manuel Frayre Escobedo holding posters of Rubi and Marisela in front of the Mexican Consulate’s Office in El Paso, Texas. Photo courtesy of author.

Marisela’s death, like that of anti-feminicide/anti-militarization activist, Josefina Reyes, who was killed in 2010 in Juárez when she protested the presence of the military and her son’s disappearance, are forever entrenched in our memories. Several members of Josefina’s family were killed in 2010 and 2011, while other family members fled to the U.S. Norma Andrade, mother of Lilia Alejandra mentioned earlier, was shot and wounded on December 2, 2011. After her recovery, she fled to Mexico City and remains vocally active from there. During these murderous years, nothing felt sacred. The targeting of mothers that searched for their missing children shook people to their core. Marisela and Josefina are revered as folk heroines, demonstrating tremendous bravery in the face of terror that cost them their life.

The Humanity of Juárez, the Real Story of Survival

In Juárez, courage trumps violence. Juárenses are some of the bravest and most resilient people I know. The will of Juárenses to survive such carnage personifies the strength of its people and communities, and the legacy that the anti-feminicide movement has had in sustaining its momentum. Juárez is as dynamic and complicated as it is vibrant and fearless. A generation of young people have learned of feminicide as part of their collective history, and despite the fears and dangers that they experience or circumvent, they become active in events like the 2009 Marcha del coraje, dolor y desagravio, where young people were lying on the streets of Juárez representing those killed during the ‘Great Violence’ (Claudia Cervantes-Soon 2017). Others have created protest art through murals, like the work of graffiti artist, Maclovio Macias and his partner and fellow activist, Lluvia Rocha who have painted more than twenty murals with twenty-five portraits of the disappeared or confirmed feminicide victims in Juárez (Figure 13) (Villagran 2017).

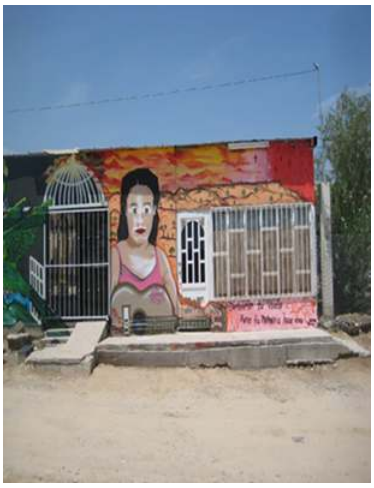


Figure 13: Juárez artist, Maclovio Macias, began painting murals of feminicide victims across the city. This mural is of Sagrario Flores that Maclovio painted on the façade of Paula Flores' home. Photo courtesy of author.

Other equally significant activities are exemplified through the work of Claudia Cervantes-Soon whose research explores Juárez girls' empowerment using *autogestión*, a "holistic and dialectical approach to humanization and a unique form of agency and self-authorship in which young Juárez women engaged individually and collectively . . . in shaping their identity, agency, and transformative educational practices in Juárez" (2017, 5). Some young women are using social media and a new phone app called *No Estoy Sola* (I am not alone) created by the city government to notify loved ones if they are in danger by shaking their phones and sending a signal of their location to select contacts (Flores 2017). It is vital to underscore the counternarratives of resistance that undergird much of Juárensen society. Juárenses demonstrate that surviving ongoing feminicides and other abominations is possible, as is living to honor those forcefully disappeared that we mourn.

Activist mothers, like Paula Flores and Eva Arce, continue to dedicate their lives to memorializing their daughters. Eva continues to search for her daughter. They remain involved in the anti-feminicide movement, even after twenty years. Eva continues to write poetry to Sylvia, her daughter, and Paula continues to energize the Fundacion Maria Sagrario when time and funding are possible, along with maintaining her daughter's love of children through the Jardin de Ninos Maria Sagrario, a kindergarten in Sagrario's honor where Sagrario's young sister works as a teacher. Figure 14 is a photograph of one of several Christmas posadas (shelter)[14] that Paula and her family hosted for her community. The food they made and the toys that were collected for hundreds of children from 2004 to 2009 illustrate the resiliency in Juárez that is visible everywhere, despite the ongoing violence. These posadas celebrate Sagrario's life and, as Paula explains, because of this "Sagrario's memory lives on."



Figure 14: Neighborhood children dancing to the Virgen de Guadalupe during a December 2009 posada at Paula Flores' house. The Fundación Maria Sagrario can be seen in the background. Photo courtesy of author.

Decolonizing Work Across Borders

The "Missing Women: Decolonization, Third Wave Feminism, and Indigenous People of Canada and Mexico" conference in 2008 exposed what setter-colonialism does to Indigenous/Aboriginal and subaltern communities of color. An unforgettable memory from this conference is of watching Paula and Eva meet Indigenous/Aboriginal mothers during the opening prayer given by First Nations Elders from the original territories now known as Saskatchewan. I kept asking myself, *how is it possible to have so many women killed and disappeared near this borderland, like those from our own borderlands?* I cried quietly to one side as community members enveloped Paula and Eva with warmth, kindness, and solidarity. I watched with reverence as First Nations Elders blessed the opening ceremony and men drummed and sang; later in the conference proceedings, a group of Indigenous women would drum and invite Paula and Eva to join them. Albeit different but familiar, I recalled the drumming of teenage boys at Paula's house in Juárez, also drumming to the sacred, and the memory of a feminicide victim.

As strangers for only a short while, mothers from two countries embraced each other after sharing their daughters' stories of disappearance. It was a surreal experience to see a virtual mirror image of the anti-feminicide movement in Mexico as it simultaneously unfolded in Canada. Blatant indications of the racism, sexism, classism, and colonialism plaguing Indigenous/Aboriginal and Mexican women are too familiar, too normalized, and too often eschewed. We are bound to each other in this life beyond walls, borders, and cultures, as the mothers demonstrated during their time together.

We know that women do not just disappear into thin air, so we name out loud, as Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991)[15] encourages us to do, the greater structural factors at work that create the social, political, and economic conditions that contribute to feminicide. As Canadian scholar, Amber Dean states, "disappearances have been brought about by numerous complex social forces" (2015, 29). How do we account for our sisters, our neighbors, or people we do not know personally but must care for? Dean's poignant question asking, "What might it mean to inherit what lives on from the disappearance of so many women, and why should a wider public engage in such practices, even—or perhaps especially—when we did not know the women in life? Simon asserts that "the work of inheritance is an inescapable consequence of the actions of another who has sent you something . . . that implicates you in the necessity of a response (even if that response is ultimately to ignore or destroy the bequest)" (2006, 194 as cited in Dean 2016, 7).

When I was given the privilege of attending this Missing Women's conference with Paula Flores and Eva Arce, I inherited a responsibility to teach about the forcefully disappeared Indigenous women of Canada as often as I could in the same manner that I teach about the disappeared women of Mexico. It is an axiomatic response to act as a witness-observer who represents "a synergy between seeing, hearing, feeling, and reacting to violence as a secondary witness to an atrocity. Secondary witnessing entails a community pledge to tell the stories, in writing or orally, of our own observations and recollections. Just as important, we disseminate the *testimonios* of human rights activists and of victims, whose truths are overlooked, dismissed, or silenced. Witness observers commit to bearing witness and demanding justice to right the transgressions done to others" (Bejarano, 196).

My use of terms like witness-observers and feminicide, are acts of witness-observing and using activist, pedagogical, and epistemological approaches to work to end feminicides. Our inheritance of this violence translates to bridging our countries' borders for solidarity work in efforts to end disappearance and feminicide—subaltern, Indigenous, Aboriginal, Mexican, or otherwise.

I would like to thank Diana Lopez and Zaira Martin for their assistance with this article, and the efforts of so many in Juárez to return the city to its vibrant self, especially those individuals in the anti-feminicide movement.

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1. I will use Juárez instead of Ciudad Juárez throughout this writing. ↵

2. The term femicide, which means “the act of killing women because they are women” (Radford and Russell 1992), is extensively used across the Americas and builds on the work of U.S. based sociologists, Jill Radford and Diana E. Russell, and Mexican cultural anthropologist and former Mexican congresswoman, Marcela Lagarde y de los Rios (1996), as well as the work of Juárez based sociologist, Julia Fragoso Monárrez (1999). For a historical account of the terms femicide and feminicide, see Marcela Lagarde y de los Rios’ explanation of how femicide and feminicide are discussed in the anthology, Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Americas (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). After working as on the ground activists and scholars for over twenty years, my colleague Rosa-Linda Fregoso and I have built our definition of feminicide from the works of the aforementioned, influential feminists to further conceptualize the concept. We describe feminicide as, “first, the murders of women and girls founded on a gender power structure and with impunity; second, feminicide is gender-based violence that is both/and public and private, implicating both the state (directly or indirectly) and individual perpetrators (private or state actors); it thus encompasses systematic, widespread and every day, random violence; third, feminicide is systemic violence, rooted in social, political, economic, and cultural inequalities . . . our analysis is not just on gender, but also on the intersection of gender dynamics with the cruelties of racism and economic injustices in local as well as global contexts; finally, our framing of feminicide as violence that reinforces a systematic pattern of subordination also advances a critical human rights perspective for countering the murders and disappearances of women, with the language of justice and empowering communities to act on behalf of social change” (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 5). Our comprehensive feminicide framework has the potential for wide applicability in most regions across the globe where women are targeted, and where communities stand in defiance of this violence. ↵
3. Narco translates loosely as drug smuggler/drug trafficker, and narco deaths are popularly defined as deaths associated with the drug trade. However, innocent people have also been killed in the crossfire of drug traffickers with rival cartels or with authorities. ↵
4. The violence in Juárez is personal for me. I have lived at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands in New Mexico and Arizona my entire life. I grew up in Southern New Mexico, just miles away from Juárez and was raised crossing the border back and forth for dental care, shopping, visiting friends, and now to visit close activist friends that I consider family. I am of Mexican descent; generations ago, my great-grandparents and their parents came from various cities across the state of Chihuahua to settle in New Mexico. My love and admiration for the people of Juárez stems from my involvement with the advocacy group Amigos de las Mujeres de Juárez that worked with several women’s and human rights groups across the state of Chihuahua and the U.S. to address the feminicides in Northern Chihuahua. ↵
5. In extreme cases, Juárenses fled Juárez and the border area altogether, seeking refuge within the interior of Mexico or beyond. ↵
6. This was an emotional event for me because I wanted to be in Juárez, but I stayed in El Paso during an especially tumultuous set of weeks across the border. ↵
7. Paula Flores is the mother of Sagrario Gonzalez killed in 1998. Sagrario’s death served as an impetus for my involvement in the anti-feminicide movement in 1998. Paula was at the University of Regina’s conference on Missing and Indigenous Women with Eva Arce, mother of Sylvia Arce who went missing in 1998, and whose status remains as a missing person. I met both women in 1998. In 2001, our New Mexico based group, Amigos de las Mujeres de Juarez, worked closely with Paula and Eva. ↵
8. These locations are on the outskirts of Juárez except for the cotton field, Campo Algodonero. ↵
9. Rastreos are areas where people carefully search for any trace of evidence for the bodies of missing women and girls. This practice has been ongoing for nearly twenty years and is now a common occurrence. During the ‘Great Violence,’ men and boys were also searched for. ↵
10. This list stems from data gathered by a Chihuahua City group Justicia Para Nuestras Hijas, which is comprised of mothers of feminicide victims. The list stems from a 2015 presentation given by Laura Aragon, founder of Mukira, a non-profit that works with women and youth in Mexico toward gender equality, transforming Mexico’s culture of legality, violence prevention, human rights, access to justice, and youth leadership and empowerment. The list is not an exhaustive one, nor is it meant to omit other individuals whose remains were found or still missing. It is a list to remember that these people existed, they lived before they were forcefully disappeared and exploited. ↵
11. Comunitarios observatorios are comprised of civic-society groups like women’s rights and human rights organizations, legal defense groups, religious and Indigenous women’s groups, and others that work as a monitoring body on issues of feminicide. The largest observatory in Mexico on feminicide is the Observatorio Ciudadano del Feminicidio (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010, 26). Observatories are practiced widely in Latin America. ↵
12. Esmeralda Herrera was a 14-year-old girl whose body was found in the irrigation canal of a cotton field in 2001. Irma was one of the three lead petitioners in the Campo Algodonero case. ↵

13. Cesar Duarte was notoriously corrupt during his tenure as governor of Chihuahua. In 2017, Interpol released a report with a red notice against Duarte, making him a wanted individual in 190 countries. The state of Chihuahua has issued 10 arrest warrants against him, and he is accused of illicit enrichment and aggravated embezzlement. He is said to be in hiding in Albuquerque, New Mexico (Ortiz 2019, 2). ↵
14. A posada is a religious celebration that is popular throughout Latin America and that marks the pilgrimage of Mary and Joseph seeking refuge for baby Jesus. The posada is traditionally practiced by community members praying the rosary while walking from house to house, hence, reenacting the imagery of Mary and Joseph seeking shelter. Paula celebrates posadas at her home with matachine dancers, children and community members from her neighborhood that venerate the Virgen of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, with Indigenous drumming and dancing to the image of the Guadalupe. The Virgen of Guadalupe's Catholic saint's day is December 12. Paula holds this event each year to venerate the Virgen of Guadalupe and to honour Sagrario's memory. ↵
15. In the U.S., Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, which offers a framework to analyze, "the various ways in which race and gender intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color" (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). ↵

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3.4: Global Capitalism's Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous Daughters 3.4: Global Capitalism's Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous DaughtersEdit Update titlecancel

Kim Erno[1]

I want to begin by expressing my deep appreciation for the privilege of gathering and being present with you to share this time and this space—to give my thanks to the Elders, to the grandmothers, to the grandfathers, to Carla, to Brenda, the coordinators, to this institution, and to all of you who have gathered here with this theme of missing and murdered Indigenous women. If we have gathered here because there are missing and murdered Indigenous women, it is because we are also in a world that has lost its way. And so part of our search, part of our reason for this gathering is trying to recover that way, to pick up the lost stitches, to re-weave the torn fabric, and to struggle and hope for a world that is not only *possible*, as we say in Latin America, but a new world that is also *necessary*. So I thank you very, very deeply for the privilege of being in this time and this space with all of you.

As I was reviewing the agenda for today with my colleague, Marta Perez, who will be sharing this podium in a short while, Marta said, "Look, Kim, they are all women in the presentations." And I said "Well, Marta, not quite." And so, I asked myself, "What is my particular role, my presence, here; what is my contribution?" In Latin America, we like to dance and I am looking forward to, we are going to have a chance here, too, I understand, to dance together, to sing together, to move together. The dances that we have are salsa and merengue and cumbia. They have a lot of rhythm and a lot of movement. They say that a good male partner realizes that he is simply the frame; that the woman knows the moves and knows the steps. So, a good male dancer knows that he is a frame for the work of art who is the woman. So that's what I understand is my role and what I will attempt to do here this morning is to set a frame. And I trust my sisters will bring the moves in the steps. And the frame that I have been asked to give is with the theme of globalization.

The first step in addressing globalization is to locate ourselves, because part of what we are seeing in this globalization is an effort to erase who we are—our languages, our cultures, our origins, our roots. As I join you in this land, I am very, very conscious of my homeland. My homeland, according to the original peoples is the Dawn Land. It is the land that stretches from the waters that lie in between the People of the Longhouse and the people of the Dawn Land that stretches to the sea and the rising sun. And so, I bring readings from the Dawn Land. I am also very conscious of my new land to the South: the Cradle of Corn. There are as many varieties of corn as there are original peoples and languages and for that reason the original peoples refer to the people as the Children of Corn. And so I bring readings from the land that is the Cradle of Corn. Also, to locate myself and my perspective on globalization, I need to say that I grew up on a border, on the Vermont/Quebec border. So I grew up moving back and forth between cultures and languages. I grew up on a border line. And while I most certainly can enjoy the privileges, the access, and the power that comes with my white maleness, I am most comfortable on the margins and on the border lines. So I have a perspective that comes both from being able to enter into those centers of power but also from being able to step back from them.

The second step after we have located ourselves in globalization is to imagine this beautiful globe, to imagine her spinning and moving and dancing through space, to imagine her with her multitude of colors—of browns and yellows and whites and blues and reds—to see her valleys and mountains and deserts and waters and rivers and oceans, to see her in all her beauty, and realize that she is a living, breathing being and that she carries scars. She carries scars because she has been sliced and diced, cut into pieces that we refer to as borders. These are barriers that are not natural divisions between peoples and lands, but rather, most often, they are the spoils of war. They are acts of violence that serve the interests of global profiteers.

The US/Mexico border is a case in point. The perspective from the south is much different than the perspective from the north. US history textbooks in this particular period in history most often tell us to remember the Alamo—the holdout of the brave Texas rangers in that mission in Texas called the Alamo—with no mention of how those Texans got there in the first place; crossing the border illegally and breaking Mexican law that had already abolished slavery. So, while US students are challenged to remember the Alamo, Mexicans never ever forget that almost half of the territory of Mexico was lost in what is considered an unjust war of aggression provoked by President Polk and justified by a white supremacist theology called manifest destiny that says that the white race has been ordained by God to rule from sea to shining sea. One more scar on the landscape.

And now we are in this new world order with the dominant economic model that is often referred to as neo-liberal economics—liberal not in a political sense, but rather an economic sense—saying that economics and economic policies and practices are to be liberated; that there are not to be any restraints, particularly any restraints by the state. So, if there are state enterprises, be it transportation and communication and banking, they are to be privatized, sold off to the highest bidder. Neo-

liberal economics says that if there are any laws that could interfere with maximizing profits—even if those laws are designed to protect the environment or to set minimum wages—then they are to be relaxed. It says that if there are taxes that are designed to protect national regional economies by taxing imports—what are known as tariffs—they are to be eliminated.

Neo-liberal economics tells us that those borders, those boundaries, are opening up so that we can enjoy this one globe all together as one people. There is both a truth and a lie to that, because there *is* an opening of borders, but it is a very selective opening. Again, an opening that is designed to benefit global profiteers—raw materials, finished products, capital investment and speculation are free to cross borders in this new world order. But people who inhabit this globe and, for that matter, all beings who might want to move across the lands are restricted and so, in effect, what we have set up is competition in capital production between the labor markets. Factories, investments, and materials are free to move anywhere in the planet based on what's called "maximizing your competitive advantage." So, if in Mexico our competitive advantage in the global marketplace is cheap labor, then we need to keep labor cheap, which means that we weaken our unions and that we keep the daily minimum wage to fifty-two pesos (about five dollars). You'll find that the prices in Mexico compared to the United States and Canada are not that significantly different; try surviving on five dollars a day—but that is our global "competitive advantage."

As a result of these kind of economic policies, we have achieved the highest concentration of wealth in human history, what some refer to as the champagne glass economy. Some 20 percent who make up the wealthiest sector of this world now control 83 percent of the world's wealth and resources. As we enter into this new millennium, there are 475 billionaires whose wealth was equal to the combined income of the poorest 50 percent of the world. So, if we are on a planet with six billion inhabitants, we are talking about 475 individuals whose wealth is greater than three billion human beings. In theological terms, there are many sectors that refer to this global system, this neo-liberal system, as idolatry, saying that idolatry has two primary characteristics. First, it is unquestionable and untouchable, it simply justifies itself and exists because it exists; it's like the law of gravity, it just is. The second characteristic is that it always, always demands human sacrifice.

And so that is where we begin to locate the missing. I would like to lift up four particular categories in which this sacrifice carries down. The first is through *exclusion*, the next is through *exploitation*, the third through *expulsion*, the last through *extermination*. And I'd like to cite particular communities in Mexico that I've come to know. So we're going to do a little bit of a tour of Mexico, but I guarantee that these are not the ones you'll find in your guidebooks; these are way off the tourist trails.

So, the first stop is the state of Guerrero, one of the most southern states of Mexico, best known for the tourist city of Acapulco, where the cliff divers make their death-defying leaps into the waves below and where young college students from the north come for their spring break. We don't even translate in Spanish; we just say, "spring breakers." So they come to bathe in the sun and guzzle beer. But if we were to go way, way off the tourist path in the state of Guerrero and climb up into the mountains, we would come to an Indigenous village where the people still speak their native language, a language that predates the Spanish conquest and the conquest of the Aztecs.

The village was founded in 1523, two years after the Spanish conquest of 1521. People were afraid for their lives, so they were fleeing into the mountains to escape the onslaught of the Spanish conquest. It still remains a very, very isolated village. There's barely a road, it just winds and spirals around the mountain, and as you come to the outskirts of the village, as is common to many of the villages, you would pass the village cemetery. And if you were feeling particularly brave that day, you may stop and wander through the tombs. I say "particularly brave" because, in this village, there are not enough resources for the living, so there is nothing left over for the dead. So in a country where there is so much respect and care for our ancestors, this village is unable to care for their ancestors. In this cemetery you will find that some of the tombs have broken open and suddenly you are face to face with human remains. The first time I was in the village was some twenty years ago and I met a grandmother who held her grandson Leonardo in her arms as he took his last breaths. Her major preoccupation was how she was going to feed the grave diggers (as payment) and have enough food left over for all the hungry mouths in her home.

Contaminated water continues to be a major health issue, so much so that cholera has been the major cause of death in that village. Some years ago when the North America Free Trade Agreement—one of the expressions of the neo-liberal economic policies of opening up borders—came into effect, the delegation had visited the village and later had a meeting with an official responsible for economic policy. Very good questions were raised on how this new world order, how these trade agreements, would affect or benefit those who are part of the village. The official—incredibly cold, but perhaps, in his perspective, honest—said, "That's what cholera is for." Do you understand? If people cannot produce and cannot consume in this global economy, they count for nothing, they are zeros in this global economic equation. That's what cholera is for, we're better off without them. They are the *excluded* ones.

This village is a village where the major source of income comes from these beautiful baskets that women weave with quick fingers, moving quickly, weaving stories. Right now, Mexico is being inundated with arts and crafts that are being made in China and sold much cheaper. Tourists cannot tell the difference or really don't care. So if these people in this village were to disappear off the face of the earth, who would miss these baskets? They really are not producers and consumers in the global economy and so they count for nothing, they are the excluded. And the women who care for their households, who wonder if there will be enough food to feed the hungry mouths, women in these Indigenous villages who bring in the water, who collect the firewood, who give birth to life, who breastfeed their babies—none of that shows in the gross national product. They carry out economic activities that are zeros, they are the excluded ones. But there is work, there is work that is paid where you can earn a salary, where you can earn the daily minimum wage of fifty-two pesos, correct? So we move to the next category of *exploited*.

Detailed work, repetitive work: putting the tiny screws into the sunglasses—3,500 pair per day—until you start to squint to see more clearly; bending steel cables for seat belts to keep the drivers and passengers of Ford and GM safe and buckled up—3500 cables a day—until your hands are tired and so sore that you can't bend down to tie your shoes. The blue wire goes here, and the yellow wire goes here, and the circuit board goes—God knows where. Stitch after stitch after stitch sewing GAP jeans; thirteen-, fourteen-, fifteen-, sixteen-year-olds sewing Barbie costumes for Toys-R-Us, but they lock us up until we've made the quota for the Christmas sales. All of this requires nimble fingers, quick hands, keen vision, minute after minute, hour after hour, day after day until the fingers are too bruised, the wrists ache from carpal tunnel syndrome and the vision is too weak, and your three-month contract is not renewed. You're out of work, you're not even thirty years old and you feel like you've lived three lifetimes.

Neo-liberal profiteers exist for capital production, not for human reproduction. Each woman is given a medical exam before she is hired, which includes a pregnancy test, and if the test is positive, the position is unavailable. During your term of employment, you receive regular checkups, part of the benefits, again including a pregnancy test, the results of which will determine your continued employment. Some factories decided to dispense with the façade of checkups and just demanded to see the used sanitary napkins once a month. It saves time and money, and that's the bottom line. A woman who is reproductive for human life is not considered productive enough for corporate life; she becomes part of the landscape of capital waste, thrown out with the factory's toxic waste.

In the community of Tijuana, there is an industrial park, although park is a misnomer—it's more like an industrial wasteland. The battery recycling factory is long gone, but the eighty-five hundred tons of toxic waste remains. And so it seeps into the ground, it runs into the streams, it collects in puddles where the children like to run, and so they develop skin blisters. Parents sleep with children because they're afraid that their children might drown in the pools of blood that come from spontaneous nose bleeding in the middle of the night. Women who work in the factories have high rates of miscarriages, birth defects, and have children born with no brain stems. The local school has set the record for the highest levels of lead in their students' blood.

If the women organize, if they demand rights, if they try to increase the wage or have better working conditions, then the factories like the battery factory in Mexico, we say they just "sprout wings and fly away." But if factories can sprout wings and fly away, why can't the workers do the same? And so we go to the next category which is *expulsion*.

We go to a village somewhere in the desert. The name—Ultar—is derived from a rectangular stone. Some years ago in the eighteenth century there was a missionary who came across this rectangular stone and it reminded him of an altar, and so he would gather people and invite people to come and celebrate the mass at it. Nobody knows where the stone is anymore, it has been buried under the sand, the river bed has been shifted, but the name is stuck. And so it is now an altar of human sacrifice. In Spanish, we say that this is the *trampolina*, this is the trampoline, this is the staging ground for the migrants getting ready to make their risky crossing through the desert to go north. In the years of 2000, 2001, in the peak months of crossing, which are January through May, some 2,000 migrants per day gathered in Ultar, a village that in its immediate vicinity numbers 5,000 inhabitants. So in a village of 5,000 people, an extra 2,000 arrive per day.

This was once a farming community, but it has also lost its way in this NAFTA, this free trade, this neo-liberal economics that allows the free flow of grains like corn coming in from the US, genetically altered corn that comes in with heavy subsidies so that companies like Cargill can set the prices and sell the low production cars in Mexico and rule the world economy. So, Ultar is no longer a rural village. It is a village that has its entire economy revolving around human trafficking.

Around the plaza you'll find the prestos, you'll find the stands where you can buy your new tennis shoes, baseball caps, bottles of water that will never ever be enough to keep you from being dehydrated—you have to carry at least twenty to thirty pounds of water into the deserts. There are vans around the plaza that have the back seats taken out with benches so that you can crowd twenty to twenty-five migrants and make the race two hours up to the line. And then when there is the opening—that

window of opportunity—the migrants, or the young men who are the guides, go off into the desert for two days, for three, four, or five days and nights to make the crossover.

So, what we would say is that while we have these borders, they are open to some and closed to others and, in effect, we have filters. So the desert acts as a filter, to select the labor market that the US economy requires. According to the US labor statistics, 53 percent of all agricultural workers in the US are undocumented. In California that goes up to 90 percent. So if you can make it three, four, five, six days and nights through the desert, then you've proved your worth and you can pick lettuce in California, apples in Washington, tomatoes in Michigan, blueberries in Maine, cucumbers in North Carolina, and oranges in Florida.

Why this area? When the free trade agreement came into effect in 1994, there was another initiative, called operation gatekeeper by the United States, to shut the border in the places that had been the traditional places of crossing, Tijuana, and urban areas, and so that's where the barriers, that's where the walls went up. The walls are made with former helicopter landing pads from the Vietnam war and the first war in Iraq—metallic walls become the first barrier. Stadium lighting, motion detectors, helicopters, all kinds of sophisticated surveillance technology now drive the migrants to the most hostile environment, which is the desert, to make that dangerous crossing, and it becomes the filter.

The desert once had been the flow back and forth primarily of men, going up for seasonal labor and then coming back to be with their families and their homes and their communities. Because of the risks, because of the costs, they now stay in America, so there are more undocumented migrants in the US after NAFTA, after 1994 and Operation Gate Keeper than before. As a result, while males continue to be the higher percentage of those who are crossing, there has been a significant increase in women who are making that risky crossing with their children. Why? Because they want to be re-united with their families, with their husbands, for their children to know their fathers. And so, they are left with a choice to stay behind in the ghost towns or to make the dangerous trek north and to become part of this migrant trail of those who are the expelled in this lonely economy. But you could stay, right? And if you stay, you could fight for change, right? And so we go to the last category of *extermination*.

We go to the south of Mexico and the southernmost state, which is the state of Chiapas, the state that ethnically and language-wise identifies with the Mayan peoples, where people still speak the traditional language. Mayan languages present a different worldview—there is no word for "I" or "me," only "we" and "us." There is no word in Mayan languages for "rich" or "poor" because they don't exist as social categories. For many, many centuries there was no word for "enemy." Chiapas is one of the richest states in terms of natural resources, of anything that you could imagine—from water to generate hydroelectric power, which generates over half of the electricity in Mexico, to uranium to timber to coffee to land, whatever you want to imagine, Chiapas sets the record for the greatest wealth of resources in Mexico.

At the same time, it has some of the poorest living standards in all of Mexico. Chiapas is "off the grid"; the land reform carried out in Mexico in the 1930s didn't quite make it all the way south, but the Indigenous peoples, the farmers, held onto the promise and the hope that someday that communal land would be theirs because it was protected by law in the Mexican constitution under article 27, which would not allow the purchase nor the sale of communal lands. But in anticipation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, under pressure from the United States to pave the way, the Mexican administration in 1992 amended its own constitution to allow for the purchase and sale of this communal land. For Indigenous families that was taken as a death sentence. On January 1, 1994, when NAFTA came into effect and when the power brokers in Mexico City were celebrating and toasting their entry into this new world order, an Indigenous army of Mayan peoples occupied six municipalities in Chiapas as part of a protest. Mayan mathematicians had done some quick calculating and had determined that, based on the infant mortality rate, they had just a few generations left and so they decided to go down in a fight.

Onto the scene appeared the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional)*. Twelve days of fighting ended in a ceasefire. Civil society in Mexico also rose up and called for negotiations and identified with the cause of the Zapatistas to defend communal lands, to defend cultures and traditions that are part of the Indigenous peoples. So there was a ceasefire, and the Zapatistas have respected that ceasefire since January 12, 1994, without having fired a shot. In the meantime, the Mexican government has continued to carry out a military strategy of counter-insurgency, sometimes described as "in order to kill the fish, you drain the ocean," which is to say that all life becomes a military target. And so, counter- insurgency policies in the southern state of Chiapas have pushed people out, have cleared areas, only allowing those who agree to collaborate with the government to stay, as a way of trying to remove any popular base and support for the Zapatistas. All of this because of the concerns of the north, including a memo that once came from Chase Bank to the president of Mexico saying, "unless you eliminate those Zapatistas, we can no longer consider Mexico a secure environment for investment."

So, in a little village in December 1997, people had assembled, Indigenous Peoples who were on the run because they understood that there was a military operation coming into the area. So they gathered. And, while they themselves were not Zapatistas—in fact, they had formed themselves into an organization called the Bees—they shared the causes of Indigenous rights, protection of culture and traditions, land reform, democracy, and human rights, but they did not share the strategy of taking up arms. And so they gathered in the little village with rumors that there was a military operation on the way, and they gathered in the little wooden chapel to pray and to fast for peace.

In the morning of December 22, 1997, trucks started to arrive, young men in uniforms got down armed with high-caliber rifles and they took position around the chapel and high ground, and at 11:00 in the morning they began to open fire. You can still see the bullet holes in the wooden panels that touched them. The people ran, they fled, they dove down the embankments, they gathered their children, they covered them up, they tried to hide in the vegetation. The shooting continued until 5:00 in the afternoon; at 2:00 it reached its peak.

In the end, forty-five lives were lost, the majority women and children. The men had moved out of the area, assuming that they would be the ones targeted for violence, but they were dead wrong. In this strategy, the women were targets. It was gender-directed violence. Among the nineteen women killed, four were pregnant; one died because her abdomen was cut open. Just 200 meters away from the killing spree were public security forces. They blocked the only potential escape route from the village. This is a military strategy called the hammer and the anvil. The anvil holds the escape route, and the hammer comes in to do its work.

The government, in its attempt to cover up its complicity, stated that it was just a dispute between Indigenous Peoples, you know how they are. There was a sand pit and they were just fighting over that. They tried to cover up the gender-specific brutality. Cultural anthropologists who have investigated the case say that this kind of heinous violence has absolutely nothing to do with Indigenous cultures, but has everything to do with a culture of military counter-insurgency training. And so, in this globalized world, this new world order that promises profits and trickle-down economics, there is a system that demands human sacrifice through exclusion, exploitation, expulsion, and extermination.

But the global profiteers do not have the last word. They do not get the last say. There is a cosmic shift that we also feel; our solar calendar shows two serpents coming together head to head. One is the serpent of light, the other is the serpent of shadows. The elders in Mexico tell us that we are now in the shifting of the pendulum, that the serpent of the shadows is now being pushed aside, and the serpent of light is coming into force and power. In Spanish, the way we say “to give birth” is “to give light.” And so, this Earth Mother of ours is not only crying out because of the pain of her lost, murdered and missing sisters, she is also crying out in labor pain. She is giving birth to a new creation, what some refer to as an eco-feminist creation that places food sovereignty above food as a commodity. That places worker cooperation above maximizing our competitive advantage. That places meeting basic human needs above maximizing corporate greed.

And so we are awaiting the birth of a new order, and as those who are here as midwives, we participate by sowing seeds —we start small because we want to concentrate the life force—seeds that are cultivated, that become plots, that thicken, that write a new history and a new story. We start thin with many threads of many colors to weave a new tapestry. And we start slow because we are in it for the long haul. We are in this marathon of life and hope and we will not be stopped. And we are not alone.

Who has called us here? I would say that our missing and murdered sisters have also called us. You can feel them, their presence; they are here. Yesterday when Maria Campbell shared her powerful, moving, eloquent words, and she talked about walking through the cemetery and remembering her sisters who had died such violent deaths, outside, in the window, I saw in the clouds a kite flying. In Guatemala, on the day of the dead, people fly kites in the graveyards to remind them of the spirits that soar and lift them up. We are not alone, our sisters lift us up and they have called us and they have convened us in this marathon of hope.

So I want to close with the words of a sister from Guatemala who reminds us of this marathon of hope in a poem that she wrote called “They have threatened us with resurrection.”[2]

They have threatened us with Resurrection

Because we have felt their inert bodies,

and their souls penetrated ours

doubly fortified,

because in this marathon of Hope,

there are always others to relieve us
who carry the strength
to reach the finish line
which lies beyond death.
They have threatened us with Resurrection
because they will not be able to take away from us
their bodies,
their souls,
their strength,
their spirit,
nor even their death
and least of all their life.
Because they live
today, tomorrow, and always
in the streets baptized with their blood,
in the air that absorbed their cry,
in the jungle that hid their shadows,
in the river that gathered up their laughter,
in the ocean that holds their secrets,
in the craters of the volcanoes,
Pyramids of the New Day,
which swallowed up their ashes.
They have threatened us with Resurrection
because they are more alive than ever before,
because they transform our agonies
and fertilize our struggle,
because they pick us up when we fall,
because they loom like giants
before the crazed gorillas' fear.
They have threatened us with Resurrection

1. Kim Erno's presentation at the Mission Women: Decolonization, Third Wave Feminisms and Indigenous People of Canada and Mexico conference was translated into English by a conference volunteer, then transcribed and edited for ease of readability by Chelsea Millman. ↵
2. Excerpt from Julia Esquivel, "They Have Threatened Us With Resurrection / Nos han amenazado de Resurrección," Spiritus 3 (2003): 96–101 © 2003 by The Johns Hopkins University Press. ↵

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3.5: Update- Global Capitalism's Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous Daughters 3.5: Update- Global Capitalism's Attack on Mother Earth and Her Indigenous DaughtersEdit Update titlecancel

Kim Erno[1]

Introduction

Previously, I identified four forms of human sacrifice demanded by the idolatry of global capitalism: exclusion, exploitation, expulsion, and extermination. Exclusion represents those women who are outside of a global economy that only values the potential for monetary production and consumption. Those whose economic means are so limited that they are neither consumers nor producers and who perform tasks such as child rearing, gardening, collecting water, caring for the elderly, etc. without any monetary remuneration, count for nothing in the global economic equation and therefore have no justification to exist. Exploitation represents those who for a limited period of time contribute to the global economy through the tedious labor in sweatshops often in inhumane conditions. Once their production rate declines or they become reproductive, that is, pregnant they are discarded. Expulsion represents those women who live in the villages that are like "ghost towns" where the vast majority of the males have gone north in order to feed their families. These are primarily rural areas since they are the ones that have been most devastated by trade agreements that flood the market with cheap corn and other basic grains. These women risk their lives crossing north through the desert to reunite their families who have been expelled by the global economy's impact on their hometowns. Extermination represents those women who resist and organize alternative societies with collective decision making, sustainable living styles and gender equality. Such women are a threat to a patriarchal global system that is based on competitive advantages, maximizing profits and converting people and the planet into commodities to be bought and sold or traded for profits through speculation. I cited particular communities in Mexico that are exemplative of each of these sacrifices. In the case of extermination I had described a massacre by paramilitaries carried out in the Indigenous community of Acteal (in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas) in which women, particularly pregnant women, were specifically targeted in order to eliminate "the seed" of resistance to a global economic model designed to generate wealth for a few rather than the well being of all.

Now, at this juncture, I would like to pick up where I left off, namely with extermination. I believe that there is an even greater urgency now to expose how extermination has become so amplified that we are now faced with a convergence of femicide with ecocide. Femicide has reached global proportions by the fact that we as humans are also committing ecocide by killing la Tierra Madre, Mother Earth! The culprit is a global economic system based upon unlimited growth fueled by the endless extraction of limited resources to feed an insatiable consumerism with waste and contamination left in its wake that is heating up the earth at a record rate. Furthermore, anyone who gets in the way must be eliminated so what we are now experiencing is a combination of the killing of the planet with the killing of women who are defenders of the planet. These women are the faithful and valiant daughters fighting to protect their Mother for the sake of their children and the generations to come.

Ecocide: Mother Earth at Risk

In spite of those who deny global warming or anthropogenic climate disruption (ACD), the data is readily available. Notably, about 97 percent of active, publishing climate scientists believe in ACD, meaning that they consider human activity to be a major cause of climate change. (Doran and Zimmerman 2009; Anderegg et al. 2010).

There are some places on the planet where denial of ACD is not an option. What do the residents of Tuvalu, an island nation in the South Pacific, and Kivalani, an Inuit village above the Arctic Circle, have in common? They are in a race, not by choice, to see which ones become the first global warming displaced refugees.

Tuvalu is the fourth smallest nation on the planet consisting of a twenty-seven square kilometer land mass with a population of around 11,000. The highest point on the island nation is about four meters above sea level. As the oceans continue to rise, the island nation faces an uncertain future. Storm patterns have also changed from the most severe ones that were once concentrated in the months of November and December to storms with high winds and huge swells that can wash over the island striking virtually any time of the year. Speaking at the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference the prime minister of Tuvalu, Enele Sopoago, challenged the industrialized world to set even higher goals for combating global warming: "Tuvalu's future at current warming, is already bleak, any further temperature rises will spell the total demise of Tuvalu. For Small Island Developing Nations, Least Developed Countries and many others, setting a global temperature goal of below 1.5 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels is critical. I call on the people of Europe to think carefully about their obsession with 2 degrees.

Surely we must aim for the best future we can deliver and not a weak compromise…Let's do it for Tuvalu, for if we save Tuvalu we save the world." (Sopoago 2015). Sopoago's words may prove to be prophetic. While the Paris Agreement calls for holding the global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius for this century, the accord is based upon political motivation for implementation rather than legal mandates. Plus a recent report from the UN Environmental Program (UNEP) states that reduction of emissions under the Paris Agreement will still result in a 3.5 degree Celsius rise in global warming by the end of the century. In the introduction to the report UNEP leaders warn: "Current commitments will reduce emissions by no more than a third of the levels required by 2030 to avert disaster."(Solheim and McGlade 2016, xi). Furthermore in what is referred to as potentially "the most impactful climate change reality of our time", a study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) warns that a collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet could produce an abrupt and catastrophic ten foot rise (about one meter below Tuvalu's highest point) in sea level between 2050 and 2060. To avert this disaster we must restore ocean temperatures to their pre-industrial state.

Heading north to the Arctic with a warming rate twice as fast as the world average, we enter a region also susceptible to the impact of climate change. The residents of Kivalani live with climate change on a daily basis. The force of the late fall storms were once diminished by the ice pack that formed along the coast as a protective shield. However with warmer temperatures this ice pack does not form until much later in the year often December or later. This leaves the coastal area significantly more vulnerable to erosion. The warmer water also increases the intensity of the storms. Some homes simply fall into the sea. There are no climate change deniers in their midst! City council member Colleen Swan is also a first responder for her village. She describes the exhaustion from the endless struggle to protect her community from being washed into the ocean. When one minor fall storm hit she decided she would try to get some rest.

> When we got that storm last fall, I decided I'm just going to go to sleep. I'm tired of worrying, I want to get some rest. The next morning when I woke up I saw the impacts from a minor storm and how quickly the water rose, and I realized that was a very dangerous thing for me to do, to sleep, to not face the reality of that night. I realized this is what climate deniers do not us. Not us who face the reality every day. We wake up to it. We wake up to it every morning. (Wernick 2015)

Indeed global warming is making itself felt in the farthest reaches of the north. During the second half of November 2016, temperatures at the North Pole averaged an alarming 36 degrees above normal! At a time when Arctic sea ice should be freezing it is melting, meaning that storms pounding the coast along Kivalani will be even more destructive and Colleen Swan will have many more sleepless nights.

In both places resettlement is considered the last resort but could soon be the only option. Abandoning the land that represents their traditions and livelihood for centuries means also losing their identity as a people. Maina Talia, secretary of the Tuvalu Climate Action Network and a theologian states:

> "Our people continue to experience the dramatic effects of climate change on our islands. Our traditional root crops…are gradually dying because of sea intrusion and frequent droughts. Fish poisoning has become a major issue, due to increased temperature and acidification of sea water…We are losing our lands to the sea as a result of soil erosion, and land defines who we are. Our culture, our life, our heritage, and our language are all rooted in the land…Losing our land literally means life becomes meaningless to us." (Talia 2014)

Furthermore, like the sea, the cost of relocation continues to rise. In the case of Kivalani the estimate is around $400 million USD. In a strategy to garner these funds, as well as, to hold accountable those who are some of the biggest contributors to global warming, Kivalani filed a law suit in February, 2008 against twenty-four oil, coal, and utility companies including ExxonMobil, BP America, Chevron Corporation, Royal Dutch Shell, and Xcel Energy. The law suit claims that the defendants by their volume of green house emissions are exacerbating global warming and the erosion of Kivalani and therefore constitute a "public nuisance" under federal and state common law (Montague 2013, 2). For a time Tuvalu had entertained a similar strategy considering legal action against United States and Australia as the world's largest and overall highest per capita producers of green house gases on the planet. The law suit filed by Kivalani was subsequently dismissed by the U.S. courts on the grounds that the remedy for their situation must be sought through legislative and executive branches of the government rather than through federal common law (Armstrong 2009).

Those who face "eviction" from their homelands due to climate change are at risk of becoming global castaways since there appears to be no political body willing to take responsibility for their relocation. The UN refugee convention applies only to those fleeing persecution and with the growing number of people in this category of refugees there is little political will to expand

refugee status to those forced to move by rising sea waters and droughts. With predictions of an estimated 250 million climate refuges by 2050 we are set for a global migration crisis (Sunjic 2008).

There appears to be no relief in sight as more and more hotspots erupt across the globe. During the summer of 2016 the temperature in Basra, Iraq spiked at 129 degrees Fahrenheit setting the record as the highest temperature ever documented and exceeding the limit of human tolerance ('State of the Climate: Global Climate Report for Annual 2016' 2017; Bouchama and Knochel 2002, 1981). Ironically Basra is situated along the Euphrates River by the legendary location of the Garden of Eden. What was once the garden of paradise is becoming a hell on earth! The months of July and August of 2016 also saw temperatures climb to the highest levels ever recorded in the history of human civilization! The most recent report from the World Meteorological Organization predicts that the year 2016 will go down as the hottest year ever on record. This follows the record setting temperature high of the year 2015; which followed the record setting year of 2014. You start to see a pattern?!?

Some of the most recent studies on global warming are the most disturbing. One describes an accelerated melt rate for the ice caps and ice sheets that produces what is known as a stratification in the ocean with the cooler fresh water from the melting ice pooling at the top and the warmer salt water settling below, which leads to even more melting as these warmer waters are melting ice sheets from the bottom up. This in turn will slow down the ocean circulation in the north, while the impact of global warming raises temperatures around the equator so we have a greater north-south temperature differential that will produce more severe tropical storms (Hansen et al. 2016).

While the year 2015 set a record for the hottest year ever (although 2016 is likely to surpass it) it was also a year when a record was set for the number of murders of environmental activists. While Mother Earth is warming up the heat is being turned up on those who fight to defend her. According to a Global Witness report titled "On Dangerous Ground", the year 2015 "was the worst year on record for killings of land and environmental defenders – people struggling to protect land, forests and rivers through peaceful actions, against mounting odds…" The report continues "The numbers are shocking. We documented 185 killings across 16 countries, a 59% increase on 2014 and the highest annual toll on record. On average, more than three people were killed every week in 2015…" Furthermore those who are most vulnerable to attack are Indigenous populations. "This report sheds light on the acute vulnerability of Indigenous people, whose weak land rights and geographic isolation make them particularly exposed to land grabbing for natural resources exploitation. In 2015, almost 40% of victims were Indigenous" ('On Dangerous Ground' 2016, 4). The following is a case in point…

Femicide: The Risk of Defending Mother Earth

In the early morning hours of March 3, 2016, gunmen broke into the home of Berta Cáceres, an internationally recognized Honduran environmental activist, and shot her to death. Also wounded in the attack was Gustavo Castro Soto coordinator of Otros Mundos Chiapas, Friends of the Earth México, and the Mesoamerican Movement against the Extractive Mining Model (M4). Gustavo was a close friend and colleague of Berta and was staying with her as an act of international solidarity to provide some measure of security by his accompaniment. By feigning death Gustavo survived the attack and is the sole witness to Berta's murder. He was subsequently held for several days in inhumane conditions by Honduran authorities for "questioning". After his release he was once again detained at the airport and placed into protective custody at the Mexican embassy only to be handed back to the Honduran authorities for further "questioning". The initial government finding was that the murder occurred during a robbery and there was no political motive. This conclusion could not be further from the truth ('The Death of the Guardian' n.d.).

Berta Cáceres grew up in a household with progressive and revolutionary ideals. Her mother, Doña Bertha, served as a role model of female leadership and community service. She was mayor of her town and later became governor of the state at time when women seldom if ever held public office. Doña Bertha was also a midwife for her community and provided refuge in her home for those fleeing from the civil war in El Salvador (Blitzer 2016).With this formation Berta emerged as a powerful Indigenous female leader among her native Lenca people. In 1993, she co-founded the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH). COPINH was created to promote indigenous pride as well as political clout among the Lencas, peasant movements, and grassroots organizations of Honduras. Together they took on some very powerful economic and political interests (both national and international) and won some significant victories: reclaiming ancestral lands through communal land titles, blocking mining and logging operations, organizing a boycott of all international financial institutions on their lands, and facilitating 150 local referendums across the country to give people a voice in determining their futures (Barra 2018; Bell 2016).

The latest campaign was to halt the construction of a megaproject which was a hydroelectric dam known as the Agua Zarca to be built on the Gualcarque River that is considered sacred by the Lenca people. The project violated international law

because it was initiated without the prior consent of the Indigenous people and would have resulted in the displacement of the COPINH community of Rio Blanco. The dam was slated to be built by the Chinese company SINOHYDRO, the largest global builder of dams, with financing provided by the World Bank and political backing from the Desarollos Energéticos S.A. (DESA), the Honduran energy company. Even in the face of such powerful opposition Berta spoke of hearing the river cry for help and that the call had to be answered. With this "call", Berta and COPINH confronted these global giants with the shear force of their integrity, communal organization, and courage. The community of Rio Blanco formed a human barricade to block the construction. Everyone participated, the elderly, the young, nursing mothers and men. The blockade lasted an entire year until finally the dam builder and their backers withdrew (Watson 2015; Bird 2013, 7). When the government reinitiated the project with construction across the river from Rio Blanco the protests were renewed and the threats against Berta, her family, and members of COPINH intensified. Berta stated: "I have received direct death threats, threats of kidnapping or disappearance, of lynching, of pummeling the vehicle I use, threats of kidnapping my daughter, persecution, surveillance, sexual harassment, and also campaigns in the national media of powerful sectors." She identified the threats as coming from various state and corporate agents including Blue Energy, a Canadian transnational corporation, also seeking to partner with the dam construction project at Rio Blanco (*La Nueva Televisión Del Sur C.A.* 2016).

In spite of efforts by Honduran authorities to pin the blame for Berta's assassination on leaders of COPINH claiming it was a crime of passion, thus far those arrested include a military officer and two retired military officers as further confirmation of military complicity and state sanctioned violence in collusion with international financial and political interests in Berta's murder (Lakhani 2018). However, given the atrocious record of the Honduran justice system (with a 90 percent failure rate in criminal case convictions) there is not much hope for a just resolution to Berta's case, especially now that it has been compounded by the theft of the case files by armed assailants who stole the materials from the car of a judge who claimed she was taking the files home "to study"! For this reason Berta's family and friends have called for an international investigation into her murder which the Honduran government has refused to do. In August 2016,the UN special rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Michael Forst, visited Honduras and declared: "Honduras is one of the most hostile and dangerous countries in the world for human rights defenders." He attributes this to an atmosphere of impunity (*UNHR Office of the High Commissioner* 2019). Additional UN officials warn that the impunity is turning Honduras into "a lawless killing zone" (*UNHR Office of the High Commissioner* 2016).

Berta's assassination must be set within the context of the political violence of Honduras; the violence directed toward those who defend land and water in Honduras; the escalating global violence against environmental activists as previously cited; and the particular violence directed against female defenders of the environment and sacred Indigenous spaces.

Honduras is ranked as the most violent country in the world with 96 homicides for each 100,000 inhabitants (Kennedy 2012). While this is often attributed to gang and drug related violence, a major factor is the state sanctioned violence against human rights activists and Indigenous leaders defending their land. The spike in killings occurred following the 2009 military coup that ousted democratically elected Manuel Zelaya. He became unacceptable to the oligarchy and certain foreign powers after he announced his plans to make significant changes in Honduras. The government would: no longer renew mining contracts with Canadian corporations; convert the large U.S. military airbase into an international civilian airport; join the Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA) that promotes trade and social programs for Latin America; double the minimum wage; and revise the Honduran constitution (Escalera-Flexhaug 2014; Mejía 2009; 2008; Ham 2015, 6; Palencia and Frank 2009). The last proposal was the one used against him to claim that his primary objective was to amend the constitution so that he could serve another term in office. This was blatantly false since even if that change were made it could not have applied to him. Besides, the major reason for the constitutional reform was to protect the natural resources of Honduras, especially from foreign interests, because the constitution had been written back in the days when Honduras was considered a "banana republic" at the mercy of corporations like the United Fruit Company.

The women of Honduras also had a stake in the constitutional reform as a means of advancing their rights and place within Honduran society. Berta spoke of this hope for change: "For the first time we would be able to establish a precedent for the emancipation of women, to begin to break these forms of domination. The current constitution never mentions women, not once, so to establish our human rights, our reproductive, sexual, political, social and economic rights as women would be to really confront this system of domination" (Carlsen 2011). Not surprisingly some of the first to take to the streets in protest of the coup were female activists who spontaneously organized themselves into a movement called Feminists in Resistance. In addition to the beatings by police and security forces that all protestors suffered, the women were also subjected to rape and sexual harassment.

Once Zelaya was removed from power, with the acquiescence of the Obama administration and then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (the coup leaders even hired a Washington, D.C. law firm to lobby the U.S. Congress on their behalf, the same firm that represented Bill Clinton during his impeachment proceedings), trade was again directed toward the north and concessions for mining and access to land for agribusiness were speedily granted (Beckman 2017). When the affected communities resisted, the killings abounded. Between January 2010 and May 2013 there were 120 reported assassinations of peasant leaders in the Bajo Aguán region of Honduras which is one of the most fertile regions of the country and especially well suited for the cultivation of African palm oil trees (OXFAM Briefing Note 2016). What was once an area of the country identified as the "capital of land reform" following government sponsored agrarian reform, is now considered the "poster child of land re-concentration" with over 75 percent of the land controlled by a handful of Honduran oligarchs who are cultivating palm oil trees and exporting the palm oil. Palm oil is considered a "flex crop," meaning that it is suitable for food, fuel, livestock feed, or industrial material, which makes it even more versatile and valuable as a cash crop. As such it also promotes confiscation of land due to a growing global demand and the land area required for cultivation. About 10,000 acres of land are necessary to supply a single palm oil mill (Conant 2014). Here we have a contradiction in the strategies to reduce global warming and an example of why having Big Business "go green" while measuring its success by maximizing "greenbacks" will not save us! A positive step in the reduction of global warming is to switch from fossil fuels to biofuels. Palm oil can be used for biofuel. However in addition to the significant territory required for cultivation, it also thrives in conditions equivalent to that of rainforests. Not only are these precious areas destroyed, the Indigenous people who live there in harmony with the environment are displaced. If they refuse, the companies have their hired guns to intimidate, evict and kill. In a country where private security forces outnumber the police by a 5:1 ratio (Conant 2014), the UN Working Group on Mercenaries condemned the African palm oil producers of Honduras for recruiting former Colombian paramilitaries notorious for assassinations and massacres directed against peasant populations. These political and economic factors make Honduras both the murder capital of the world and according to Global Witness, the most dangerous country for those who defend their land and the environment (Global Witness 2017). Ironically Honduras is also the nation considered most affected by climate change that produces extreme weather. In a report issued by Germanwatch, Honduras is listed as the number one country to be negatively impacted by climate change during a 20 year period from 1994 to 2013 (Kreft et al. 2015).

While violence against defenders of the environment escalates, with Indigenous peoples being the most vulnerable to attack, female activists are considered most at risk. An OXFAM report issued in October, 2016, "The Risk of Defending Human Rights: The Rising Tide of Attacks against Human Rights Activists in Latin America" describes how the cultural context contributes to this higher risk. "The prevalence of the patriarchal culture that is so predominant in Latin America means that women human rights defenders face specific risks and attacks, since their activities involve challenging cultural, religious and social norms. This means that they are victims of stigmatization, hostility, repression and violence more frequently and to a greater extent than men," (OXFAM Briefing Note 2016). In Berta Cáceres' own words:

> "I am absolutely convinced that if I were a man, this level of aggression wouldn't be so violent. There are always campaigns against leaders. But as women we're not only leading campaigns like the fight against the hydroelectric project, but also against the whole militarization culture that's involved in our defense of the public good, of nature. We are women who are reclaiming our right to the sovereignty of our bodies and thoughts and political beliefs, to our cultural and spiritual rights – of course the aggression is much greater," (Andrews 2016).

Within this national context of Honduras returning to a "puppet state" to become the most violent nation on earth and the deadliest for environmental activists together with a global context of ever escalating violence against defenders of the environment with Indigenous people and women as the most at risk; Berta Cáceres, an Indigenous Honduran female environmental activist, was killed.

Conclusion

The mounting violence directed toward Mother Earth and her allies appears like the last throes of a global monster that wants to consume and destroy all that it can before its demise. It carries the seeds of its own collapse within itself. A system that is based on unlimited growth with the endless extraction of limited resources is unsustainable for the long haul and therefore doomed to fail. However this does not mean that we are to stand by idly awaiting its downfall. If the monster is in its last throes of life, then Mother Earth is at the beginning of her labor pains to give birth to a new creation. In this birthing process we are called to be midwives, which means:

- standing alongside those who are on the frontlines of the defense of our lands, air, and water for future generations in defiance of those who exploit any and all resources to reap short term financial gains;
- cultivating sustainable food systems rather than treating food as a commodity to profit large agribusiness enterprises;

- designing local economies to meet basic human needs rather than an imposed global economy driven by corporate greed;
- connecting with renewable energy sources that minimize environmental impact rather than extractive ones that accelerate global warming and contaminate the planet;
- joining social movements that cross borders and issues to globalize justice rather than the globalization of international financial institution policies to benefit transnational corporations and their investors; and
- organizing a participative politics of the people rather than a plutocratic rule by the rich.

In 2015 Berta Cáceres was awarded the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in recognition of her leadership in defense of her Lenca community and their opposition of the Agua Zarca dam project. In her acceptance speech she issued a call to all of us who continue to walk on this earth which I expect was similar to the call she once heard from the river. “Let us wake up humanity. We’re out of time…Let’s come together and remain hopeful as we defend and care for the blood of this Earth and of its spirits…” (Garcia and Ruiz 2016).In honor of Berta and for the sake our planet and the generations to come we must heed her call.

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1. “I dedicate this updated version of “Global Capitalism’s Detrimental Impact on Our Sacred Earth and Indigenous Women” to Iris Janet Figueroa Flores, my life companion and wife, a defender of women’s rights whose Indigenous roots sink deep into la Tierra Madre (the Mother Earth) of México. She was torn from my midst much too soon so now we look for a new way to walk together between life on this side and life on the other side to continue our path toward a world of abundant life for all.” ↵

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3.6: Video of Keynote Address by Marta Perez at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women 3.6: Video of Keynote Address by Marta Perez at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous WomenEdit Update titlecancel

Activist Marta Perez, introduced by m.c. Rev. Carla Blakley, describes her first-hand experiences at San Salvador Attenco. Rev. Kim Erno translates for us.

The dangers of speaking out about the violence directed toward Indigenous women is real. As such, we send out prayers for safety to those women who speak up, like Marta.

Part One

Part Two

Part Three

Part Four

This page titled 3.6: Video of Keynote Address by Marta Perez at the 2008 Conference on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women is shared under a CC BY-NC 4.0 license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by Brenda Anderson, Shauneen Pete, Wendee Kubik, and Mary Rucklos-Hampton via source content that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

3.7: From Genocide to Femicide- An Ongoing History of Terror, Hate and Apathy 3.7: From Genocide to Femicide- An Ongoing History of Terror, Hate and ApathyEdit Update titlecancel

Leonzo Barreno

Genocide[1]**:**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s one of the largest genocides in the western hemisphere was taking place: genocide in Guatemala (Chomsky, 28; Falla, 4) that the world knew little about. Only after survivors told their stories to those who dared to listen and to write about them did we learn of the extent of a campaign carried out by "an army blinded by ignorance, hatred [towards the Mayan people], and fear" (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 257). What this campaign of state terrorism created and left in Guatemala, amid the Peace Agreement signed in 1996, was a culture of violence and fear amongst the general population, impunity for those who committed crimes against humanity and apathy among the selected few who continue to govern that Central American country.

Growing up in an urban town of Guatemala in the early 1980s, I recall the news—from clandestine radio stations, from urban *foci* informants, or from secret discussions with high school and university students' gatherings—of the daily rural *matazones* (massacres). Official news on radio and TV minimized the extent of the massacres by telling people that the national army was fighting against the "evil of communism." One president, General Efraín Ríos Montt, even told Guatemalans in his Sunday speeches that God had chosen him to rule Guatemala and that killing rebels was part of his sacred duty[2]. He was, in fact, ordering the massacres of ten of thousands of Mayan people.

Speaking publicly against the massacres in the urban areas was uncommon due to the fear caused by the several terrorist instruments used by the Guatemalan state: neighbours (*orejas*) spying on neighbours; selective disappearances and mass killings of university professors and students, unionists, and Catholic leaders; assassination of youth suspected of being *guerrillas* (rebels); and military surveillance of collective gatherings. In short, the country became a militarized state where dead bodies were left on the streets for the purpose of causing fear among the urban population. There were no political prisoners in Guatemala and until 2012 no single high-ranking officer ever faced justice for all these crimes.

The rural areas of northern and western Guatemala, highly populated by Mayan people, suffered the worst of state terrorism. Entire rural zones were difficult, even "illegal," to visit. Guatemala became divided not only along social and cultural lines but also by geographic zones. Those in power ruled with an iron fist and with contempt for and "devaluation" of the rural Mayan population. Army generals, since the 1954 CIA orchestrated invasion of Guatemala, took turns as "Presidents" of the country. Generals such as Schell Laugerud, Romeo Lucas, Benedicto Lucas, Efraín Ríos Montt, and Hector Gramajo, as Presidents or Ministers of Defence, were the masterminds of the genocide of more than 200,000 people, mostly Mayan.

Under the Ríos Montt government (March 1982 to August 1983), the army destroyed "some 400 towns and villages, drove 20,000 rural people out of their homes and into [concentration] camps, killed between 50,000 and 75,000 mostly unarmed indigenous farmers and their families, and violently displaced over a million people" (Schlesinger and Kinzer, x). In the Guatemalan army rhetoric, the rural Mayan people were the water keeping the fish (*guerrillas*) alive; "in order to kill the fish," they said, it was necessary "to get rid of the water," literally. Very few people escaped the massacres. In his book *Massacres in the Jungle* (1994), Jesuit priest and anthropologist Ricardo Falla documented some of the massacres in the Ixcan region. It was through the personal stories of survivors that the world learned about the effectiveness of these military regimes. Guatemalans did not learn until much later because Falla's book was considered 'subversive' and was illegal to read (Beatriz Manz in the foreword of *Massacres in the Jungle*, xv).

Falla says that although racism was not the main motive for the genocide, it became a trait of it. Foot soldiers in the field and army generals stationed in Guatemala City were influenced by the racism and hate they felt for the Maya, who they only referred to as *Indios* (Indians)—"a despicable being, whose life is worth less than a normal person's and whom one can therefore exterminate without scruples to save the country from a great evil such as communism" (Falla, 185). Non-Maya (in the Guatemalan lexicon referred to as *Ladino*, or people of mixed Spanish and Indigenous blood) killed in the massacres were treated so because they looked like Indians and were "infected" by the Indian way of doing things (Falla, 86).

By 1996, when a "peace agreement" was signed between the Guatemalan government and the rebel forces grouped under the Union of Guatemala's Revolutionary Forces (URNG), the war was supposed to be over. "Guatemala: Never Again" was the title of a 1998 report led by the Catholic Church that documented the atrocities of both army and rebel forces during the thirty-six years of

fighting. The report estimated that “150,000 people had been killed and another 50,000 had disappeared. Eighty percent of the casualties, it asserted, were inflicted by government forces” (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 264). The Catholic Church took on this project after learning that the Historical Clarification Commission (HCC), a commission agreed to by rebels and government, had agreed to impunity for the two sides: nobody was going to be prosecuted for the crimes committed in thirty-six years of “war.” Notwithstanding its limitations, the Commission’s 1999 report concluded that “the conflict had caused more than 200,000 deaths, and blamed the military for 93 percent of them.”[3]

The URNG became an insignificant political party, and former dictator Ríos Montt became President of Congress and died in April 2018 without going to jail for the crimes he committed. Other Generals became politicians or rich entrepreneurs. Terror, hate, and apathy, despite the peace agreement, was far from over. In his final report, the head of the HCC Christian Tomuschat emphasized the “the special brutality directed against Mayan women, who were tortured, raped and murdered” (Schlesinger and Kinzer, 265). This was one of the few occasions in which violence against women began to be acknowledged. However, and despite early hopes for a better society, terror and violence continue to be rampant in Guatemala.

While state terrorism was implemented in Mayan territories, resulting in genocide of four Mayan groups, the current violence is mostly affecting large cities. For example, in 2008, Bismarck Pineda and Lisardo Bolaños found that in the Departamento (province) of Guatemala, where Guatemala City is located, there were 2,433 homicides, or 81.26 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants. In large Indigenous territories like the Departamento of Totonicapán 23 killings represented 5.30 homicides per 100,000 people during the same year. Genocide against Indigenous peoples has been replaced by femicide in urban areas. The killing of Guatemalan women did not stop; it continues even more in contemporary times.

Femicide:

Since 1976 femicide has been defined as “the processes to which violence against women becomes socially acceptable and quotidian” (Russell, 1976 in Torres, M., 1). Every year thousands of people, men and women, are killed in Guatemala. While more men die in violent acts the violence against Guatemalan women has a misogyny undertone.

According to a report from the National Committee for the Prevention of Intra-Familiar Violence against Women (CONAPREVI), violence against Guatemalan females include physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse. Physical violence includes “pinching, slapping in the face, kicking, blows using objects or weapons. Severe physical violence can cause death.” Psychological violence is applied in many forms including “insults, negligence, humiliation, blame, emotional blackmail, degradation, isolation from friends, ridicule, manipulation, threats, exploitation, yelling, and indifference. The result is emotional harm” (CONAPREVI, 17). Sexual violence is when male offenders force their partners to have intimate relations with them or with other men. It also involves sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, incest, and forcing women to watch pornography. Economic violence refers to the selling or destruction of the couple’s patrimony, destruction of the women personal identification documents, and refusing to pay child support (p. 17).

The O*bservatorio de los Periodistas*-CERIGUA, based on a report from the Guatemalan Mutual Support Group (GAM), reported that in 2013 alone, 51,525 women reported to be victims of violence and 755 were killed violently (Observatorio de los Periodistas-CERIGUA, November 22, 214). The National Institute of Statistics reported that between 2000 and 2018 more than 11,255 women died violently (in Torres, M., January 23, 2019).

Who is killing women and young girls and why? Is it gangs or organized crime killing women and young girls who disobey their command to commit illegal acts or who refuse to be sexually exploited? Or is it some police officers, as some gang leaders say, who are in a campaign of social cleansing and thus show their bosses that they are doing “something” against crime? Is it husbands or partners who use violence as a way to ‘punish’ women? Or is it the direct apathy and inaction of the social, economic, and political elites whose women are not victims of femicide? There is no one single answer.

Rarely punished, perpetrators of crime include “Non-state organizations – including the aforementioned gangs, and organized crime syndicates as well as quasi-police forces and even some rural communities – now engage in the quotidian acts of violence to enact social control” (Torres, 3). In an interview with journalist Antonio Ordoñez, lawyer and activist Ana Lucia Moran said, “violence against women is a continuation of the violence that predates the [Guatemalan] armed conflict” (Ordoñez, November 24, 2009). Chilean photojournalist Carlos Reyes Manzo told a group of journalism students at the School of Journalism, University of Regina (March 30, 2009) that gang leaders told him during his visit to Guatemala that it was the National Police killing their women to send them—gang leaders and their “groupies”—a message.

In one of the few public confessions about femicide and killing for money, gang leader Axel Danilo Ramirez (a.k.a. Smiley), who began his criminal career at the age of 10, told journalists that killing gives him pleasure, “especially killing opposing gang

members and their women" (Castañón, M., April 16, 2009). Whether it is domestic violence, organized crime (drug cartels and gangs, or the police, or all), the killings continue despite the creation of Decree 22-2008 or Femicide Law (*Prensa Libre*, 1).

Femicide caused concerns in the United States House of Representatives who, in April 2007, through Resolution 100, attempted to bring an end to femicide in Guatemala and other Central American countries (United States Congress 110th, April 2007). It noted that in 2001 about 300 women were killed and in 2005 it was more than 500 victims. Sponsored by Representative Hilda Solis, this American Congress resolution observed that most victims were young women between 18 and 30 years old. The resolution also mentioned that violence "can include torture, mutilation, and sexual violence." The new Femicide Law and the American Congress resolution did not result in changing the ever-increasing number of murdered girls and women in Guatemala. As in the 1980s, hundreds, if not thousands, of Guatemalan and other Central American women are choosing to seek refuge in the United States despite the barriers imposed by the American Administration (Torres, M., January 23, 2019).

Conclusion

The root causes of the 36-year Civil War and the causes of the genocide against the Maya are very much alive. Poverty and racism are endemic in Guatemala. The Maya, the majority of the population, and the poor non-Maya, or *Ladinos*, are mostly remembered during national elections with promises and little change to the corruption, violence, and organized crime identified by most authors that keeps the general population under a constant state of fear.

In this culture of violence and organized crime, femicide has found a fertile ground. Killing women and young girls is endemic in a society whose national authorities have rarely dealt with the crimes against humanity of the recent past (genocide) and who continue to show apathy to the thousands of femicide cases. In one of my recent visits to Guatemala, a local scholar told me that during the Civil War (1960-1996) the state had control of the state security apparatus by repressing its people. Now the state lost control or is not interested in the internal security of its citizens. Although most victims of daily crimes are men, the violence against women shows that physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence against them are rooted in their sexuality and gender. If judges have no education about misogyny and femicide, if no resources are provided to deal with these crimes and no political concern is shown for the lives of women, these crimes against humanity will continue. Justice in Guatemala remains a utopia.

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1. "Acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (Staub, Ervin, 1993:8) ↵
2. Author's personal experience ↵
3. Schlesinger and Kinzer, 265. Despite the American ambassador's attempts to call the report a "Guatemalan internal conflict," in his visit to Guatemala, former American President Bill Clinton said that the US support "for military forces and intelligence units which engaged in violence and widespread repression was wrong, and the United States must not report that mistake." ↵

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3.8: The Role of Government Policies and Drug Cartels in Violence Against Indigenous Women in Guatemala 3.8: The Role of Government Policies and Drug Cartels in Violence Against Indigenous Women in GuatemalaEdit Update titlecancel

Leonzo Barreno

When this paper was first published, I argued that femicide (the killing of women or other crimes against women) in Guatemala was rooted in the country's long history of political violence. I also argued that the oligarchy and the army were unreachable by the justice system for crimes they committed during the country's 36-year Civil War. Using a media analysis, this brief update shows how the justice system briefly changed in 2012. In November that year, the Public Attorney's office penetrated the immunity and impunity walls that protected military strongmen. The Public Attorney charged former dictator Efrain Rios Montt with crimes against humanity and a trial ensued. Most media articles were in favour of the trial, but they faced an unorthodox, yet expected, opposition: the oligarchy's paid media ads.

General Efrain Rios Montt, who ruled Guatemala from 1982 to 1983, had, for three decades, enjoyed judicial and constitutional immunity for crimes he committed during his short presidency. On May 10, 2013, following a two-month trial, he was found guilty of committing genocide against the Ixil-Maya people and sentenced to eighty years in prison. However, his conviction was overturned eight days later by the Constitutional Court. Eventually, he was found mentally unfit to stand trial. Although justice for the Ixil-Maya was achieved in a court of law, the trial by media, especially by paid media ads, favored Rios Montt. Despite some journalists' investigative work in exposing the oligarchy-army partnership and the atrocities they committed during the war, the pro-Rios Montt paid ads showed how far the Guatemalan economic elite was going to go to defend its interests and, above all, help its member to avoid justice.

On one side of the media spectrum, Journalist Martin Rodriguez wrote that some members of Guatemala's elite participated in the general's 1982 to 1983 government in various cabinet positions and were directly involved in bombing the Ixil Maya communities (Rodríguez Pellecer). According to Rodriguez, Zury Rios, the general's daughter, went into a crusade to remind the elite of the imminent legal trouble they could face if her father was found guilty. Further, a friend and former collaborator of Rios Montt, *Prensa Libre* columnist Alfred Kaltschmitt, confirmed the elite's participation in the 1980s massacres in his April 2, 2013 column lamenting that such elite abandoned the general during his trial. Zury Rios and Kaltschmitt were on the minority side because most Guatemalan columnists were in favour of the trial.

A survey conducted between April 18 and May 8, 2013, found that fifty-six columnists wrote in favour of the trial against Rios Montt, fifteen were neutral, and eighteen were against the trial and the allegations of genocide. However, the journalists who expected justice for the Ixil Maya to prevail were drowned out by the paid opinions and editorials favoring Rios Montt. For instance, the Alfred Kaltschmitt column and paid pages (*campos pagados*) ran in all national newspapers on April 8, 2013. The ads not only defended Rios Montt but also warned the public of renewed political violence if he was convicted.

Even more, Rios Montt enjoyed the support of a rare group composed of members of Guatemala's economic elite and former rebel leaders, "The Group of Twelve," who bought whole newspaper pages to deny genocide and other crimes attributed to Rios Montt and the state. The piece "Traicionar la Paz y Dividir a Guatemala" (Betraying Peace and Dividing Guatemala), defended the Guatemalan state and warned the population of more political violence if the trial proceeded. A second group paid for an ad published the day after, on April 17. The opinion "Reflexión de la Asociación Amigos del país sobre la verdadera Reconciliación Nacional" (Observations from the Association Friends of the Country about the true National Reconciliation) stated: "The [Rios Montt] genocide trial betrayed peace and the reconciliation spirit of the peace agreement signed by the State and the Guatemalan Revolutionary Unity in 1996." The ad warned all involved in the massacres that if Rios Montt was found guilty "the state is obliged to prosecute all those who were involved [in the thirty-six-year war]. Their paid media ads did not succeed; at least not at that historical moment. Rios Montt was found guilty by a panel of three judges. After the sentence was read, the Association declared "justice lost!" With the cheers and tears of survivors and their supporters in the background, the general was taken to jail. In a surprising ruling, the Constitutional Court overturned the sentence on May 18, 2013. The general went home and a series of appeals and counter-appeals took place.

These events showed how most media, even though they serve a non-Indigenous audience, were against the decision to free the general. A survey done by the program "Public Opinion" of the private university Rafael Landivar included four different media outlets, all based in Guatemala City: three national newspapers and one online magazine showed support for justice to be done.

Despite the majority siding with the Ixil-Maya people, the trial, and the final verdict, the opposition's paid ads did have a political effect on the Constitutional Court. It is worth mentioning that Guatemalan judges are political appointees.

Rios Montt evaded justice, but Guatemala's Public Attorney, Thelma Aldana, went after other military men. Aldana and the United Nations Commission Against Impunity (CICIG) continued their investigations, even when facing threats and attempts against their lives. They detained other generals, including General Benedicto Lucas Garcia, former Minister of Defence during his brother Fernando Lucas Garcia's (1978–1982), term as president. Benedicto Lucas is now in prison for crimes he committed against humanity, including sexual slavery against Kekchi-Maya women.

This updated context shows how difficult is to achieve justice in Guatemala where the oligarchy and the army remain in control of the country. Moreover, they used their economic power to buy media ads to warn the public of more political violence and to influence the Constitutional Court's decision to favor Rios Montt and other potential war criminals. The current government (2016 to 2020) is headed by comedian James, "Jimmy," Morales. Under pressure from the oligarchy and the army, they outlawed Thelma Aldana, who now lives in exile, and unilaterally ended CICIG's work in Guatemala. Morales is also attacking prominent journalists; arrests for political crimes that target male and female community leaders have skyrocketed, and justice for femicide offenses and crimes is taking a back seat.

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19 "Acts committed with intent to destroy in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group" (Staub, Ervin, 1993:8)
20 Author's personal experience 21 Schlesinger and Kinzer, 265. Despite the American ambassador's attempts to call the report a "Guatemalan internal conflict," in his visit to Guatemala, former American President Bill Clinton said that the US support "for military forces and intelligence units which engaged in violence and widespread repression was wrong, and the United States must not report that mistake."

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Family Stories of Trauma and Resistance

4.1: Sinews Torn and Sinews Strong- Stories from Three Generations

4.2: The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia Flores

4.3: Update- The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia Flores

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4.1: Sinews Torn and Sinews Strong- Stories from Three Generations 4.1: Sinews Torn and Sinews Strong- Stories from Three GenerationsEdit Update titlecancel

Tracey George Heese (B.Ed.) and Carrie Bourassa (PhD)[1]

> *okâwîmâ*. At the breast of women, the generations are nourished. From the
>
> bodies of women flow the relationships of those generations, both to society
>
> and to the natural world. In this way, our ancestors said, the earth is our mother.
>
> In this way, we as women are the earth (Cook 156).

You will never understand unless you slip my moccasins on. I wanted a life that is mine, creating my own path. In the wrong place in the wrong time with the wrong person. My spirit helpers could not save this flesh. See the historical behavior of the colonial legacy. Is the victim at fault? Was she brutalized with a furious rage, her own fault? It is difficult to hear the stories and have to step back and look at the big picture as "Coroner" to examine how so many of our women are disposable. Thank you to all those families, communities and individuals who share their experiences. Hearing about the blindness of individuals who can SEE the evidence of the Regina City rallies for the families with missing and murdered loved ones, rallies around the murders of our women here in our own PILE OF BONES[2].

Maybe had I done my homework, had I put my heart on the shelf, had I not felt desperate or had been content with what I had. Maybe I could have protected myself, could have shielded myself from my death. Now, wrapped in my mother's shawl, telling myself if I could protect you from a broken heart, if I could wipe away the tears, if I could take away all your pain, I would. Now a dream dressed in quilled moccasins lifted and wrapped in a warm hide to return to the weaving of the stars.

Winnifred was murdered in Edmonton, Alberta on May 7, 1991 at the age of forty-two. This chapter examines the colonial contexts that have created the stigma, racism, and discrimination facing Indigenous women today by using an Indigenous storytelling methodology. We share Winnifred's powerful story to reveal systemic discrimination and institutional racism and explore how her daughter Tracey has been able to heal and become an important role model for others who are grieving the loss of our missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

Sinew for Life, Belly Button Teachings

And this story inside of me has to do with sewing my own book in telling glimpses of my life, my mother's life, and my grandmother's life story—our sinew for life —connects us to my daughter and to our granddaughters yet to come. You need to know where you come from. Put your hand on your mid-stomach. There is a sinew that connects you to your hereditary blood to the dressmaker of the universe . . . that rope keeps you connected to the Creator and to your mother. When you first come into this natural world, that cord is tied with a knot to prevent you from falling into the unknown. Your mother's cord is connected to your grandmother and your grandmother's cord is connected to your great grandmother all they way back to the beginning of time when the first woman fell onto the turtle's back. This is the very beginning of the sinew teachings of life.

Long before the Canadian government's apology and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, my grandparents were rich in many, many ways. We lived from the land and I loved my grandparents very much. But at the age of eight, I was taken into the care of the Saskatchewan foster system during the period presently known as the Sixties Scoop, the Indian adoption project. It was horribly inhumane for my grandmother to have experienced first her children being taken by the Church and RCMP, and then her grandchildren being taken by Saskatchewan's social services system, all mandated by the Canadian government.

My grandmother did what she had to do. My mother did what she had to do. And, in my life, I did what I had to do. The common thread of sinew in three generations is my grandmother who was seriously encouraged to marry my grandfather because he was considered wealthy and would make a good protector and provider. My grandmother said she was too young to be married and had no interest in starting a family. She thought herself as just a little girl. What would she know about having a family? There were still so many things in life to learn, but her older brother brought both his sisters to grandfather, who chose my grandmothers as his wife. I'm not sure what my grandfather paid to have this arranged marriage, but I do know that my grandmother did not want it. The common thread of sinew is that a woman's life is worth next to nothing in Canada.

My mother's life: she was taken from my grandmother by the red coats and sent off to Round Lake residential school. Did my grandmother believe she was being punished for having children? All of her children were swept away by the red coats. Did she

even want these children, this life she was forced to live? The sinew between my grandmother and her children was forcibly severed.

My mother Winnie learned to take the beatings from the nuns and sexual abuse from the black robe. She was the oldest of her siblings that attended the school. Her father, my grandfather, hid her older brother in the bush to protect him. At school, my mother was forced into a life that she certainly did not want in carrying the male role of protecting her little brothers and sister. She was strong, undeniably loud, and spoke up. Yes, she was strapped daily, chained, and jailed often. Yes, she was treated as a wild savage, but that unimaginable childhood would serve her as she bloomed into a young woman. Most of our men and women are born to fill the jail system, social services system and, with the odds of diabetes or suicide, likely the health care system. Yes, our babies will give you jobs and make you rich and fat. Your funeral homes and hospitals will profit from the birth and death of our babies, the death of our women, and the death of our people. Many have gotten rich from our mortality.

Violence against women is about power and control over her life and her body (Amnesty, 5). We are First Nations, but we never call ourselves that. We call ourselves "Indian," not the kind that wears a sari but the kind that wears moccasins. My mother was a part of the generation of children that was hauled off to residential school, and then she grew up to be hauled seasonally in and out of jail.

My mother may have learned how to cook, clean, sew, tend a garden, and speak English at that school. But she had to endure sexual, physical, mental, and spiritual abuse at the will of the minister and nuns ordained by a church and sanctioned by the government to run the Round Lake Residential School.

My grandparents' never taught my mom to speak Cree, probably to protect me or to decrease the beatings at Round Lake. One good thing about the school is that it was where my mom met my dad, and soon she was free of the Round Lake prison. Both she and her handsome warrior from Pasqua took off to the big city with no money but enough love to change the world. Very soon after, they both knew she was carrying his child.

My mom loved my dad but he made a drunken choice and shot his brother. He was sent to high security lock-up for sixteen or eighteen years for manslaughter. Not the fairy tale that anyone could hope for. Winnie was destined to do it on her own. Being thrown away, she was left to mourn her dream of a happy ending.

My mom went back home to her parents, helped her dad with cutting pickets, really man's work but even being pregnant did not stop her from doing what needed to be done to survive. With the little money she earned, my mom took a bus up to the Prince Albert jail to see my dad. Something happened to my dad in jail. He pushed my mom away. My dad told my mom to forget about him, that he wasn't worth it. My mom gave birth to a baby, and she was *a girl . . . How? How? How can I be a mother?* She checked herself out and left that little girl at the hospital. I was that baby girl and my grandmother claimed me. Winnifred was never able to reconnect to the belly button teachings. She lost the strength of her grandmother's teachings. The sinew had been cut.

After mom left me, she worked on the streets. Every individual makes choices and research says that you know right from wrong at the age of eight. The Church says, "Give us your children till at least the age of six, and they will be ours for life."

The Canadian government, Indian agents, and Indian commissioners treated and viewed Indian people /Aboriginal people and Indian women /Aboriginal women as less than human, as merely a way to make their riches from and off of. There are many examples of government officials

> debauching Indian women. As proof, Cameron assured the House that he knew of an Indian agent who lived on a western reserve "beneath the shadow of the Methodist mission, in open adultery with two young squaws." He also cited the case of an Englishman who, although unfit for public service in his country, had been appointed to Indian Services in the Territories where he had been "revelling in the sensual enjoyment of a western harem, plentifully supplied with select cullings from the western prairie flowers. (Cameron, quoted in Barron, 139)

Even though we may have gained the vote in Canada in 1960, we were still yet to be viewed as human in Canadian society.

But it wasn't only government officials that abused Indigenous women. Even our own men did it. The following story was shared with me by one of Winnie's closest friends, an Aunty of mine. My mom was chumming with her friends. They always had a great time. They did lots of crazy stuff. This one time one of her girlfriends stood at the corner to get a "John" to get a room for an unspoken party of passion. She said, "You got anything for us to drink, some Baby Duck or whiskey? And, we will get our party started." As soon as her friend was in the room with this guy, Winnie followed and waited five minutes before banging on the door. She pushed her way in and told him to get the hell out. This "John" was a married chief and had no business trying to have a sex-date with anyone except his wife. Well, this chief, just in his white boxers standing in the hotel hallway, begged to be let back into

his room. Winnie tossed his clothes out and said, “You better get out of here or I will call your wife.” He left, unable to call the police for help and unable to explain how the events came to be without incriminating himself. All of my mom’s girlfriends showed up and they partied. Life was good. They partied till the next morning. The chief showed back up begging at the door to be let in. He said, “Look under the mattress. There is five thousand dollars cash. It’s the band’s money. Please! Please! Can I get it back?” So, Winnie checked and holy shit! There was a bag of cash stashed under that queen-sized bed, but they were too drunk to be woken by the lumpy mattress. Winnie took pity on the idiot and gave him the bag of cash. He broke down crying, just so happy he got the cash back. Well, he gave my mom fifty bucks and took the room of girls for breakfast, and they all partied another night together.

I am my mother’s daughter (Figure 1). I am proud to be a pagan squaw. I am her. She is me. The sinew between us is too strong to break forever. She carried me with the feelings of being shunned or shooed away. Did my mother carry my grandmother’s sins or was she paying for all the shame endured at the residential school? All of my grandparents’ children were stolen by the red coats and jailed in residential school. Two of my deceased uncles became sexual abusers. They learned that behaviour from that school. Did all of my aunts and uncles have to suffer because my grandparents did not know how to fight the government or fight the Church or fight the red coats? Or, was my mom destined to pay for that Treaty Four agreement between the Queen and our Red Indians.



Figure 1. Winnifred George

DO SOMETHING . . . I went to Edmonton with hopes of finding where my mother was last seen. Instead, there are many more questions that arose. Was she assaulted before her violent death? She is not “counted” as one of the murdered or missing. I was told that if she was found in Edmonton or the surrounding area that she would have been brought to the hospital whether she was injured or deceased and that it was up to the coroner to decide if it was homicide. How is it possible that our WOMEN can have their skulls crushed in and for it not to be considered homicide? When our Canadian society says nothing or does nothing, we all lose. WE ALL LOSE our “Human-Ness.”

Winnifred George April 8, 1949 – May 7, 1991 (May 31, 1995 is what I believed, but it was incorrect according to the medical examiner). I believe my mother was murdered in a downtown park in Edmonton, Alberta. In her forty-two years, she made many friends in her gypsy-street lifestyle from Vancouver to Winnipeg to Saskatoon to Regina, including Calgary and Edmonton. She had three daughters. As a mother, she did the best she could with what she knew at that time. Many have shared with me that she loved her three girls and missed us. Forgive me Grandmother and Grandfather Spirit Helpers for taking so long to be requesting answers to her blood calling out . . . forgive me for blaming her, the victim, in her death . . . forgive me for feeling shame. Asking the Creator Great Spirit to take pity on our families that are suffering when loved ones go missing and murdered—condolences #MMIW.

I am homesick for heaven and am tired of this hell on earth. This pain is too great for me to carry. The devilish spirit relishes in pleasure over my painful sorrow. My cries are ridiculed and danced to. Every human that has ever walked this earth is destined to endure heartbreak, to have sorrow and obstacles to overcome. This is all normal and natural. The heartless spirits attack, telling

you, "You are disposable. It's your own fault. You shouldn't have worn that outfit. You're stupid. You asked for it. Nobody will ever love you. You don't matter!" Just kill me. God please smash me up so I will forget. Give me amnesia. Let me suffer out my breath as a brainless vegetable. I don't want to care anymore. Please take this pain. The suffering is too long. Forgive me. Yes, I chose this life. I made choices. It is my own fault. Just give me another drink to dull the pain. "Cheers to my death." This downward spiral to finally sleep, to never wake up crying, forever to be lost in hell on earth. Pastahowin, karma, have I paid this brokenness forward to my daughter or to my granddaughters? Our family cycle continues to let those moniya, wasi'chu say, "Look! They are killing themselves." Those blind wasi'chu living off of the fat of our mother's milk. Just suck her dry. Kill her. Let her go missing, and you'll damn yourself.

> Pastahowi when you go against nature or the right way to act and you know it's wrong and it might come back to you in a bad way later. It's a teaching but never one of revenge. It's a teaching that all we do may have consequences for us later in life to ourselves or others we care for. So we should be kind and act with kindness to others. Sometimes people say others who wronged them may have pastahowin but that's not a good way to think. Even karma is not punishment in eastern philosophy. It's more about the guilt and suffering you bear when you have purposefully done wrong and that you must live life knowing it." (Wheaton,
> Facebook entry)

Scooped

Note and understand that my experience is only one from the adoption project during the Canadian Sixties Scoop. "The white social worker, following on the heels of the missionary, the priest, and the Indian agent, was convinced that the only hope for the salvation of the Indian people lay in the removal of their children (Fournier and Crey, quoted in Sinclair, 67).

A blue Ford drove onto Ochapowace to my grandparents' home. A white woman arrived while my grandmother was in the hospital due to a stroke and my grandfather was out snaring rabbits for supper. Us three little girls were outside playing when the lady asked us, "Would you like to come for a ride?" Now, car rides were rare for us little Indian girls and I said, "YES!" with excitement. Being only eight at the time, not understanding or knowing the scope of what this ride meant or what it would cost, we three girls took that car ride and were put into foster care for four years—which meant the end of innocence, the love of childhood memories, and being directly cherished by my grandparents.

We were put up for adoption and an ad was placed in a newspaper. Through the protection of our Creator, we three girls were eventually blessed to be found by the Heese family. Soon after we were adopted, we also found our original family: my grandparents, aunties, uncles, cousins, and the rest of our natural extended family. In respect and love, I claim both names—George and Heese.

Before we were adopted, my childhood stories are similar to many others who understand a child's misery. I was choked to silence and beaten: "Speak no lies! Tell no truth!" But in terror, I have consciously and unconsciously reviled the shame that my kin gifted. As a powerless child being called a "tale tail," a liar, or troublemaker because I tried to get help. I was beaten and pushed down into the dirt basement to prevent me from telling the event of witnessing my Auntie's rape. Yes, I became the systolic doll silenced. The abuse that was endured came from family and from both men and women, from the families we were forced to live with. We were forced beyond our will to choose where we would live. We were forced to live in poverty. The government since the time of the Indian agent and farm instructor wanted to gain control over the Indians—control over the food rations, annuity money, and the pass system. The Aboriginal Women's Action Network reports that "80 percent of Aboriginal women surveyed were victims of family violence, sexual assault, and abuse from attending police."

As a young child of five or six living in Saskatoon, my friend and I had a grand plan of going swimming down at the big pool. We were only allowed to swim there if there were grown-ups with us. On this special day, my friend said for me to wear her bikini while she wore her one piece. I believed that she came from a wealthy family because she had two swimsuits while I didn't even have one. We went down to the water park to play until her aunty was ready to go over to the big pool. There was a bunch of us kids playing in the water when her aunty showed up. Her aunty was mad that I was wearing this bikini yelling, "That is not yours. You're too fat to wear that, you thief!" She then yelled at my friend, "I bought that bathing suit for you. She will stink up your suit. Get it back right now." And, before you know it, I had this grown woman grabbing my ponytail and holding my arms as my friend and her cousins tore the suit from my flesh. There I stood, all scratched up and crying, with my friend and the others laughing. Through blurred vision, I attempted to cover up, hearing them sing, "Fatty! Fatty! Na! Na! Na! Fatty! Fatty! Na! Na! Na! Fatty! Fatty!" That brought out the rabid dogs all foaming at the mouth. Seeing their naked prey, yes, these boys chased me, throwing

rocks and dirty names at me. My saving grace was an elderly grandma that came to my rescue with a straw broom and scared them boys away. She gave me clothes and got me to safety. I never told anyone my horrible experience of child's play until now.

In foster care, witnessing a young girl, a teen, being handcuffed to the bed for she too was in care: it was months of having to listen to her cries, her pleas to be free of her confinement. She may have been fourteen or fifteen years old and not allowed to leave her bed because as soon as the foster father or mother unlocked those cuffs, the young girl fled. This one time she was just in a tank top and panty-style shorts when she was up the flight of stairs from the basement and out the front door in the middle of the winter. She did not want to be there, but social services or her social worker jailed her along with the police's help in the same home I was put in. I wanted and wished I could help her, but what could I do? I certainly was stuck there too. This was the first home I can remember. This was the family that used lighter fluid to kill the lice in our hair. They also burned my favourite pair of baby blue cords and sent away my fluffy kitten. I wished all the time that I, too, could just run away and take my two younger sisters with me to go find our grandmother.

How can people be so cruel to the helpless, to the young? Where did people learn this? Where did they learn to treat others? Did they go to that school at Round Lake? Had the black robes done this to them? Did they learn this behaviour in Rome or France or from England? Had they learned to hate so much that they no longer saw themselves in others during the violations of being beaten, raped, caged and tortured? You will never understand unless you examine historical behavior of the colonial legacy, which says that the victim is at fault for how they are treated. "Repeated invasions of the child's territory and body space reinforce his or her self perception as a victim, and an inability to avoid further victimization, be it sexual social or economic." (Bagley and King, 116)

But some of the sinew between my grandmother and me survived. My grandmother was a soft-spoken woman with the authority to allow me to feel like I was her favourite. Her hands were mostly busy sewing moccasins and beading for an Indian trading post in Saskatoon. I clearly remember she would sew sixty pairs in two weeks. This one time, she only had thirty-five cents to deliver them downtown so she sent me. I was maybe five or six years old and, yes, I delivered them sixty moccasins. Then I returned home, and we went off to eat coconut cream pie in a Chinese restaurant, the one place that welcomed Indians. With a mirrored backsplash to showcase them delicious pies, we sat at counter seats that were chrome vinyl stools. Still today I have echoes of my late Kokum speaking softly, helping me to mend and love my Spirit.

As a shy little girl hanging on my grandma's dress hem, I was attached to my grandma with that strong sinew that connects us to our mothers, grandmothers, and the Creator. I went everywhere with her. I loved her. She would sit to bead leather vamps and would have me string beads to make loose beads into hanks or necklaces. I would sort out bead colours, just happy to be given this role as her helper. Yes, I have many fond memories of learning from my grandmother. I can't really remember how old I was when I was shocked to learn that Winnie was my mom only because I had always thought my grandma was my mom. Now, today, I can't help but think of one of my own son's books, "Are you my mommy?" Kim Anderson says, "One of the most important teachings shared between grandparents and their grandchildren was the principle of reciprocity in relationships. Youngsters were not simply passive recipients of care and teachings. They were often helpers to their grandparents and were given tasks and responsibilities that facilitated their learning" (Anderson, 73).

Gertie Beaucage of the Ojibway of Nipissing First Nation in Ontario shared her experience of her grandmother tanning hides. "When the hair is all off and all the fleshy parts are all off and it's nice and clean and it has been doing this soaking business for a while, then you have to take the water out of the hide, and you have to stretch it. Well, there's nothing more perfect than five little kids, all stretching this hide that she was preparing! (Anderson, 73).

Remembering my home with my grandma when my mom would visit. This one time, my mom had a black satin lace slip and feather boa. I thought and said when asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" I thought and said, "A hooker." I had no idea what the word meant but that's what my mom was, and I wanted to grow up to be my mom because, in my eyes, she was smart, beautiful, and strong. She had the best laugh and the greatest sense of humour. Others were drawn to her. She was magnetic and fun. But, eventually, I was taught to be ashamed of her, to be ashamed of myself, and to be ashamed of all my relations.

Nobody asks to be discarded. How can I love my grandmother when she gave birth to a son who learned and became a pedophile that sexually abused her granddaughters? With so much anger, rage, and hatred, my mother attempted to kill her brother. It took five strong, grown men to hold her down so my broken uncle could escape death. Why did they let him live? Maybe my mother taking revenge would have scarred her, she would have had to dig her own grave, or it may have been considered cowardly. Regardless, I'm forever grateful because my mother believed me and was willing to protect me; for my mother at least stood up in protection of me as a little girl. I will forever love my mothers. God forgive my family. Forgive all my relations.

Is God relishing in human pain, greed for the milk, and lusting after her breasts to graze his livestock? The Creator must be blind. Does the Creator care that I am just another disposable Indian woman? Why did my parents have sex? Why did my grandparents give my mother life? The slash marks on my arms are evidence that life has been severely difficult to live. You think you know me. It may be hard for you to imagine what it takes to want to end the pain. I'm not looking for your pity and, no, I'm not trying to control you. You are wrong! All those that judge my pain may your superiority rape you and rip you and your family to pieces. Understand that I wish you no harm, no pain. I just know no other way to numb "the letting go." Yes, I was born into a messed up history. I don't blame my parents nor do I blame my grandparents. Those government policy makers are accountable for my messed-up history. But, please understand why the wolf chews his leg off to escape. Understand why the buffalo stands in front of Van Horne, Sir William forced to offer up her life so you will live. Bury me in this pile of bones so I will turn to dust. Please don't send my bones to England or China to be made into teacups. Then my spirit will be freed to leave this hell here on earth. I will have escaped to be returned to my right place in the happy hunting grounds.

I was separated from my birth family and community and moved to and from several foster homes. Having to survive those traumatic years of abuse and separation ended at the age of twelve. My two younger sisters and I were adopted by a German Mennonite family who loved and cared for us as their own. My adoptive parents reconnected us with our birth family. I'm forever grateful and love my parents and German family. They helped me while I struggled with identity, battled depression, and searched for a place to belong as a survivor of the Sixties Scoop and the residential school legacy.

As a teen, I wanted to be white, blond, and blue eyed, wanting to hide my heritage because I was ashamed of who I was and where I came from. Yes! Yes! I bleached my hair, which then turned green and then orange in the summer chlorine swimming pools. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ahh! I even had coloured contacts in an attempt to change my Indianness. I learned, or was taught, from the time I was exposed to the extended community from name calling like *f'n' squaw, wild savage*, *Pocahontas*, and *apple* to name a few. Then, learning in school and on TV of drunken Indians and Indian givers. All of these stereotypes are negative and damaging to my spirit. Dealing with this information, I needed other women to be my teachers and role models and am grateful to each one of them as they have helped me to learn my history, where I come from, and how to cope with the effects of being an Indian woman. My teachers have also encouraged me to teach and share the knowledge of warrior shirts and the strength of the shawl. In university, I learned about the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Woman and how she came to help people. I also learned about our creation beginnings, the teaching of Sky Woman being powerful and with a great responsibility for our people to create and nurture. All human beings are first born in the womb of the mother. There are many versions of the White Buffalo Calf Woman but the heart of her teachings hold "generosity, humility, honesty, and respect for all things in creation" (St. Pierre and Soldier, 38–41).

A Shift in Perspective

Now, as a grown woman raising my own children, each of my sons and daughter are a blessing. I am grateful to be their mom. It is only in the last ten years that I have become aware that I have raised my children with the fear they too would be taken with me having being taken and also because statistically I, as an Aboriginal mother who was a single parent and a high-school dropout when I had my first son, was under scrutiny. But the sinew between us has not been broken. It continues to connect us to each other, to my mother, to my grandmother. With the help of my parents and my older sister as my support group, I was able to return to school to get my GED then go on to university to become a teacher.

My children are my life, and the work that I do and have done is with the prayer that they will have opportunities to be productive members of the community and family. School has been a struggle for each of my children just as it was for my grandmother, my mother, and me. In truth, it was at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) where I had my very first Aboriginal, Native, and First Nations teachers. Attending this school was a blessing for me. It was a space to reconnect and build my knowledge of Canadian history.

I learned how to piece together the stories of the Treaty Four medal, the Indian Act, and the Indian agent during the pass system era and residential schools, eras that my grandfather told me about. From 1871 to 1930, our lands were secured for the railway and highways to transport goods across the country via the Treaties. Our landscapes were altered for profit, greed, gold, diamonds, uranium, lead, coal, and oil. Digging up our Mother's resources comes with a human life price tag. Also, clear cutting our forest and contaminating our sacred water sources all comes with a plant, animal, and human life price tag. All of this has carried on for more than a hundred years and, when we stand up in protection of our home lands, our women, or our water, we are considered the "savage Indians," or it is said that, "The Indians are getting restless." I challenge the government and the CEOs of corporations to give up food and water for "Lent" for four days and four nights and then consider your own human price tag. Drink from the contaminated water, eat the lead poisoned caribou or fish, and then consider your own human life price tag.

> "The code of silence . . . consists of documents dating back to the Doctrine of Discovery. The Doctrine of Discovery was used by the colonial powers of England, Spain, Portugal and France to divide the 'new world' they were discovering. Following the Doctrine of Discovery, came the 1830 Detribalization policies of the same colonial powers. Sanderson said these two documents led to the issuing of a Papal Bull by a Pope in the 14th century. The issue gave colonizers the ability to carry out actions as if it were 'God's Will.' The Papal Bull said Indigenous people are not human or Christian. Because Indigenous people are not human, they don't have sovereignty in government; they don't have title to land and resources." (Sanderson, quoted in Eneas)

In healing my spirit, I have sought out Elders, Pipe Carriers, and grandparents and gone to the lodges in prayer and sacrifice. I went because I was lost in my own pitifulness and needed to heal the spirit of the child within me. All of these gathering of family and community have grounded and strengthened my connection to the land. Returning to Ka-Ki-shiwew Ochapowace, Sakimay, Pasqua, and Piapot lands has allowed me to find my family and myself. In my spiritual journey, I also had the interesting privilege of participating in the Nimis Kahpimotate (Sister Journey Canoe Trip) hosted by the Lutheran Church in 2014. It was a 45-kilometre canoe trip up to Grandmother's Bay. Seven of the thirteen participants were church members who wanted to understand the residential school experience and become part of the reconciliation of the wrong doings. In preparing for the trip, I brought my tithings of tobacco, prayer flags, and a gift to family Elders to ask for prayers for protection of my children while I would be away. Off I went into the wildness with twelve other women whom I had never met and with little-to-no experience canoeing. I was grateful to be part of this circle. Along the way, I kept finding wild strawberries. When I returned home, my Aunty explained that the moccasins she had gifted me for this journey were heart medicine. Her prayer for me was that my heart would be healed or made whole again. That is really what reconciliation means to me.

One is no greater than another. Your life is no more valuable than our seventeen hundred missing and murdered women. Acknowledge that we are all part of the human race. Many people, me included, submitted beaded flower vamps for WWOS for family and community coming together (Figure 2). When I began needing a connection or connecting back to my mother, I needed to know why she was murdered. I wanted to know her life story so that I could learn my life story. I am still learning to be here in this world, moving through the sewing skills of my mother and my grandmother.



Figure 2. Walking with Our Sisters poster.

I believe that my late mother Winnifred George was murdered. Who would care if I went missing? I am raising my adopted granddaughter as my daughter. If anything were to happen to her, would others care? The Canadian message is clear: our seventeen

hundred murdered and missing Aboriginal women are just hiding or are hidden. In working with the other women of Walking with Our Sisters, I thought every inch of the red path in the university art gallery was to showcase and encourage all people to stop and think about how behind each moccasin vamp is a woman who was stolen, vanished, or murdered. STOP to think! You have daughters! You have sisters! Acknowledge that we are human!

Who is God? Who is the Trickster? The crow flies from point A to point B in search of the dead following on the coattails of Mr. or Mrs. Reaper. How thankful you will be in the wrong place at the wrong time for the crow to feast. Is that where the Trickster comes in with a wise Bugs Bunny companion? The Trickster lives to join me in a tripping dance over the roots of my mother's dream, dressed to re-create myself. The murdered and missing in Canada are the fabric of Canada. I cannot understand how our society can turn a blind eye to a lost life, a lost IDENTITY. It's disheartening how society can look at another with an attitude of superiority. This began with Canada's birth.

Because I was sexually abused as a small child, I learned to be the world's greatest secret keeper. In the moment that my little niece of six years old tells me, "Ooh! I go there by myself, but it's a secret. Don't tell my dad." My stomach turned as an instinctual cautioning signal calling out, "Danger! Danger!" And, as we walked down the road, we spoke of never keeping secrets from our mom or our dad because our moms and dads keep us safe. If I went walking all by myself, I could get lost or some big animal could come take me away. We must always tell our mamas and our papas. And, just as we were about home, a long garter snake caught my eye in the grass. I pointed it out to my little niece even though I had been taught to be scared of them. I didn't need to teach past learned fears forward. When I was a little girl, I learned the game of secrets and now I know that I need to tell my mama and papa and grandma and grandpa of the hidden shames. Please allow me to share my concern. Maybe this is nothing but I am only bringing attention to learning about "secrets." I don't wish to tell my own children of the shames I carry as a sexually abused little girl. I don't wish to tell my own children about the physically abused little girl. But, I will tell you how grateful I am for my mom believing me when I told her what her brother did to me. It started innocently. I loved my uncle. He brought me presents and candy and visited me in the hospital. As a little girl, how did I know that an innocent gift of candy and tickling would lead to great pain and suffering? Thank you for listening and believing the damage of a secret.

The games we play as children: we love to have fun, laugh, sing, and play but the "whole" is balanced by hatred, sadness, crying, pain, suffering, and the loss of childhood innocence. It's okay to be emotionally vulnerable. It is time for me to detach. There have been and are moments when I was protected from beyond the heavens. Maybe my mother, grandmothers, or one of my protectors has prevented me from being completely destroyed. Thank you! Thank you for all that I am! Having to navigate a lower life expectancy, housing shortages, a lower income, unemployment, high poverty, depression, and family violence has oppressed the health of Aboriginal women. In Canada, 70 percent of all deaths before the age of seventy-five are avoidable mortality. First Nations members were at higher risk of dying prematurely and from avoidable causes, compared with their Aboriginal counterparts. The disparity was particularly evident among women and younger age groups (Statistics Canada, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2015008/article/14216-eng.htm).

In the beginning, women, woman carry the sphere of life. If a man understands you, he will protect. He will value and protect his sister, mother, grandmother, and daughter. He will value and protect what it means to hold the spirit of woman. She has magic and she has a direct connection to the Creator and has all authority to create. She is a woman. As women, ee go to other women to nourish each other. We go to them when we're hungry. We go to them because they wrap us in their arms and listen. Woman is a mother. Woman for her first BIRTH. Thank you. Sing, dance, celebrate to burst into my life, tears of joy, of exhaustion, of pain, and trusting. Mother, she can correct the numerous sadnesses and the shame. Woman is life.

Blood of Our Mothers

Mark (name changed for privacy) became handsome in my vision as he searched for his chance to get my attention. He was charming, funny, and very clever. We began to spend time together in drama class. Yes, he was a senior and I was a junior, very much enamored by his humour and thrilled by his desire to steal me away from others. We would attend youth groups and go for coffee. How we would laugh. The stories he would tell. Yes, I was in complete awe of this boy who was almost a man. Love's first kiss would scar us both for life. Yes, Christian's parents planned and financially paid for our "happy un-birthday." Mrs. Bell spoke directly to me as a filthy whore and certainly wanted to protect their reputation in the community. Yes, descendants of the Scottish community did not want a grandchild to forever connect them to a dirty squaw Indian. It was certainly his older sister's health card that carried the abortion.

Yes, both Christian and I struggled to carry the burden of our choices. He ended up on the fourth floor of the psychiatric ward because he attempted suicide and was brought in on two separate occasions: once to have his stomach pumped and once for

attempting to hang himself. It was repulsively pathetic to look at his face or to be in the same space as him. It was also painful to have his mother blame me for all of it, for her saintly son deserved greater than someone of my nature. Why had I not run or phoned my parents? Why had I taken the "easy way out" that led both of us to the room of suicide as our child was sucked from my womb. Our love became our nightmare. I did the unforgivable. I killed my child that grew within me. As I could not carry the shame, the only relief was to spill my own blood. Slashes are forever reminders of my shame. But this didn't start with Christian and his parents. It is the legacy of Canada's genocidal policies.

This thing called life, life in Canada, born as an Indian woman. My hereditary blood, my blood, is also my strength. I'm made of the blood of this land, a custodian of our great lands. Blood of our mothers, of the first woman, and our blood has given us the resilience to survive the last 250 years of Canada's constitution, policies, laws, acts, Indian Affairs, Indian agents, and the Indian commissioners that administrated and controlled Indian, Indigenous, and Aboriginal people. From King George III's Royal Proclamation of 1763 to the Crown's acquisition of Indian lands; the 1857 Gradual Civilization Act introduced by Etienne Paschal-Tache and John A. MacDonald; the 1876 Indian Act passed by Parliament; and the 1885 North-West Rebellion, which was a result of mistreatment by Indian agents, communities were starved. Then, to control the Indians, the pass system was introduced. Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs Hayter Reed proposed the pass system in the "Memorandum on the Future Management of Indians," which was approved by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Edgar Dewdney and MacDonald who was then Prime Minister of Canada. The provinces gained jurisdiction over Indigenous children under section 88 of the 1951 revision of the Indian Act, thereby beginning the era of the Sixties Scoop. Indian women and Indian lands have been deliberately targeted and marginalized, vulnerable to being and becoming exploited.

By sharing with you, the reader, our Canadian timeline of history and each of the individuals mentioned above, we have to acknowledge this is our—yours and mine—Canadian leadership. Yes, you may not have directly suffered from this leadership but all Aboriginal, Inuit, Métis, and Indian people have. Treaty promises were not kept. Our land base of 100 percent has shrunk to less than 1 percent. Many people were starved into signing those Treaties for your benefit. Our natural food source, the buffalo, was slaughtered to near extinction. Our children were jailed in residential schools because of the Indian Act. Then in 1951, section 88 of the Indian Act gave authority to the Indian adoption project. It was against Canadian law for us to seek council to hire a lawyer, to leave the reservation, or to sell any goods, harvest, or butcher our own livestock without the permission of an Indian agent. Thinking back to Christopher Columbus, a thief and con artist who left his own country of Italy in 1492 in search of India to escape treason charges; thinking of all the ministers and nuns who raped and abused children and who were transferred to new missions by their leadership; thinking of past and present police officers, social workers, and teachers whose bosses or leadership allowed them to abuse their roles and their authority in power; thinking about how our British queen has not been able to protect us just as my own grandmother was not able to protect me. I do believe that people would care if I were to go missing. My family would care. My friends would care. The community I belong to would care. But I wonder if our police chief, mayor, or any of our local MLAs would care, me being no more important than any of our other missing and murdered women here in Canada. Sometimes I have considered what law could protect me or any other Aboriginal woman from marginalization, poverty, racism, and violence.

All these glimpses into my family and me have to do with sharing the truth as painful or shameful as it is. It has to do with having others become aware: violence and oppression has come from both men and women. Both kin and strangers have caused the abuse and violence. As Aboriginal women, there is much more we need to do to keep ourselves safe.

Long ago, we lived on the rez, also in Regina, but mostly in Saskatoon. This one time there was this big powwow for the queen. My grandmother wrapped a shawl around me and told me to go dance. I twirled and skipped around. The whole space was filled with so many dancers. I am in wonder all these years later that I fell, like a cocoon of the butterfly tree, ready to remove the silk robe of protection, ready now to fly back through time to find my grandmother and mother. Finally, now, after all these years, as a grandmother and mother, I have been initiated and accepted into the powwow circle. Forgive me. I was lost for so long. Please forgive my grandmother for not being there to protect me as a little girl. Forgive my grandmother for not being able to protect her children from the damages of Round Lake residential school.

First Nations people, we have expressed our heritage and spirituality through our art, beadwork, and apparel. Here is a small glimpse of the teaching of the shawl. Woman created garments that hold special meaning. It was said that long ago a mother created a shawl for her daughter. The young lady was preparing to leave her family to pursue her life's dream. The shawl was said to have powers. It was created to protect the teachings that she gained in the early years. Throughout life, she was told, she would hold those teachings in high regard so she would be proud of who she was and of her family. The shawl would also protect her from the unseen hardships of an unknown world. Wrapped around her, it would keep her warm as the warmth of her mother's arms. Cree Elder Mary Lee explains that "women were named after that fire in the center of the tipi":

> Woman in our language is *iskwew* . . . We were named after that fire, *iskwuptew* . . . In our language, for old woman, we say Notegwew. Years ago we used the term Notaygeu, meaning when an old lady covers herself with a shawl. A tipi cover is like that old woman with a shawl. As it comes around the tipi it embraces all those teachings, the values of community that the women hold. (quoted in Anderson, 100)

These values are still inscribed in our shawls of today such as when I created the shawl to be gifted to Her Royal Highness Prince Anne during her naming ceremony in 2007. In my artistic symbolism, I shared Our Grandmother Moon, a true symbol of leadership. She controls the water cycle on Mother Earth. As humans, we are made up in the same water proportion as Mother Earth. Our sacred hope of life for as long as the sun shines is that all nations will be treated equally for thirteen full moons all year around. I adorned her shawl with abalone shells to represent woman and the cycle of thirteen months, a connection to our mothers' veins and balance of our grandmother. Seven rows of navy ribbon were used, for it is said that when leaders are forging ahead, they need to think seven generations forward. The beaded flowers represented our Little Rainbow, a young woman, and the Thunder Bird Beings gifted to us here on Earth, and the many colourful flowers across our lands so that all of us can enjoy the beauty. The Creator gifted the flowers, the rainbow, and the water to our Mother Earth. Having also learned from my Mennonite family that the rainbow is a promise from God, may you, me, and all of us remember to avoid being wicked or greedy to prevent the earth from becoming flooded again.

The Creator gave women clear responsibilities, and in the twenty-first century women are returning to their original authority. To all of the women in my life: Thank you for bringing me into this world, helping me to be, and to become. Grandmothers have wrapped me in their dress of tradition, respect, and grace. In their eyes, I'm sacred. Our mothers are the carriers of life and have given a wealth of energies. My roots, my sinew are sewn to them. I belong to this land. In her heart, I'm loved. My aunties, sisters, and girlfriends have taught me the language of woman. We have prayed. We have done and we have laughed together as one. Together we are the fabric of the nation. Together we are strong (Figure 3). *Miyo-kīsikanisik kahkiyaw*.



Figure 3. My late Mom, Winnifred George, attending my Grandmother's wake and funeral. As a First Nations woman, I thank the women who came before me and passed down our traditions.



Figure 4. Asking Her Royal Highness The Queen, "Am I Next?"



Figure 5. My granddaughter and I dancing forward…

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1. This chapter weaves the stories of three women, Tracey George Heese, her mother, and her grandmother, with the history of Canada. We have italicized Winnifred's (Tracey's mother) words as Tracey reflects on what her mother might have thought. Tracey says, "I am telling my story in the hopes that it will benefit others and help them with their grief. May it help them rebuild when everything has been taken away. I also tell my story to keep my granddaughter safe." ↵
2. According to the City of Regina's Historic Facts, Regina was referred to as oskana ka-asastēki, meaning "bone piles," later translated as Pile of Bones. The city was so known because it became the site for depositing the bones of the bison slaughtered to make way for the "settlement" of the land https://www.regina.ca/about-regina/regina-history-facts/. ↵

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4.2: The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia Flores 4.2: The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia FloresEdit Update titlecancel

Paula Flores[1]

Paula Flores's seventeen-year-old daughter, Claudia, went missing in 1999 on her way home from the factory where she worked. Besides working in a factory, Claudia also helped with catechism lessons in the Catholic school in her neighborhood. She was learning how to play the guitar and she loved to write poetry. Claudia worked the same shift as her father at the factory, but for legal reasons the factory owners changed her shift. After two months of her shift being changed, Claudia disappeared.

When her daughter didn't return home, Paula knew something bad had happened because her daughter never went anywhere after work without permission. Claudia was missing for two weeks before the authorities found her in a place called "The White Hill" in Juarez. Paula was not informed of this by the police; instead, a reporter told Paula that a woman's murdered and raped body had been found and that the body was likely Claudia's.

Paula's son went to identify the body but was unable to confirm that it was Claudia because the coroner had already begun an autopsy. In September 1999, a DNA test was performed, and the test results indicated that the body was not Claudia. This gave Paula hope that her daughter was still alive. Suspicious events then took place, and Paula's family asked if the woman's body could be exhumed and another DNA test performed. The authorities exhumed a body, but it was the wrong body from the wrong grave site. Eventually the authorities did exhume the correct body and confirmed that it was Claudia. To this day, however, Paula constantly wonders if that body was, in fact, her daughter's or if the authorities had lied to her.

A man has been in jail for three years for Claudia's murder, but he claims that there were another two people involved. This man said the other two people paid him $500 to take them to where Claudia worked. He even gave the authorities the names, addresses, and pictures of the people who killed Claudia, but the police have not investigated these leads. Because of this, Paula believes that the authorities and even the governor are complicit in all the murders and disappearances. The authorities, however, are not punished for their involvement, but are instead promoted. Paula says that "the only thing that seems to be important in Juarez to the authorities is that we quit messing up their city with our crosses. They want to kind of sideswipe the issue, all the news and all their concerns are on drug trafficking and all the drug issues that are happening, and they [do not want] to take away the limelight [by investigating] missing women. And so we are just being pushed aside."

Throughout all this tragedy, however, Paula says, "I ask God to help me to forgive. I want to have the same strength that Gwenda [2] has. I want to have her peace. And we are united, no matter what the distance is, we are united."

1. Paula Flores's presentation at the Missing Women Conference was translated into English by a volunteer at the conference, then transcribed and retold in the third person by Chelsea Millman. ↵
2. Gwenda Yuzacappi, the mother of Amber Redman. Her story—"Wicanhpi Duta Win"/Red Star Woman—is found on page 40 of the first edition of *Torn from Our Midst*. ↵

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4.3: Update- The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia Flores 4.3: Update- The Story of the Disappearance of Claudia FloresEdit Update titlecancel

Paula Flores[1]

Through this writing I wish to share that it is already nineteen years since the assassination of my daughter Maria Sagrario González Flores and I continue to fight for justice and asking [for the conviction of] the authorities, the main and true killers of my daughter. It is not possible for us to continue to do nothing; the girls in Juárez City continue disappearing and appearing [being found] dead. In the last years already there are more cases of disappearance and mothers looking for their daughters: I ask myself, “When is this going to stop?”

We are physically and emotionally tired, I personally don’t know what we can do, I feel the same courage, the same helplessness, and hopelessness every time I see a girl disappear and the mothers join the protests; thinking that the authorities are going to help find them. But our reality is that they do nothing, or they do everything; because it is not possible that the killers are smarter than they are.

We live in a country without justice and in a city of impunity; because our only crime is being humble migrants—our only purpose when we arrive in Juárez City is getting ahead and finding a better life.

We hope to continue counting on people who are interested in this sad and serious problem; in life they are killing us. How many families are destroyed? In my case, we are a chain of nine links; now we are missing two; Sagrario and my husband, Jesús González.

I say farewell by asking “NOT ONE MORE” and appreciate the opportunity that you give me for my voice to be heard; continue to denounce and make visible those that continue killing our women and girls in Juárez City.

1. The update to Paula Flores’ story was translated by Valerie Leitch. ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Organizational Resistance

5.1: Interpersonal Violence in Northern Saskatchewan Communities- A Case Study

5.2: Saskatchewan Response and National Developments regarding Missing Persons and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

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5.1: Interpersonal Violence in Northern Saskatchewan Communities- A Case Study 5.1: Interpersonal Violence in Northern Saskatchewan Communities- A Case StudyEdit Update titlecancel

Darlene Juschka, Mary Hampton, Melissa Wuerch, Carrie Bourassa, and Tracy Knutson

Introduction

In the following case study my effort is to argue for a harm reduction approach to interpersonal violence in northern Saskatchewan. Using a feminist critical theory approach, I engage individual interviews of interpersonal violence service providers collected over a two-year period (2012 to 2014). Telephone interviews of Saskatchewan service providers, ranging from health care, shelter, and victim service workers, and RCMP, were conducted. The data was collected as part of a larger four regional (AB, SK, MB, NWT) SSHRC-CURA funded grant ($1,000,000) titled “Rural and Northern Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence” conducted over five years (2011 to 2016) and headed by Dr. Mary Hampton (Luther College, University of Regina) and Diane Delaney and then JoAnne Dusel (past and current directors of the Provincial Association of Transition Houses and Services of Saskatchewan). The project operated under the auspices of RESOLVE Saskatchewan, a network of researchers, community experts, and organizations that focus their efforts on interpersonal[1] violence across the three prairie provinces. The study proposed three open-ended questions to individual interview participants: What are the unique needs of victims of interpersonal violence living in rural and northern regions of the Prairie provinces and the North West Territories? What are the gaps that exist in meeting these needs? How do we create non-violent communities in these regions? The same questions were again asked during the face-to-face focus group interviews conducted several months following the individual interviews. In Saskatchewan, a total of twenty-eight telephone interviews, fourteen of which came from service providers from northern locations, and focus groups in a northern and rural location were also conducted.

We authors have drawn on Indigenous and postcolonial scholars to situate our data and study in the white-settler colonial context of Canada. We also have drawn on theories of violence that show the complexity of interpersonal violence. The theoretical lens employed in this chapter is feminist poststructural as it allows for an intersectional analysis that pays attention to how socially constructed categories such as gender, race, indigeneity, sexuality, able-bodiedness, and geopolitical location intersect with power that provides access to limited and valuable resources—however those resources are defined. With power differentials in mind, the analysis examines violence in the context of northern Saskatchewan, asking how past and present colonialisms continue to shape that violence, and how colonialisms intersect with and shape interpersonal violence. Equally, we ask how white-settler gender ideologies, and their accompanying conceptualization of proper masculinity and femininity, come into play in the discursive formation of violence as it plays out in northern Saskatchewan.

Linked to the feminist poststructural analysis is an effort to bring a harm reduction approach to interpersonal violence. A harm reduction approach is the effort to reduce the harm without dismissing or diminishing the harm done. The effort is to recognize the potential for further harms beyond the initial harm and ask how the harm can be reduced (Marlatt, Larimer and Witkiewitz 2012, 5). Moving beyond the discourse of victimizer and victim, a harm reduction approach takes into account the complexity of the event of violence (Stancliff et al. 2015, 207). Aron Shlonsky, Colleen Friend, and Liz Lambert have written that a harm reduction approach to interpersonal violence takes a realistic approach insofar as conditions for, and events of, violence cannot be completely eliminated: “if we cannot hope to stop all forms of abuse, does it make sense to reframe “success” in this area as being the reduction of violence and the minimization of harm” (2007, 356)?

Case Study Issue questions/statements

As violence is at the center of this case study, it is necessary to ask what we are talking about when we use the terms violent and violence, and how then has the understanding and discursive framing of violence shaped responses to it. How has this framing shaped the discourses of intimate partner and family violence (IP/IV)? How has this framing shaped responses to IP/FV? How does introducing a harm reduction model alter IP/FV discourses?

Case Study Research questions/statements

Specific research questions are: What is the historical context of northern Saskatchewan? How has colonialism shaped northern Saskatchewan? How does it intersect with and shape gender ideologies in northern Saskatchewan? How do the above define and shape IP/FV in northern Saskatchewan? And finally, what can a harm reduction approach bring to understanding and responding to the needs of those caught up in interpersonal violence?

Theorizing violence

Violence, wrote Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Phillippe Bourgois, is an unstable concept, one that is "non-linear, productive, destructive, and reproductive. It is mimetic, like imitative magic or homeopathy" (2004, 1). They argue that violence is difficult to define as it is multiply manifested being structural, subjective, symbolic, psychic, and depending where one stands, perceived as productive or destructive, legitimate or illegitimate (2004, 2). Understanding that the interpretation of violence can change depending on situatedness, they further argue that violence is often a response to larger social conditions, making violence "seem like the only possible recourse" (2004, 3).

Slavoj Žižek argues that although subjective violence, for example, interpersonal violence, is the most visible form, there are two other "modes of violence" that are often overlooked. These overlooked aspects are "objective violence," which is systemic, and symbolic violence, which "is embodied in language and all its forms . . . [it is] our 'house of being'" (2008, 1). As an aspect of object violence, symbolic violence is constitutional to the state on all levels of its operation as well as to larger global systems (2008, 2).

The contexts that comprise our very sociality are encoded with symbolic and systemic violence. Furthermore, systemic or state violence, is coded as non-violence, and seen in actions against citizens, actions like the killing of a "suspect" presented as "defence of society" and therefore not violence in and of itself. The violence staged by the state is coded as *non*-violence so that, for example, the brutal beating of Rodney King in March 1991 was presented as non-violent in the courtroom. Officer Powell, who struck King forty-six times with his baton, claimed he did so in order to "knock him down from the push-up position, back down onto the ground where he would be in a safer position" (Feldman 2004 [1994], 210). Indeed King was repeatedly presented as the site of violence that had to be contained by four members of the Los Angeles police department who repeatedly beat Rodney King (Feldman 2004 [1994], 213).

Žižek argues that part of, but equally separable from objective violence, is symbolic violence, which is performed in our linguistic, representational, and gestural systems and practices. Pierre Bourdieu wrote that symbolic violence "is a form of power that is exerted on bodies, directly and as if by magic, without any physical constraint" (2001, 38). That is, our very being in all aspects is shaped within a habitus wherein we are located and locate ourselves in relation to the ideologies—gender, economic, racial, sexual, age, etc.—that comprise said habitus. It is in the quotidian we learn to exist in accordance with the rules and regulations of our social body, our habitus, and as such "social law is converted into an embodied law" (Bourdieu 2001, 39).

Interpersonal violence[2]

Gendered violence, although having a long history in human relations, came under the purview of Canadian federal and provincial law over the period of 1983 until 1986. The authority given to the white settler male/masculine in the Canadian context has changed over time, and also demonstrates variation with regard to location. For example, with the emergence of women's/feminist movements and the Indigenous peoples movements in the 1960s and 1970s, the authority of the State based on white settler masculinity and its explicit statement of (proper, that is, hetero, white settler) men as its legitimate heirs and actors was challenged. Federal and provincial governments began to shift away from thinking about the majority of its populations as normatively subordinate to white-settler, heterosexual masculinity. Nonetheless, even as violence against women, female spouses, and girls was problematized, particularly with Canada's role in and adoption of the 1993 UN's Convention on the Elimination of violence against women, violence continued as social censure of it was often conflicted and contradictory. Violence against the female/feminine was criminalized, but humans marked as female/feminine were formally and informally held to views that tended to mitigate the application of laws against this kind of violence. For example, although the state of Texas ratified its laws to include violence against women in 1994 and again in 2000, a thirty-year old white man was cleared of murder after the Texas court determined that his actions were justified since the woman he killed took his money ($150.00) but refused to have sex with him (Moran 2013).

The representation of masculinity as naturally prone to violence influences how intimate partner and family violence are understood. Within a frame of heteronormativity, intimate partner and family violence are instances of the emergence of normative masculine rage that has been provoked into appearance[3]. The provocation of these actions can be many things, but the outcome of violent, masculine rage is taken to be a reasonable response to the situation at hand. The links between masculinity, violence and rage continue to operate normatively as part of current neocolonial gender ideologies. This is not to say that intimate partner and family violence are accepted in Canadian social bodies; rather, intimate partner and family violence are often taken to be normative outcomes because of an implicit understanding that violent rage is naturally—that it is a biological reality—declined in the masculine. Women have abused men (and other women), although in significantly lower numbers (reported spousal violence in Canada 2014, Female 32,205 and Male 8,645) (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2014, 39), and with less deadly outcomes (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics 2014, 8). Yet, they continue to be viewed as victims and provocateurs rather than

perpetrators of violence. However, humans marked as female/feminine are not victims by nature (a synonym for victim is “dupe” which speaks to the negative declension of this category). Rather, their numbers are greater in terms of reports of intimate partner and family violence because of an uneven distribution of power in the social body: folks who have less social power/status depend on the government and its resources, such as the police, to balance out the play of power—or, at least, that’s the hope.

Context

The context of this case study is northern Saskatchewan, a designation of a spatial divide between the developed south and underdeveloped north—underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure that supports and sustains communities. In Saskatchewan the line that marks this divide, running east to west, is just beneath Cumberland House and extends to Green Lake.

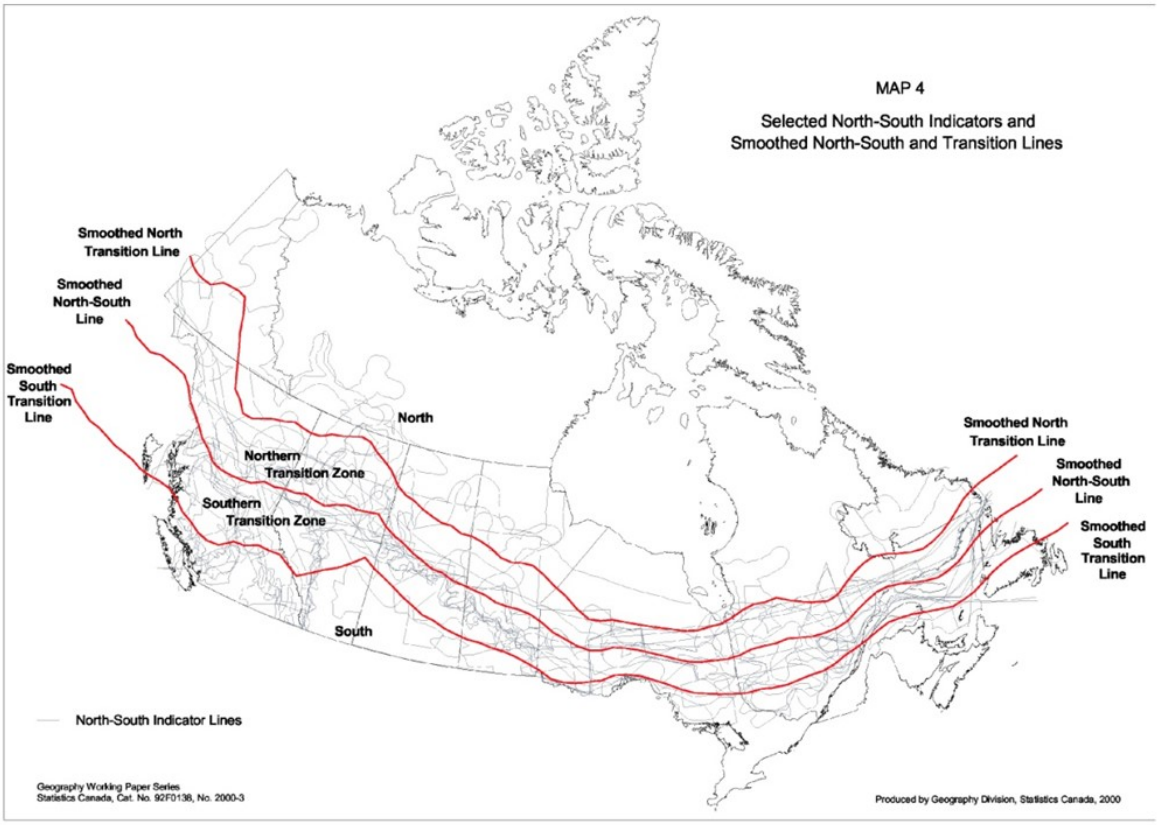


Figure 1: North-south divide (map creator Dr. Paul Hart)

The Canadian north is composed of dynamic communities that share some aspects of the prairie south but are also markedly different. Although there are shared aspects between northern and rural communities insofar as they are remote and have fewer services than one would find in an urban location, there are differences as well. These differences need to be accounted for to acknowledge the realities of the challenges northern communities face such as the lack of good housing; affordable healthy food choices; education opportunities; the itinerant work lives of many community members; the harshness of the climate and its social, psychical, and economic demands; and violence—objective, subjective, and symbolic. Ignoring the differences obfuscates these communities and challenges they face.

The history of northern Saskatchewan, as with all of Canada, is one shaped by English and French colonialism. It is a history steeped in the blood of Indigenous peoples whose lands and lives were delimited by the influx of Europeans. Initially, colonialism consisted of tenuous relations of exchange between Indigenous peoples who inhabited the land that would, in time, be called

Canada and European newcomers. However, conflict between French and English in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and then between Britain and what would become United States in the eighteenth century, brought about numerous divisions and numerous acts of colonial violence perpetuated against Indigenous peoples by both the colonizing British and French (Juschka 2017).

As white-settlers and their governments and armies moved west, Indigenous peoples were pressed to take up white-settler ways or were moved to reserves, while those who persisted in demanding treaty be respected were more often than not ignored, dismissed, and, in some cases, criminalized (Turpel-Lafond 2000, 76–79). Colonialism in Canada took the form of taking Indigenous lands and relocating Indigenous Peoples to reserve lands and of control over individually allotted land that was coercively appropriated by a government seeking the surrendering of Indigenous lands for white-settlers (Turpel-Lafond 2000, 79). In an attempt to eradicate Indigenous cultures and subsequently assimilate Indigenous peoples as an underclass, denomination residential schools were founded in Canada, and Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their homes and deposited in these badly constructed and isolated schools where they too often faced starvation, malnourishment, emotional, sexual, cultural, psychological, linguistic, and physical abuse (*Honouring the Truth* 2015; Adams 1996; Eigenbrod 2012). Other sites of oppression include the effort to control Indigenous women's reproduction, often through sterilization (Caprio 2004; Pegoraro 2015) and, linked to this, the abduction of Indigenous children during what was called the "1960s baby-scoop" (Green 2007; Juschka 2017). Further sites of oppression include the criminalization of Indigenous Peoples (Razack 2015), their continued under representation in sites of power in the Canadian socio-political landscape, and their over representation among the impoverished, alienated, disenfranchised, and the marginalized.

If colonialism shaped the landscape of Canada, this was even more marked in the northern areas of the prairie provinces such as Saskatchewan. As urban centres sprang up in the southern regions of Canada, the north became the site of small remote communities, many of which were cut off from southern regions of the provinces. La Ronge, for example, was not connected until 1948 when a gravel road was laid (Bone 2005, 14). But these connections, as limited as they were and remain in 2017, are less concerned with connecting the peoples of the north and the south as they are with the extraction of wood, minerals, and other valuable commodities for the southern-facing white settler provincial and federal governments. As Robert Bone has noted, the tendency is to extract from the north but never settle the north in a sustained fashion (2005, 13–14).

Along with geographical differences, there are demographical variations as well. In northern Saskatchewan, the population is less dense and has a larger and faster growing Indigenous population who are also younger on average than white settler populations in the north and the south (Flanagan 2017, 1). While the south of Saskatchewan grew with the influx of white settlers from eastern Canada, Europe, and the United States, the population in the north grew naturally, particularly among Indigenous peoples. Equally, migration affects population numbers in the North as Indigenous folks moved south to take up waged employment or to access education, health care, and other social amenities available in the south, while resource industries, such as uranium mining or oil sands, for example, rise and fall in relation to the global market affecting people's livelihood and propelling them toward the south (Bone 2005, 16–22).

Northern Telephone Interview

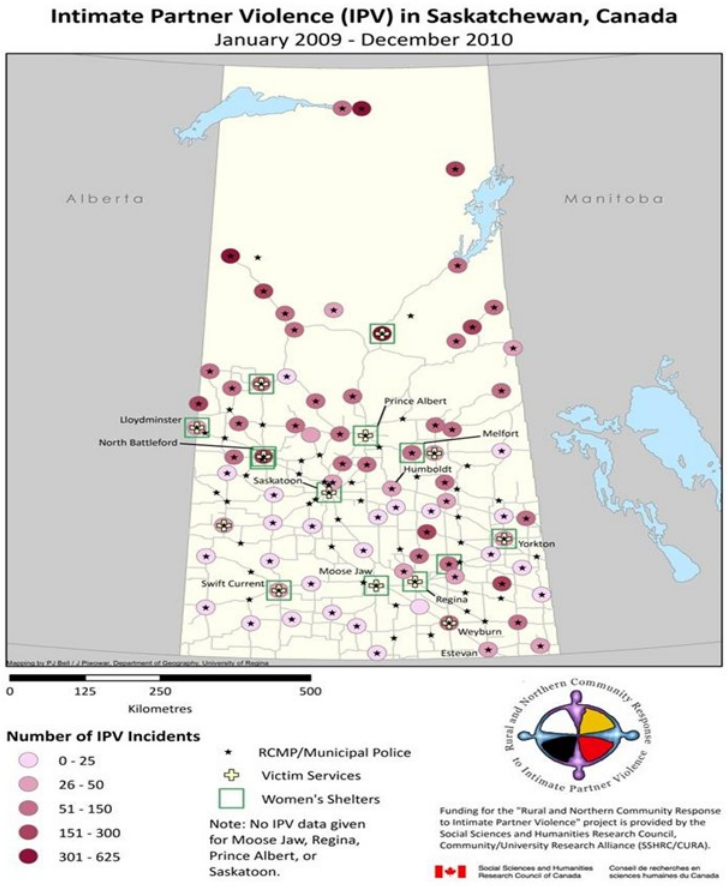


Figure 2. Incidents and services of Intimate Partner Violence in Saskatchewan

The maps developed for this project charted incidences of violence and interpersonal violence services. The map of Saskatchewan (maps were developed for each region within the study) provides a visual that makes clear how northern (and rural) locations were, in many ways, under siege with some locations having incidences of violence that exceed the population of the community. One participant who works in a remote northern location in Saskatchewan commented that there is "lots of violence. . . . [This is] the first time in two and a half years I've seen a reduction in prisoners, we're just shy of 1300. And the two previous years [2012 – 2011] it was 1500 [and] there's only 2000 people" (Participant 2).

In Saskatchewan twenty-eight telephone interviews were conducted over approximately six months in 2013, and, of these, seventeen were from service providers working in northern locations. The participants were male (six), female (eleven), white-settler, Black Canadian (one) and Indigenous (five). Six of the participants were RCMP officers, four were shelter directors and/or workers, three were victim services workers, one was a family-based victim service provider, two were health care workers, and one was a registered nurse. Saskatchewan coded interviews according to geographical location keeping west and east in mind. The open codes were identified by researchers and community partners working together. The open codes are too numerous to enumerate but include safety plans; housing needs; partnerships among agencies and case planners; access to child care, transportation, pro-active policing and services, support groups, healing lodges, and elders trained about interpersonal violence; insufficient EIO enforcement; and the need to heal from colonization.

The codes made apparent the difficulties faced by service providers in northern Saskatchewan with two primary codes of "under-resourced" and "overwhelmed": "You know, ever since when I was small, I saw abuse happening. Ever since I can remember, I've seen people, women getting beaten, and there was no place for them to go" (Participant 10). Although there are shelters in northern Saskatchewan, these are few, frequently full, and often well removed from their home community. Removal from the community to a shelter also has its problems, as noted by participant six: "when I look at some of the northern communities . . . these women have nowhere safe to go, and if they do wish to go to a shelter of some sort . . . then they're displaced from their extended family. They have to pick up the children, and basically live out of their suitcase while the offender gets to stay in that community."

The problem of alienation links to a broader problem—the model of the patriarchal family with the male/masculine seen and treated as the sole proprietor of the house/home. This view of masculine prerogative is commonly held by the Canadian and Saskatchewan governments and the services they support and, as such, acts as objective systemic violence. The masculine prerogative takes the actions of the male/masculine as proper and normative so that challenging the prerogative requires special pleading on the part of those subjected to the deployment of patriarchal power. From the outset, then, those who do not occupy the default location are subject to its rules of power and must demonstrate that the particular "man" has aberrated from the normative male/masculine. Interestingly, Emergency Intervention Orders (EIOs) ignore the masculine prerogative and instead remove the perpetrator of violence from the home and leave those injured, in this study the female parent and children associated with her (if any), in the home and community. However, as noted by participants the EIO is infrequently used and is not applicable on reserves.

The open codes were subsequently subjected to axial coding. Axial coding requires that researchers abstract the open codes identifying larger categories. The primary axial code designated for Saskatchewan was "safety." The visual schematic that was developed (see Figure 3), assisted us in visualizing the relationships between our axial code and our open codes. In the Safety schematic, our primary axial code, is at the center around which the open codes are clustered. For example, safety is connected to the open code partnership, and partnership is linked to the open codes of police/legal, mental health, victim, and children services. The diagram is neither explanatory nor does it identify causes; instead, it demonstrates the complexity of interpersonal violence in northern Saskatchewan.

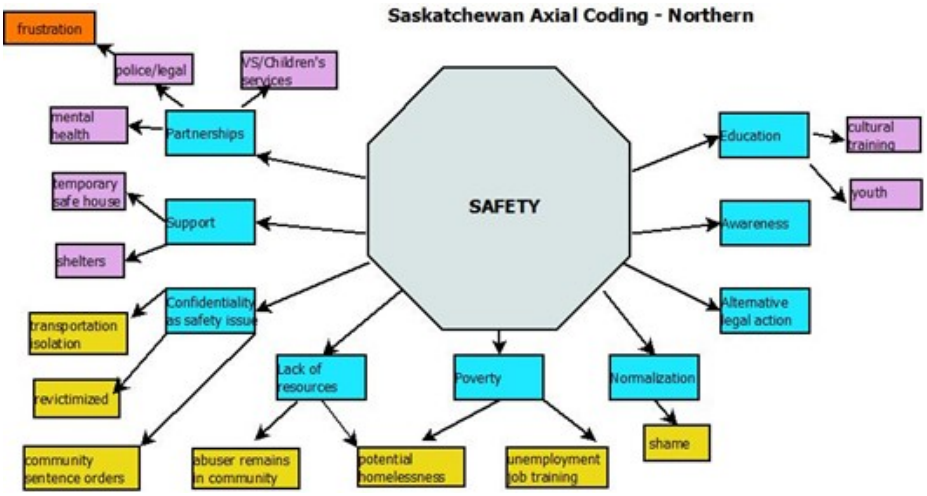


Figure 3. Northern Axial Code Safety

Other axial codes determined by the researchers and service providers were education, perception of intimate partner violence, lack of resources, legal and policing, partnerships, and support. Open codes were organized under each of these axial codes.

The axial codes, open codes, and maps provided researchers with a complex view of the interpersonal violence. Although desiring to keep those victimized by interpersonal violence safe, our data make apparent the difficulty of leaving violent relationships; so difficult that women did not leave or returned as soon as the violent event had ended. "I would say that the victims don't cooperate because they're afraid would be the biggest thing, I would think. Yeah, and I know one couple we've dealt with repeatedly is she relies on him, financially so she's, you know, she says 'how can I testify against him, I need him, he provides for me and my family'" (Participant 14).

It's not unusual to hear the moms say, "You know, I don't have any food; I'm running out of Pampers, I don't have any money, and I have no place to go" (Participant 21).

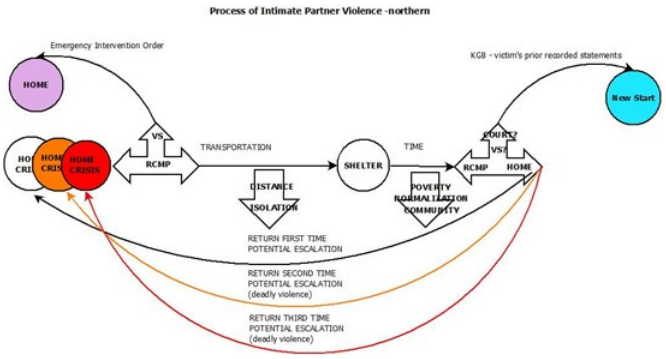


Figure 4. Process of leaving an abusive relationship.

Figure four represents the process of leaving an abusive relationship, beginning with the first reported incident. The diagram represents three routes: one is the Emergency Intervention Order and is the least commonly used; another is returning to the home where violence often escalates and may become deadly; and the third is a "new start." Represented underneath the process line are constraints that act as obstacles such as fear of poverty. Other constraints are everyday violence that accompanies daily activities such as working, sleeping, eating, and interacting with family and friends, which normalizes the violence. Communities can also act as constraints insofar as they can and do take sides in prosecuted cases of interpersonal violence, which can then leave the community divided. In other instances, the violence is ignored and, as such, erased. Participant 19, a health care worker, commented with regard to the normalization of violence that "It's normal. Yes. Well, I would say about 90% of the women here within the community have experienced some sort of domestic violence."

Coding Family Violence

To further code family violence, we organized our open codes into two categories, objective, which includes symbolic, and subjective violence. Objective violence is inherent to the context itself, taking the forms of ideological and systemic violence, both of which are unstable and in flux. Symbolic violence, seen in the representation of interpersonal violence in media, obfuscates objective violence and effectively locates interpersonal violence with persons, making the violence an anomaly. and locating it as bad with State violence enacted against it as good. Subjective violence is violence performed/enacted by a social agent.

Objective violence

The codes that speak to objective violence are cyclical, generational, lack of attention to dating violence, lack of counselling services for children, deracination of those who have suffered violence, and prioritizing the needs of the male/masculine gender. For example, men generally own the home, so the abuser remains in the community and abused women and children must leave. Situated in the community, his narrative is often given credence. A high percentage of victims return home because they miss their homes; experience systemic poverty and must rely on social services; or cannot find a job and so fear homelessness. They also deal with the effects of colonization; the lack of cultural training/understanding of Indigenous and small community kinship systems; a reduced social network, leaving them with no one to call for help because of pressure of the community; mistrust of governmental systems; abused seen to be the problem, "Get women into counselling right away." Further aggravating their precarious situation, family members are criminalized, that is there is "no alternative to legal action"; and blame and shame which all parties carry in connection to the violent event: the perpetrator risks the shame of being designated a bully and the blame of emotionality, that is he lost control of his emotions (Giordano et al. 2015, 11–12), while the abused person endures the blame and shame attached to "the victim" who is too often situated as a provocateur and/or a "dupe" of violence, while children are perceived as "victims" who may well upon maturation reproduce violence in their own relationships.

Symbolic violence upholds and obscures objective violence insofar as media frequently represent interpersonal violence as always and only subjective. They may at times speak to the significant numbers of "domestic violence" in Saskatchewan, but rarely speak to systemic state mechanisms such as neocolonialism, southward facing politics, the under-resourced and exploited north, patriarchal family relations, the disenfranchisement of abused persons (and children) from their home, or even frontier justice. Again and again, the media assume that interpersonal violence is subjective, involving two (usually heterosexual) people.

Subjective Violence

Subjective violence is violence performed and enacted by individual subjects who are themselves shaped within a context of objective and symbolic violence and who enact this violence in accordance with the normative rules of the larger social body. In a

gender ideology wherein the masculine normatively (and naturally, as is often understood within this framework) dominates the feminine, those marked as properly masculine are authoritative, while those others, the victimized, lack such privileging. Intersect Indigeneity with gender and not only is authority of narrative further removed, but it is made impossible as the model of indigenous femininity in white settler masculinity, as found in Canada, is one of an inability to speak the truth (Smith 2003; Stote 2012).

Against such odds, the sufferer of violence must speak their story of the violent event take on both shame and blame in lesser or greater degrees depending on how much her story gains a hearing and is taken to be credible. Partners and families who experience violent events are subject to social shame as their family, that is private, affairs have been exposed to the community at large. Although certainly all homes engage violence of some kind or other, that violence is obfuscated and negated by the exposure of private violence.

Family and intimate partner violence are stigmatized, particularly in small northern communities. Connected to the stigmatization is the threat of the loss of children to the state, along with home and community. Violence in the home can well mean children are removed from the home and the sufferer of violence experiences more loss and further violence, this time by the state. Indigenous women do not trust colonial systems even if advocates and workers in these systems are trying to support them. Too often, support has turned into a situation of further loss for those who have suffered family and intimate partner violence. Subjective violence also entails mental health issues such as attempted suicides, rage, despair, hopelessness, and distrust because the system, legal and otherwise, operates behind closed doors, which can mean the re-victimization of people these social systems are meant to assist.

Conclusion

When asked to identify the gaps in meeting the needs of those in situations of IP/FV, participants came up with a number of clear issues: the persistence in linking male/masculine to property and the subsequent disenfranchisement of female/feminine. For example, Emergency Intervention Orders that remove the violent offender are not the default action and are not applicable on reserves. Participants spoke of a lack of viable and sustained intimate partner and family violence resources and services, in particular, culturally competent services in northern Saskatchewan. Linked to this problem is a lack of commitment on the part of provincial and federal governments to northern communities of Saskatchewan reflected in problems such as the lack of infrastructure, healthy food choices, housing, and a hopeful future.

In asking how we create non-violent communities, we wondered if we had asked a viable question. If non-violent communities do not exist, how do we anticipate such a social formation could be created in northern Saskatchewan? Objective and symbolic violence preclude the possibility of non-violence and indeed provide the rationale for enacting subjective violence in the form of dating, intimate partner, and family violence. With this in mind, we might shift our question: Knowing subjective violence is upheld and justified by objective violence, how can subjective violence be met with a non-violent response in northern Saskatchewan communities?

Seeking a non-violent response operates within the frame of a harm reduction model rather than a criminal justice model. A harm reduction model seeks to reduce harms rather than increase them through criminalization. A harm reduction model requires those harmed to identify the harms and determine how they might be met with a non-violent response. For example, the majority of participants made abundantly clear that the criminalization of those who enact violence created more harm than it reduced. For example, the female recipient of the violence and children lose their home and community, her story is muted, his voluble presence garners community sympathy, her absence from the community creates enmity because she is now an outsider, and the violence becomes her shame and blame. The current model of criminalization deracinates and potentially impoverishes the person(s) most vulnerable, while she and her children are also criminalized insofar as they are moved through the criminal court system and experience further harm. Down the path of poverty that often accompanies women and their children leaving violent relationships can be found further harms such as addictions, self-abuse, lose of children, and homelessness. A harm reduction perspective and a healing approach, then, to intimate partner and family violence might well be a means by which to reduce the harm identified. Resources and support for communities to reduce harm and maintain health need to be properly distributed and sustained to allow for community success to understand and mitigate intimate partner and family violence. Part of the harm reduction approach is also to emphasize education to further reduce harms.

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1. I have opted to use the phrase interpersonal violence rather than intimate partner violence as the former includes within its meaning frame, according to the World Health Organization, intimate partner violence, family violence, youth violence, violence against women, child maltreatment, and elder abuse (Butchart and Mikton, 2014, 2). Within this larger category of violence, this chapter examines intimate partner violence and family violence (referred to as IP&FV throughout this chapter). ↵
2. Conceptualizing IP/FV as subcategories of interpersonal violence is useful in the context of northern Saskatchewan since interviews with service providers made apparent there were more than just two people involved in the conflict. In small, remote and/or isolated communities, rarely are only two people involved in the event of violence. With this in mind, then, including family violence along with intimate partner violence allows the researchers to understand that all members of the family are affected by family violence when it occurs, such as children, siblings, older dependent parents, cousins and, other extended family members (see also Lightfoot, et al. 2008, 507). ↵
3. This is so even if enacted by women since intimate partner and family violence are seen to be the prerogative of the masculine. See for example the study of Peggy Giordano et al. wherein a female perpetrator of intimate partner violence commented that she felt like the “incredible hulk” during her rages against her partner (2015, 18). The hulk is a decidedly masculine anti-hero whose rage is generally put into the service of the “good” when properly domesticated, typically by a human marked as female/feminine. ↵

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5.2: Saskatchewan Response and National Developments regarding Missing Persons and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 5.2: Saskatchewan Response and National Developments regarding Missing Persons and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and GirlsEdit Update titlecancel

Betty Ann Pottruff & Barbara Tomporowski[1]

In 2008, Saskatchewan officials provided information to the Missing Women Conference in Regina regarding the actions of the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons (PPCMP) to better understand and respond to missing persons cases. This article provides an update about the PPCMP, discusses national developments regarding violence against Indigenous women and girls and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG), and describes the work occurring in Saskatchewan to address these issues.

Public concern about missing persons, including cases of missing Indigenous women, led the Saskatchewan government to announce a plan to address the issues in fall 2005. The plan was based on three elements: increased resources to support police investigations, the development of a province-wide policy and protocol to standardize how reports of missing persons are received and investigated, and a strengthened partnership among government, police agencies, Indigenous, and community organizations to support families and communities when identifying and responding to missing persons cases. This led to the establishment of the PPCMP, which is unique to Saskatchewan. The PPCMP was formed in January 2006 with organizations that had a provincial scope and the expertise and perspectives regarding missing persons that would help them come together as a partnership of equals to improve collaboration and the support provided to families and communities when people go missing. While Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice officials have chaired the PPCMP since its inception, each member from participating organizations is responsible for developing and supporting the partnership by sharing the workload and contributing resources and expertise. The mandate established in 2006 is set out in Figure 1.

The PPCMP builds trust and cooperation between government, justice, and non-profit sectors. The original members included Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice (both Policing and Policy areas), Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Women's Commission, Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation, Child Find Saskatchewan, STOPS To Violence, Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan, Métis Family and Community Justice Services Inc., Search and Rescue Saskatchewan Association of Volunteers, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police. Over the last decade, membership has grown as more organizations contribute to this important work, including the Saskatchewan Chief Coroners Service, Victims Services, Caring Hearts Inc., municipal police services, and provincial ministries involved with child protection, education, health, and government relations. Each member is ultimately responsible to their organization for their participation and the partnership's work.

PROVINCIAL **PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE ON MISSING PERSONS MANDATE**

Vision:

Work towards a future that ensures that when people go missing there is a full response that mobilizes all necessary participants and that recognizes the equal value of every life.

Goals:

- to raise awareness of and support public education around the reasons why people go missing;
- to promote prevention strategies;
- to encourage cooperation and partnerships amongst agencies to better support families and communities where someone goes missing; and
- to enhance capacity to respond to cases of missing persons at the family, community, and provincial level.

Principle:

The Partnership recognizes that people go missing for a variety of reasons and will work to respond specifically to each of these reasons, as brought forward by the members of the Partnership Committee, while addressing the needs of all missing persons.

Key areas where action will be taken or recommended

- Raise awareness of and support public education on the risks to Saskatchewan citizens that lead to persons going missing.
- Recommend, implement or promote prevention strategies.
- Build a network of protective interventions to assist in deterring or responding to missing persons cases.
- Develop supports to help families and communities identify missing persons cases, support their role in responding to these cases and in addressing the families' immediate and long-term needs.
- Identify best practices in responding to missing persons cases.
- Improve understanding of roles and responsibilities to help agencies network and communicate (could require development of protocols).
- Improve data and information collection and information sharing between agencies in missing persons cases.
- Suggest improvements to police reporting procedures/policies on missing persons cases.
- Suggest ways to work to improve media coverage of missing persons cases.

Figure 1: Mandate of Saskatchewan's Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons

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The Committee issued an interim report, met with families of missing persons in February and March 2007, and issued a final report containing twenty areas of recommendations to support families, raise awareness, prevent people from going missing, and improve the response by police and other services (Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, October 2007).

Around the same time the PPCMP was established and was developing its mandate, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police (SACP) developed and launched the province-wide missing persons website in spring 2006, which includes cases from 1935 onward. The website, which can be found at www.sacp.ca, contains photos and information about persons who have been missing for more than six months, and about unidentified human remains. It also contains information created by the PPCMP, such as a checklist for families to follow if someone goes missing and other public awareness materials prepared for the annual Missing Persons Week that has been recognized in Saskatchewan every May since 2013.

Characteristics of Missing Persons in Saskatchewan

As part of the initial work to support the PPCMP, Dr. Jeffrey Pfeifer (2006) conducted research that found 4,496 reports to police regarding missing persons in 2005. These reports represented 2,956 individuals, and the majority of missing persons were between the ages of nine and eighteen. The difference between the number of reports and the number of missing people results from individuals going missing multiple times during the year, particularly youth who repeatedly leave home or foster care and who were referred to as "chronic runaways" (8). The data also reveals that there is an equal distribution of missing males and females. The majority of missing persons where ethnicity was reported were Caucasian or First Nations/Aboriginal, but ethnicity was not listed for many individuals. The number of First Nations/Aboriginal persons reported missing was and remains disproportionate to their representation in the population.

While Dr. Pfeifer's research has not been repeated to date, the available information suggests that the numbers and characteristics of those reported missing has not changed. This includes ongoing concerns about how to reduce the number of youth who repeatedly go missing. This contributed to the development of the 11 and Under Initiative, a collaborative partnership that supports children under the age of twelve who are exhibiting behaviors that put them at risk for criminal involvement or who are at increased risk for victimization. Children are referred to the 11 and Under Initiative through an early identification process, and an integrated case management system links them and their families to human service supports and community partners[2].

Over 99 percent of missing persons cases are resolved, often within a few days. Unfortunately, there are a number of long-term cases in which people have been missing over six months. These cases are profiled on the SACP website. Although long-term police investigations into missing persons reports are sometimes called "cold cases," they remain open and under investigation until solved. As of the date this article was written in September 2019, the SACP website listed 134 missing persons between 1935 and March 2019 (ninety-seven males and thirty-seven females) in addition to nine cases involving unidentified human remains and twenty-nine located persons.

There has been considerable attention to the issue of missing Indigenous women in Canada. The SACP website uses the terms Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal status where known. As of March 2019, eighteen of the missing women were Caucasian and nineteen were of Aboriginal ethnicity. Since the SACP started recording long-term missing persons in 2006, the number of missing Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan has consistently been about 50 percent of total females missing. In comparison, only 11.3

percent of missing women in Canada were Aboriginal (Royal Canadian Mounted Police 2015, 13; Figure 5). This shows an overrepresentation of Aboriginal women among the missing, particularly when Aboriginal women accounted for only 16 percent of the female population of Saskatchewan (Status of Women Office, 2016). In contrast, the SACP website shows that fifty-three of the missing men in Saskatchewan are Caucasian, two are visible minorities, and forty-two are Aboriginal. Canada's National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains (NCMPUR) doesn't provide national ethnicity data but does indicate that 57 percent of missing adult reports involve males and 73 percent of missing child reports involve runaways (National Center for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains 2018).

It is sometimes assumed that people who go missing have fallen victim to violence. While this may be the case, the data and the experience of the PPCMP indicate that people go missing for many reasons.

- Sixty-eight percent of missing person reports in Saskatchewan in 2005 involved children, according to Pfeifer's research. These missing children were primarily runaways, as less than 1 percent of all missing children cases involve child abduction, usually by a parent based on NCMPUR data (National Center for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains 2018).
- People with health concerns such as Alzheimer disease are at risk of going missing if they become lost.
- People suffering from mental health issues may be at risk of suicide.
- People can get lost and be reported as missing when engaging in outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting, and boating.
- Foul play or criminal conduct can also cause people to be reported missing. This is a clear concern in the disproportionate number of missing Indigenous women.

Updates on the PPCMP

For the last decade, the PPCMP has been implementing and advocating for the implementation of the recommendations in its 2007 Final Report. The Committee met again with families of missing persons in 2009, which led to further recommendations on topics such as the need to work with jurisdictions outside Saskatchewan, support families financially or through networking, and the importance of continuing to build the partnership (PPCMP 2009). To follow up on these recommendations, in 2011 the PPCMP organized a meeting with officials from Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and other partners to discuss how to work together to address the needs of families. This Regional Forum led to more recommendations for action on supporting families and how to support work within and across jurisdictions (Policy, Planning and Evaluation Branch 2011).

The PPCMP completed a Strategic Business Plan in 2012, which identified key areas of focus for the Partnership Committee regarding working together, raising awareness, and supporting families (Child Find Saskatchewan 2012)[3]. The PPCMP has implemented or made progress on implementing most of the recommendations from 2007, 2009, and the 2012 Strategic Business Plan. Examples include the following.

- Missing Persons Weeks have been proclaimed annually in Saskatchewan since 2013 to promote public awareness and understanding by addressing myths regarding missing persons, profiling different types of cases from across the province, creating a hypothetical case for people to follow, highlighting the range of services for families, and reaffirming that those missing are not forgotten.
- In 2009, Saskatchewan proclaimed *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act* to assist families to administer assets of missing persons. The Act was amended in 2018 to allow law enforcement agencies access to a wider range of records to help in the search for a missing person.
- The Saskatchewan Police Commission and Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police approved a policy for recording and investigating missing person cases which applies to all municipal police services in the province. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police have a similar policy.
- The SACP and Victims Services Branch agreed upon a new policy to ensure all families of missing persons who need support are referred to police-based victim services. In addition, three missing persons liaison workers in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert are available to support families and assist victim services across the province[4].
- The PPCMP created materials that are posted on the Ministry of Justice website, such as a checklist for families, a media kit, an inventory of agencies, and an Agency Response Guide to assist agencies in supporting the families and friends of missing persons.
- On September 19, 2014, the PPCMP dedicated an oak tree in Wascana Centre in Regina to remember missing persons. In 2016, the Place of Reflection for families at the RCMP Training Academy in Regina was formally dedicated. Members of the PPCMP contributed funds for this location.
- In 2014, the PPCMP also began to focus on supporting families and assisting both service providers and families to understand the impact of trauma when a loved one disappears. That fall, the PPCMP held a series of workshops about how to cope with or

support individuals experiencing ambiguous loss, which describes the feelings of those who are caught in a cycle of hope and grieving for a missing person whose fate is unknown (British Columbia Missing Women Commission of Inquiry 2012, 38). These workshops were held in Regina and Saskatoon and were broadcast in northern Saskatchewan via the Telehealth network. Since then, further training for over 6,400 service providers has occurred in partnership with Caring Hearts Inc. regarding trauma-informed practice. Caring Hearts Inc. provides these training sessions to Indigenous communities upon request and involves Elders in the sessions.

National Developments

In addition to its activities in Saskatchewan, the PPCMP's recommendations have informed national work regarding missing persons and MMIWG. For example, the recommendation to develop a national police database was acted upon by the federal government with the creation of the NCMPUR[5]. The PPCMP's work also contributed to the national dialogue regarding missing women, informed the report of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) Working Group on Missing Women (Coordinating Committee of Senior Officials, 2012), and was cited as a best practice in the British Columbia Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (2012, 160). Moreover, both the PPCMP's work and the FPT report on missing women contributed to the national dialogue on violence against Indigenous women and girls (VAIWG), including MMIWG.

Over the past several years, there has been growing awareness and concern among Indigenous communities, provincial justice agencies, FPT governments, academics, and the public about the troubling issue of VAIWG. Figure 2 shows a continuum of violence that can result in Indigenous women and girls going missing and being murdered.

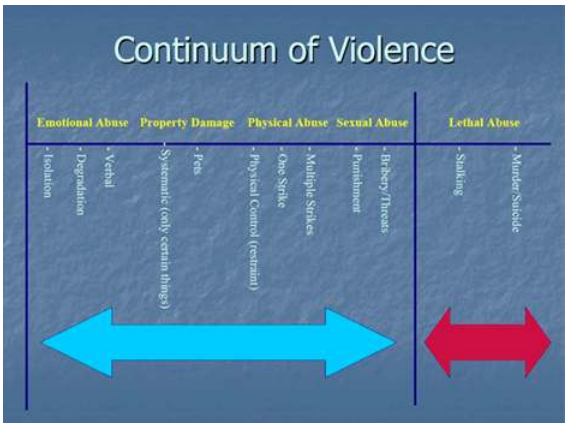


Figure 2. Continuum of Violence, Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice.

In January 2012, FPT Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety agreed to continue to collaborate and develop a common approach to VAIWG. They directed their officials to develop a flexible justice framework to coordinate FPT justice actions to address VAIWG. The FPT Working Group on Aboriginal Justice reviewed thirty reports, found similar themes among the findings and recommendations, and prepared a draft justice framework. In November 2013, FPT Ministers agreed to publicly release the draft so jurisdictions could hold dialogues with Indigenous groups and other partners. FPT jurisdictions approached these dialogues in many ways. For example, Saskatchewan held twenty-two meetings with over 700 people, including the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, Métis Family and Community Justice Services, First Nations, Tribal Councils, community justice workers, court workers, victims' services programs, interpersonal violence and abuse programs, both Saskatchewan universities, and other groups. The Ministry also supported the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women's Circle Corporation (SAWCC) in holding dialogues with Aboriginal women and in Aboriginal communities, and the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations held dialogues as well.

While feedback was being compiled regarding the draft FPT Justice Framework, FPT Justice Ministers released a progress report in October 2014 with examples of activities already underway to prevent and respond to VAIWG. Next, several national events occurred to discuss VAIWG and MMIWG, such as the 2015 and 2016 National Roundtables and the Justice Practitioners Summit in Manitoba. The National Roundtables included leaders from Indigenous organizations and FPT governments, representatives from Indigenous organizations, families of MMIWG, and many others. Saskatchewan's delegation to the 2015 National Roundtable included the Minister of Justice, government officials, and representatives from the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Women's Commission and SAWCC. The Roundtable referred to the draft FPT Justice Framework to Address VAIWG and adopted the following principles.

- **Human Rights**: VAIWG violates numerous human rights including the right to life, to security, to equality, and to be free of discrimination.
- **Shared responsibility**: Preventing and addressing violence against Indigenous women and children is a shared responsibility, requiring shared commitments across governments and communities.
- **Community-based solutions:** Solutions to prevent and end violence against Indigenous women and children must be led and delivered by Indigenous communities, which may need support to build community capacity to prevent and respond to VAIWG.
- **A focus on healing**: Addressing violence against Indigenous women and children acknowledges the need for improved relationships based on respect and understanding among Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous Canadians and the need for holistic approaches in concert with support for the healing of individuals and communities.
- **A collaborative focus**: Indigenous Peoples must be partners in developing and implementing responses to address VAIWG.
- **Bringing about behavioral change:** Addressing and preventing VAIWG requires a shift in societal attitudes and behaviours within individuals, institutions, and organizations, including men and boys, who are key agents of that change.
- **Changing the discourse:** Mobilizing Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to change how we talk about the issues can help reframe institutional responses, community perspectives, and individual attitudes.

The National Roundtable also led to a commitment to hold the Justice Practitioners Summit in January 2016 to bring together victims' services agencies , police, prosecutors, and others to discuss the justice system response in cases of MMIWG. Results from the summit and other developments were the focus of discussions at the second National Roundtable in February 2016 in which Saskatchewan's Minister of Justice also participated, along with the FSIN Women's Commission, SAWCC, approximately twelve families of MMIWG, and provincial officials. Work continues on commitments from the 2016 National Roundtable, such as cultural competency training and improving communication and coordination between the justice system and Indigenous communities.

The FPT Justice Framework to Address VAIWG was finalized and publicly released by FPT Ministers Responsible for Justice and Public Safety in January 2016[6]. Its purpose is to assist FPT Ministers of Justice and Public Safety in taking a coordinated approach to working with Indigenous Peoples to stop the violence. Since it will be up to each FPT jurisdiction to work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners on responses that are effective and appropriate for their communities, the FPT Justice Framework provides principles and priorities rather than detailed recommendations. The principles include elements such as reconciliation and building trust, a shared responsibility for preventing and addressing violence, community-based solutions, and the importance of changing attitudes and behaviours. The priorities include:

- improving the relationship between justice sector professionals (including police) and Indigenous people;
- supporting Indigenous communities in the development of individual and community safety initiatives that respond to their unique cultural, traditional, and socioeconomic needs and realities;
- engaging the whole community, including government departments, non-government agencies, families, and community-based organizations in prevention, intervention, and assistance for victims and offenders;
- improving responses to violence within intimate relationships and families;
- supporting alternatives to mainstream court where appropriate and effective;
- identifying strategies within the existing justice system to support Indigenous women who are victims of violence and their children;
- addressing the safety and healing of individuals (victims, offenders, witnesses), families, and communities; and
- improving coordination across government departments and among provinces, territories, the federal government, and Indigenous communities.

While these inter-jurisdictional events were occurring in 2015 and 2016, Saskatchewan Justice officials continued to work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners including police, to discuss how the province could develop an inclusive approach to address VAIWG in families and communities. The principles approved at the National Roundtable in 2015 were reviewed, and the partners agreed to adapt these principles to the Saskatchewan context.

In summer 2016, the federal government announced the establishment of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, which was originally intended to operate from September 1, 2016 to December 31, 2018. The Commission was mandated to examine and report on the systemic causes of the violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls, "including underlying social, economic, cultural, institutional and historical causes" and "institutional policies and practices implemented in response to violence."[7] To create a truly national inquiry, all provincial and territorial governments were asked to authorize the Commission to review matters within the jurisdiction's area of responsibility. This had never been done before, and it took time to work out the technical and legal

requirements for each jurisdiction. Saskatchewan publicly supported the National Inquiry in September 2016 by passing an Order in Council mirroring the federal terms of reference.

The Commission met with families and survivors of violence and held a number of events across the country. This included fifteen community hearings, statement taking events with families of MMIWG and survivors of violence, institutional hearings, and Knowledge Keeper and Expert Hearings. According to the National Inquiry website, as of April 20, 2018, the Commission had heard 1,484 testimonies from families and survivors. The Expert Hearings considered topics such as Indigenous laws, decolonizing perspectives, human rights, racism, and international law. There were hearings about the criminal justice system, the child protection system, and sexual exploitation, in addition to a number of guided dialogues to gather perspectives from two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersexual, and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA) people, the Métis and Inuit, and those in Québec. The Institutional Hearings, which examined the systemic causes of VAIWG and violence against 2SLGBTQQIA people, covered matters such as policing and government services. The Commission heard testimony about the PPCMP during the Institutional Hearing into Government Services from May 28 to June 1, 2018.

Provincial officials worked throughout the National Inquiry's term to support this important national process, to respond to Commission requests, and to support families by establishing a Family Information Liaison Unit (FILU). The FILU is funded by the federal government to assist families in accessing information regarding a family member who may be missing or murdered. Several Saskatchewan Indigenous groups also played vital roles in supporting families during the National Inquiry, such as SAWCC, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations Family Information Liaison Office, Regina Treaty/Status Indian Services, Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik (Women Walking Together), and the Prince Albert Grand Council Women's Commission.

The National Inquiry's Final Report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, was released at a ceremony in Gatineau, Quebec, on June 3, 2019. It contains 231 Calls for Justice directed at governments, institutions, industries, the media, and all Canadians. The Calls for Justice address a wide range of topics, including health and wellness, education, social services, housing, justice, and governance. The release of the Final Report was attended by the Prime Minister of Canada, provincial and territorial ministers, Elders and Knowledge Keepers, families of MMIWG, representatives from Indigenous organizations, victims and survivors of violence, representatives from justice agencies, and many other groups.

The Commission found that a "significant, persistent, and deliberate pattern of systemic racial and gendered human rights and Indigenous rights violations and abuses . . . is the cause of the disappearances, murders, and violence experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people." The Final Report calls for "an absolute paradigm shift . . . to dismantle colonialism within Canadian society, and from all levels of government and public institutions" (National Inquiry, "Executive Summary" 2019, 60). This will require work to address four pathways that have sustained colonialism: historical, multigenerational, and intergenerational trauma; the social and economic marginalization of Indigenous people; institutional lack of will; and ignoring the agency and expertise of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people (National Inquiry, "Executive Summary" 2019, 11).

Indigenous groups, community-based agencies, governments, institutions, professionals, academics, and members of the public are analyzing the Final Report and considering how to make progress on these and other important issues. Many of the Calls for Justice relate to VAIWG, and two focus specifically on missing persons. Call for Justice 5.6 is, "We call upon provincial and territorial governments to develop an enhanced, holistic, comprehensive approach for the provision of support to Indigenous victims of crime and families and friends of Indigenous murdered or missing persons." Call for Justice 5.8 is, "We call upon all provincial and territorial governments to enact missing persons legislation." As previously discussed, Saskatchewan has some responses that are consistent with these calls, such as *The Missing Persons and Presumption of Death Act*, access to victims services for families, and the missing person liaison positions. There may be other things that could be done to address the needs and concerns of families of MMIWG and victims and survivors of violence. The Final Report mentions the importance of trusting relationships with Indigenous people as one vital step for Indigenous women and 2SLGTBQQIA people to experience justice[8].

Final Thoughts and Next Steps

The PPCMP recognized its tenth anniversary in 2017 and released a ten-year progress report in 2018 regarding how the original twenty recommendations from 2007 were implemented. The PPCMP reviewed the actions taken over its ten-year history in order to reflect on the good work that has occurred, take stock of current issues, and develop further actions. The resulting progress report indicates that fourteen of the twenty recommendations had been completely or substantially implemented, such as enacting legislation, standardizing police practices in missing persons cases, developing supports for families, and the establishment of a national database (Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons 2018). The progress report also highlights the need to continue raising public awareness about matters related to missing persons and indicates that four recommendations are ongoing.

The ongoing recommendations include matters related to search and rescue and increasing the capacity of Indigenous communities to respond when someone goes missing. Additionally, two of the original twenty recommendations were considered outside the scope of the PPCMP to significantly influence. One of these two recommendations relates to media sensitivity when reporting about missing persons. The other concerns the role of school-community councils in educating people about these topics.

The process of reviewing its history and progress led the PPCMP to consider new initiatives. The Committee is currently reviewing its mandate and developing a new work plan with additional ways to enhance communications and public education.

The National Inquiry into MMIWG will undoubtedly lead to more attention regarding the reasons why Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately reported missing and become the victims of violence, including homicide. The Commission's findings will help inform the future work of the PPCMP and many organizations in striving to support individuals, families and communities to live in safe communities that reflect the PPCMP's mandate of "the equal value of every life".

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1. The authors were co-chair and chair of what was originally named the Provincial Partnership Committee on Missing Persons, but which at the time of this publication is now named the Saskatchewan Missing Persons Partnership. Although one of the authors is employed with the Government of Saskatchewan, this article solely reflects her personal views. It does not reflect the views of the Government of Saskatchewan, Ministry of Justice and Attorney General, or Ministry of Corrections, Policing and Public Safety. ↵
2. The 11 and Under Initiative can be found at http://11andunderinitiative.ca/. ↵
3. These and the previously referenced documents can be found on the Ministry of Justice website at https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/family-and-social-support/help-for-families-of-missing-or-murdered-persons. ↵
4. Information about victim services for the families of missing persons can be found at: http://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/justice-crime-and-the-law/victims-of-crime-and-abuse. ↵
5. Can be found at http://www.canadasmissing.ca/. ↵
6. The framework, which is designed to be flexible so it can evolve over time, is available at http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/about-bc-justice-system/publications/fpt-justice-framework-english.pdf. ↵
7. See the terms of reference at https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/terms-of-reference.pdf. ↵
8. National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (June 2019). Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Vol. 1, 715. ↵

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Resistance Through Art 6: Resistance Through ArtEdit Update titlecancel

6.1: Project of Heart Can Work for All of Us

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Decolonizing Postsecondary Institutions

7.1: Troubling Curricula- Teaching and Learning about MMIW

7.2: Pedagogical Considerations on Teaching “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women from a Global Perspective”

7.3: Indigenous Women’s Literature- The Power and Truth of our Words

7.4: Indigenous Masculinities- A Reflection

7.5: Afterword

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7.1: Troubling Curricula- Teaching and Learning about MMIW 7.1: Troubling Curricula- Teaching and Learning about MMIWEdit Update titlecancel

Shauneen Pete[1]

The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) is largely misunderstood in Canada. As educators it is incumbent upon us to better prepare our learners to respond to emergent societal issues. How do faculty and staff in one prairie university work together to ensure that our learners gain a greater understanding of Indigenous peoples broadly; especially those experiences that contribute to the higher rates of violence directed toward Indigenous women?

In 2015, during a series of campus engagement sessions organized through the Office of Indigenization, information was gathered about how and where students are learning about MMIW issues; and how faculty are designing courses to address this topic in their own teaching. This case study summarizes one of the approaches that a group of concerned faculty and staff undertook to expand discussions about MMIW issues across the curriculum areas on our campus. As we trouble notions of curricula, we work toward academic decolonization and Indigenization.

Universities in Canada have been more actively engaging in decolonizing and Indigenizing practices. Our university, like many other Canadian universities and colleges, had entrenched Indigenization into our strategic plan. The work of Indigenization was operationalized through an Office of Indigenization; and led by an Executive Lead: Indigenization. Part of the work plan of the Lead was to inspire curriculum reform throughout the university. As faculty and instructors on our campus, we troubled dominant curriculum norms about what was worth knowing, and thus what was worth teaching and learning.

This chapter broadly addresses the question, “As faculty working to support deeper levels of Indigenization on our campus, how do we take up Indigenous worldviews and experiences in our curricular practices?” More specifically, this chapter is designed to respond to the question, “How can teaching about Missing and Murdered Indigenous women be practiced in ways that enhances learning about Indigenous experience, and engages learners in the practice of critical social justice?”

In this chapter, I explore one Canadian university’s commitment toward correcting the lack of Indigenous content available to learners; and, more specifically, the lack of opportunities to learn about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). For us, the absence of content in university courses about the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples meant that few people understood why violence directed toward Indigenous peoples was important to know. A group of like-minded faculty from several disciplines came together to explore our collective concerns for the curricular holes we identified. We agreed to facilitate a symposium to engage other members of the academic community (students, colleagues, community members, and alumni) in conversations about Indigenous peoples, and more specifically about Missing and Murdered Indigenous women. Symposium participants engaged in a series of discussions over the course of the week-long symposium. At the conclusion of the symposium, participants indicated that faculty must engage in a critical examination of the colonial curriculum and begin to embrace a practice of academic Indigenization and decolonization.

As discussed elsewhere in the book, terminology regarding Aboriginal and Indigenous identities have continued to shift since Torn from Our Midst was published in 2008. Scholars, including myself, use Indigenous when referring to First Nations, Metis and Inuit; and I use Indigenous when referring to the original peoples within an international context. Where a reference to Aboriginal is used in a quotation or referenced in a text or participant comment, I will privilege the original word choice.

I begin this chapter by addressing my own positionality as a First Nations woman and scholar. Then I present the context and describe a series of exercises that were designed to engage students and faculty in conversations about MMIW; lastly, I connect the voices of the participants to recommendations meant to guide faculty toward academic programming reform.

Situating Myself

My name is Dr. Shauneen Pete. I am from Little Pine First Nation in Treaty 6 territory (Saskatchewan). I served as the Executive Lead: Indigenization at the University of Regina in Saskatchewan, from 2013 to 2016. During those three years I was responsible for animating the priorities set forth in the University Strategic Plan, and the Indigenization Plan. I provided leadership to encourage greater levels of Indigenization in every administrative and academic unit; this included building our capacity to engage in academic Indigenization.

As an educator, I have worked for nearly three decades to confront the colonial constructions of knowledge, and our ideas about schooling and education. During that time, I have worked as a high school teacher, educational consultant, curriculum writer,

faculty member, and university administrator. I've taught education courses that focus on anti-oppression, anti-racism, social justice, and Indigenous education. I've taught Indigenous Studies courses including a course on Native Women in Canada. In the Women's and Gender Studies department, I taught a class entitled, Indigenous Women and Feminism. My curricular choices aim to expose my learners (mostly white and female; often middle-class and Christian) toward a more accurate understanding of settler-Indigenous relationships in Canada. My courses include inquiry into topics associated with racism, the social construction of difference, power, and hegemony. I draw my learners toward an awareness of their own privilege, and white identity development. In these courses we critically examine the ways their social positioning often denies them access to an awareness of the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Regardless of what course or what level I've taught, I have worked diligently to re-center the voices and experiences of Indigenous women because I believed that if I didn't do so, learners would not gain those understandings anywhere else. Upon coming to learn (for the first time) the history of systemic inequality my learners often wonder, "Why didn't we learn this before?" In my view, most Canadians have been structurally denied the opportunity to learn about Indigenous peoples. While some provinces have mandated the inclusion of Indigenous content in the K-12 curriculum, this work is often perceived as optional by white educators. Canadian higher education also reflects the marginalization and omission of Indigenous ways of knowing, experiences and pedagogies. As a result, the inclusion of Indigenous content is usually the responsibility of Indigenous educators, and we are under-represented in Canadian higher education: therefore, Indigenous content is marginalized or largely absent in the academy.

This limited access to Indigenous content is problematic not only for the Indigenous students who seek to see their experiences reflected in their areas of study, it is also detrimental for members of the dominant group, visible minority students, and new and visiting students who tend to then adopt dominant ways of knowing and learning. These ways of knowing ill prepare all learners for the intercultural demands that an ever-increasingly diverse society offers; in particular, they limit the possibilities for new relationships with the rising Indigenous population of this prairie province. Many of my learners express that they were raised with very narrow and limiting views of Indigenous peoples, that they rarely interact with Indigenous peoples, and that what they learned in school about Indigenous peoples was mostly rooted in the past. It should be no surprise that our campus, like many others in Canada, has experienced various forms of ignorance, racial bias, and racism in our many years.

Campus Context

The University of Regina is located in Treaty 4 and Treaty 6 lands in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada. It has a federated relationship with First Nations University of Canada (FNUniv) which offers academic programming in Indigenous Education, Business, Fine Arts, and Indigenous Studies, among others. First Nations University offers many U of R students an introduction to Indigenous perspectives, worldviews, and scholarship that is not generally offered at the U of R.

Under the leadership of President Vianne Timmons, the U of R has been actively working toward indigenization as outlined in the university strategic plan. The members of the Indigenous Advisory Circle to the President define indigenization as the transformation of the existing academy by including Indigenous knowledges, voices, critiques, scholars, students, and materials as well as the establishment of physical and epistemic spaces that facilitate the ethical stewardship of a plurality of Indigenous knowledges and practices so thoroughly as to constitute an essential element of the University. It is not limited to Indigenous people, but encompasses all students and faculty, for the benefit of our academic integrity and our social viability. (Indigenous Advisory Circle 2012)

In 2013, when I became Executive Lead of Indigenization, there were several academic programs that had already developed courses that introduced learners to Indigenous experiences (Social Work, Fine Arts, and Education, to name a few). However, at that time only one course (offered infrequently) through Women's and Gender Studies exclusively taught about the issues of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. As I began in this leadership role, I couldn't help but wonder, how learners are ever to gain a deeper understanding of our histories and contemporary issue if Indigenous experiences are not included in the curriculum. At the same time, I was conscious that our campus was still recovering from the violent harassment and active resistance directed toward a visionary Indigenous undergraduate student who had called for mandatory Indigenous Studies on our campus. I understood that leading our faculty and students to higher levels of academic Indigenization would illuminate the racism that always was on our campus.

The Challenge of Cognitive Imperialism

Cognitive Imperialism insists on "one language, one culture and one frame of reference" (Battiste 2000, 198) at the expense of all other ways of knowing. Canadian's embrace dominant ways of thinking. This dominant way of thinking extends to the vision and narrative we prefer to tell about ourselves – that we are a kinder, peace making nation, we are multicultural and fair. This narrative

so permeates dominant thinking, that in 2009, Prime Minister Harper declared that there was no history of colonialism in Canada! The problem with these dominant ways of knowing is they are not true: dominance masks the violence of colonization; and cognitive imperialism masks anything that doesn't fit into that frame of reference. I believe that cognitive imperialism results in what Kuokkanen refers to as "*epistemic ignorance*": the inability of educational institutions to teach what they don't know. In the absence of other than dominant ways of knowing, dominance is replicated. Therefore, higher education is a system that denies all people the opportunity to learn anything but the dominant ways of knowing . . . except in marginalized spaces: for example, courses on Indigenous women offered through Women's and Gender Studies and/or Indigenous Studies but not elsewhere. The marginalization of academic programming about Indigenous experience leaves most learners unaware and, therefore, unconcerned about the experiences of Indigenous peoples—often resulting in a "blame the victim" response when topics of inequality are explored.

My former colleague, Dr. Mike Cappello, often says, "We are steeped in racism, it's the air we breathe." White dominance in the academy often goes unexamined, and members of the dominant group often see departmental structures, majors and minors, course content, and instructional strategy choices as "normal" and "the way things are supposed to be" in the academy. Instructors and learners alike often replicate dominant worldviews in course design and assignment choices because that is what they know to be "truth." For example, in her book, *Unsettling the Settler Within*, Paulette Reagan (2010) reminds us that one part of the residential school history in Canada "is the story about well-meaning paternalistic educators, government and church officials who sought to educate and assimilate Indigenous children into mainstream Canadian society "for their own good"' (5). When the dominant narrative of a benevolent education is retold in higher education, it makes invisible the violence in which this process was enforced. Children *were* removed from their families . . . children *were* punished for speaking their language . . . children *were* sexually, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually abused. Not until we begin to examine the social construction of dominance can we begin to see how colonization itself is a violent, racialized, and sexualized act. Epistemic ignorance replayed in the academy allows the violence of colonization to be masked. Epistemic ignorance replayed in the academy has very real effects on our learners. I offer three examples from our own campus.

The Murder of Pamela George

In 1995, Alex Ternowetsky and Steven Kummerfield, both university students, were found guilty of killing Pamela George. The two men were celebrating the end of term when they decided to pick up a prostitute and, "after failing to persuade one Aboriginal woman working as a prostitute to join the two of them in the car, one man hid in the truck. Approaching the woman twice, and being refused twice, they finally succeeded in persuading another Aboriginal woman, Pamela George, to enter the car" (Razack 2002). The court would hear how, following oral sex, the men took turns beating her. Razack explains, "In their everyday life, they would have had almost no chance of encountering an Aboriginal person" (136). Razack asks, "How do young men such as Alex Ternowetsky and Steven Kummerfield come to know themselves as beings for whom the definition of a good time is to travel to the parts of the city inhabited by poor and mostly Aboriginal peoples and there to purchase sexual services from an Aboriginal woman?" (136). This story reminds us that our learner's attitudes are shaped by the larger colonial and racist attitudes that we all live with. As an educator, working within the very institution that these two men attended, I can't help but wonder, had the university taken a more active role in decolonizing academic programs prior to 1995, would these two men have justified their actions all in the name of a good time?

Playing Indian

In March 2014, I awoke to a phone call from a senior university administrator. The night before, the U of R Cheer Team dressed like cowboys and Indians for an end of season practice. During the practice, they took photos of themselves, which they posted on Instagram and Facebook, in a mock battle scene . . . imagine, the "cowboys" with guns (fingers) pointed toward the "Indians" who are crouched animal-like with their claws and knives ready for battle. Or, in the other photo of the group, one "Indian" with fingers overhead signalling feathers, hand over her mouth in a gesture akin to "whooping." I was informed that in response to their now very public actions, I would offer the team cultural sensitivity training. In preparation for meeting the team, I asked my colleague Dr. Mike Cappello to work with me to deliver the training. I did so because, like Mike, I had years of experience in teaching anti-racism courses and understood that white learners "hear" me differently than they do my white colleagues. We began the cultural sensitivity training by asking them, "How did you learn about Indigenous people in your home, school, and community?" Through their story sharing they came to see that their own experiences as white women were very similar: they learned about Indigenous people from watching the Disney movie Pocahontas; some expressed how they cherished their Pocahontas costume as children and later into young adulthood. They reiterated that they didn't intend to do any harm—that they were just *having a fun evening together*. Mike drew the women's attention to the book *I Thought Pocahontas Was a Movie*, edited by our colleagues, Dr. Carol

Schick and Dr. James McNinch. The book explores the 2001 Tisdale rape case involving Dean Edmondson (age 24), Jeffrey Brown (age 25), and Jeffrey Kindrat (age 20). The victim was a twelve-year-old First Nations girl. Like Kummerfield and Ternowetsky before them, these men were out drinking and driving . . . *having a good time.* They picked up the girl, offered her beer and then took turns sexually assaulting her. Upon first seeing her, one of them said, "I thought Pocahontas was a movie."

Mike and I explained to the cheer team how their actions, *playing Indian*, allowed them to, firstly, replicate the savage Indian imagery through their gestures and dress, and, secondly, engage in the romanticism of Pocahontas without ever having to pay the price for her sexualized and racialized identity. Mike and I drew the team's attention to the uncomfortable parallels between Pocahontas and the young rape victim: here, some of the team members were surprised to learn that the real Pocahontas was a girl of eleven or twelve while John Smith was a man of twenty-eight. They came to realize that the case of Pocahontas—treated as a romantic equal in the Disney movie; was really not all that different from the way the media and the justice system made the young rape victim both womanly and wanton, and therefore consenting to the sexualized activity (gang rape). In the case of Edmondson, Brown, and Kindrat all were referred to as boys by the media and the legal system, even when they were all in their 20s and several years older than the girl. As "boys", these men, like John Smith from the movie, were helpless in their response to the sexualized identity of the girl.

To go further, Dr. Cappello and I shifted the focus back to the Cheer Team members "playing Indian" in an overly sexualized and "animalistic" way and the how problematic that choice was. We explained that the choice was not all that different from the way in which Edmondson, Brown, Kindrat, Ternawetsky, and Kummerfield interacted with Indigenous girls and women: as sexualized objects. The cheer team members adopted the dominant narrative of the "sexy squaw" when they donned the short, fringed skirts and braided their hair. One of the privileges that these young women had that actual Indigenous women did not have, was that they could take off the costumes at the end of the evening. Real Indigenous women did not share in the ability to shirk the markings of their brown woman's bodies: they are ever cast as wonton, promiscuous, sexually available for those out to have a good time.

I didn't know this was wrong. In the weeks that followed the cheer team incident, Mike and I spoke to these issues in our own classes and we were invited to a couple of classes to discuss the interconnecting issues of cultural appropriation, MMIW, and violence directed toward Indigenous Peoples. Often, the learners would comment that "the matter was blown out of proportion"; "these were just girls having fun" (referencing the cheer team); and in some cases, we heard "I didn't know this was wrong." We were not surprised by these responses; in fact, the level of ignorance expressed by these learners is reflective of the norms of Canadian society. As educator's we are committed to correcting absences in the curriculum.

The Violent Rejection of Indigenous Content

Not long ago, a Facebook post was circulated on the university page called UofR Confessions. The post referenced the mandated Treaty Education requirement in our provincial curriculum. The author wrote: "In response to the teacher who wants Treaty Education integrated, you really think that it will work? No. Just do what I do. Don't teach it all. . .. It's a farce. Nobody cares about treaties. . .. I'm not teaching that crap."

In our province, the inclusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit content has been a required component for over thirty years and mandatory Treaty Education has been provincial policy since 2007. Yet, in the case of this educator (and many more like her/him), as a member of the dominant group, violent rejection of Indigenous content is justified . . . and there are no repercussions for not fulfilling the provincial mandate. The exclusion of Indigenous content helps no one—not the Indigenous learners who don't see positive reflections of their histories and contemporary experiences; nor the non-Indigenous learners who maintain socially constructed ideas of dominance.

Clearly there is a need for our university and community to proactively address race and racism, and to tell a more accurate history of Indigenous/(white)settler relations in Canada. In our work in the Faculty of Education, my colleagues and I have learned that confronting white dominance is to trouble curricula. We name whiteness in the curriculum, and we engage our learners in an examination of the experiences of marginalized peoples in the face of colonial dominance. As my students learn, often for the first time, about residential schools, the pass and permit system, or Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, they often are overcome with anger, guilt, and shame. They express anger toward a system of education that didn't teach them about these topics; they feel guilt and shame as they come to recognize that the "luxury of ignorance" (Howard 2006) is a privilege that members of the dominant group share. I remind them that anger, guilt and shame often dis-able learners from moving forward in their understanding, but it also can serve to motivate them to a deeper practice of social justice education. This deeper practice would ensure that learners are able to move beyond denial, dismissal, minimization, and, in some cases, violent rejection of the experiences of Indigenous Peoples. The point is not simply to discomfort white-settler learners, but to help them grow their stamina

for the ambiguity of knowing this uncomfortable knowledge—knowledge that is common sense for those more marginalized in society and invisible to members of the dominant group. In my teaching work with mostly white students I've learned that feeling guilt (and shame and anger) is the price of a legacy of privilege and the luxury of ignorance (Howard 2006) that dominant group members experience. I recognize that these learners can, and will learn to overcome these feelings when educators practice pedagogy in ways that facilitate them coming into the space of race-based stress and moving through it. Building their stamina for ambiguity and thus their resilience offers members of the dominant group (and those that align with them) a starting point for reconciling relationships with Indigenous peoples.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women: A Symposium

In December 2014, Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated that the issue of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women "wasn't high on his radar." In response, a number of faculty and administrators at the U of R and First Nations University of Canada proposed to work together to development a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Forum. The purpose of the forum was to foster discussions around the topic with an aim of informing public policy.

The committee members included Dr. David Malloy (VP Research), Dr. Brenda Anderson (Luther College), Dr. Lynn Wells (VP Academic, FNUniv), Dr. Mary Hampton (Psychology Department), Dr. Kathy McNutt (Executive Director, Johnson Shoyama School of Public Policy), Steve Palmer (The Collaborative Centre for Justice and Safety), the late, Dr. Jo-Ann Episkenew (Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre), Dr. Judy White (Dean, Social Work), Dr. Kim McKay-McNabb (Sessional Lecturer, Women's and Gender Studies), Hirsch Greenberg (Justice Studies), and I. The committee purposefully engaged faculty and staff from a broad range of affiliations: we understood that MMIW issues have interdisciplinary implications. Additionally, we invited diverse faculty and staff to participate in planning the symposium in order to reduce potential duplication with other events we were involved in, namely the 2015 Canadian Criminal Justice Association Meeting and RESOLVE 2015 events.

The committee members agreed that we would offer a Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Symposium (March 24 to 27, 2015). The symposium included three round-table discussions and a World Café event. The round-table discussions were meant to provoke discussions with faculty colleagues, undergraduate and graduate students, and community/alumni members, on how we are taking up the issue in our curricular practice. In my role as Executive Lead, I wrote field notes based on each roundtable discussion; Moses Gordon made field notes during the World Café event; and I compiled and analyzed our notes, wrote and submitted a final report to the VP Research and committee members. I present the format and findings from each of the round-table sessions and the World-Café in the sections below.

MMIW in the Liberal Arts

The first roundtable discussion was held at First Nations University of Canada. Three presenters discussed how the topic of MMIW was taught in the liberal arts, particularly in English Literature, Native Studies, and Indigenous Health Studies. The three presenters included Holly MacKenzie (Doctoral Candidate at UBC), Dr. Jesse Archibald-Barber (First Nations University of Canada, English Department), and Johannah Bird (Briercrest College, Native Studies). There were approximately twenty participants, including one of the Indigenous Studies classes from FNUniv.

The presenters explained the methods they use to re-center MMIW issues in their classes. They cited using literature as one example of how to raise the topic. They also use contemporary issues presented in media as a catalyst for directing learning toward MMIW, issues of colonization, social inequality, gendered violence, and the daily lived experiences of Indigenous women and girls.

Some of the teaching resources included *April Raintree* by Beatrice Culleton; Maria Campbell's book, *Halfbreed;* and the poetry of several Indigenous authors. These instructors identified how they invited Elders and community members to serve as guest speakers. They talked about the importance of talking circles to support students in responding to trauma that arose because of the content. They also spoke to how they must anticipate racism and prepare their response to it.

MMIW and Professional Programs

The second roundtable featured Dr. JoLee Sasakamoose, Assistant Professor in Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education (U of R). She explained that, in anticipation of revising her graduate course (Counselling Girls and Women), she wrestled with the foundational questions of teaching and trauma in the classroom. She knew she wanted to include topics associated with racialized violence and MMIW. She was also cautious: she explained that the faculty member must respect that teaching in this way had the potential to trigger learners, and faculty members had to anticipate the need to address the trauma as it arose in the classroom. Dr. Sasakamoose relayed that she opted to slowly introduce these topics and that she drew purposefully from the foundational

documents developed by the Native Women's Association of Canada. She was mindful of her pedagogical choices and decided that her learners would develop their own "gendered autobiography" whereby they would explore the intersections of race, class, and gender in their own lived experience. A second assignment included a review of a book about the life of one missing or murdered Indigenous woman. This book review would offer the learner the background information necessary to track the lack of action on the part of justice, child welfare, and social services agencies. Her learners gained a deeper understanding of how interconnecting differences compound access to services and fair and equitable treatment by service providers. Her intention was to offer her learners an opportunity to reconsider their own identities, their identities within their chosen profession, and as service providers working toward social justice.

Several faculty members were in attendance, including faculty from the Saskatchewan Urban Teacher Education Program, the School of Business and Luther College. Dr. Sasakamoose responded to questions about accessing and reviewing teaching resources and about how she planned on addressing racism, anti-racism and responding to racist comments in class.

Learning about MMIW: Student's Voices

In hindsight, it would have been more appropriate to start the week of MMIW roundtables with the student roundtable. This discussion was led by three students who were in a course on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (Women's and Gender Studies) taught by Dr. Brenda Anderson. These learners identified a clear gap in access to content about Indigenous Peoples in their experience on our campus. All three speakers stated that they had gained little access to content about Indigenous peoples in their Kindergarten to Grade 12 schooling experiences and that access to this content did not improve once they became university students. One student stated, "In my five years here, these issues were never introduced".

The panelists were asked to identify how effectively the topic of MMIW was portrayed in their university classes. The students spoke to what they viewed as systemic ignorance within the entire system of formal education. They noted that their teachers and professors knew very little about Indigenous experiences and did not teach about it. Audience members reiterated that they found access to Indigenous content very limited, even with access to courses offered through First Nations University of Canada.

The students explained that they went out of their way to find courses about Indigenous experiences. They chose to audit classes and took additional courses beyond their formal academic program of study to learn about Indigenous Peoples. A participant from the audience added that, in her experience, the severely limited number of approved electives that she could take as an engineering student meant that she (and her classmates) could not learn about MMIW, let alone anything else to do with Indigenous experiences. In her case, she took courses beyond her program in order to address her individual learning needs.

The participants on the panel agreed that more attention to academic Indigenization was needed on our campus. They confirmed that the system failed to offer them even a basic understanding of anything related to social justice, let alone the specific content that would have helped them to better understand MMIW issues. One student noted that had she seen Indigenous Studies or Women's and Gender Studies listed in the course catalogue under the Electives options, she probably would have taken one of those courses sooner in her program. As it turned out, she, like many of her classmates, read the electives list and saw "English, Sociology . . ." and chose English because it was first of the options. She explained that it wasn't until her final year that she realized other options were available. The student voices panel served to remind participants about the priority for curricular reform on our campus.

At the conclusion of the three days of roundtable discussions, I illustrated the presenter narratives and the participant responses together into one large drawing. The image was intended to provide World Café participants (many who were not involved in the earlier roundtables) to quickly review the discussions held earlier in the week.

What emerged from the drawings was a clear need on the part of learners to have a re-centering of Indigenous content in the curriculum offered by our university. On the part of faculty, there was a desire to continue to ensure that Indigenous literature, issues, and pedagogies are practiced in our teaching work. I also understood that faculty and instructional staff required practical supports to help strengthen academic Indigenization including establishing a data base of teaching resources, developing workshops to support faculty on addressing racism in courses with Indigenous content, and the need for faculties to re-examine the selected elective choices and the order in which they are presented in the course catalogue. World Café participants understood from reviewing the image that students desired and needed academic programs that offered greater access to Indigenous content.

World Café Event

On March 27, we concluded the week-long MMIW symposium with a day-long event that was designed to further encourage discussion, creativity, and action planning with individuals committed to social justice. The organizing committee decided to use a World Café approach to facilitate community engagement.

The World Café approach is designed to encourage small group discussions (four to six people). The approach allows for a progressive series of conversations (approximately twenty minutes per round), with some participants changing tables between rounds to encourage a broad conversation. At the end, participants are encouraged to share discoveries and insights from all of their conversations. Participants are encouraged to draw, doodle, play, and link comments and ideas on paper provided. The vision for the World Café approach was not realized due to the smaller than anticipated number of participants. As a result, we modified the event to engage two groups in a facilitated session. The ultimate goal remained the same: to pool together the collective knowledge of the attendees with the aim of promoting a serious and open discussion regarding potential resolutions that may affect future policy changes and generate effective solutions to the current social epidemic of violence against Indigenous women.

To better reach a community-oriented audience, we decided to hold the World Café off campus. We recognized that the costs of parking on campus could be a deterrent for some members of the community. We were pleased that a local church community offered their kitchen and communal space for our purposes. The minister supported our request to begin and end our gathering in a smudge ceremony. Kokum Brenda Dubois was offered tobacco to begin the final day of the symposium in a good way; she offered participants an opportunity to smudge and she was invited to begin our discussions in prayer.

The communications strategy for this event included inviting members of First Nations and Métis organizations from Regina and beyond. Invitations were also sent to local organizations engaged in providing supports to families of MMIW (Newo Yotina Friendship Centre, Circle Project, Women of the Dawn Counselling Centre, All Nations Hope, Regina Alternative Measures Program, Regina Tribal Services, the YWCA, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations – Women's Commission). Several government representatives attended, as did members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), and members of the media, a bus driver, local police services, and the RCMP. This group included a mix of settler and Indigenous peoples as well as queer and straight peoples. Due to the number of participants, we restructured our event so that we had two table with six to ten people per table. Each table had a facilitator who was responsible for guiding the participants toward the questions and documenting their responses. I served as facilitator for the whole event.

Following introductions, I reviewed the roundtable discussions that had happened earlier in the week. In preparation, I had utilized visual facilitation methods to communicate the emerging themes from the round-tables. The visual images offered to World Café participants gave them an opportunity to see and hear how discussions on campus unfolded. Some participants commented that they were not surprised that so little is taught about MMIW on campus as in their experience the university offered very little content about Indigenous people either. Participants were able to identify terms they wanted to know more about, and they were invited to engage in deeper examinations of pre-professional training, the need for in-service training and proposed policy needs for each organization. Once the format of the World Café was explained to the larger group, the facilitators guided participants to refocus to their small group discussions.

During the facilitated discussion with the groups we began by identifying the root causes of the ongoing crisis of MMIW. The colonial and patriarchal nature of Canadian society was central to this first part of the discussion. Respondents identified a clear connection between colonization and its impact on education and the general lack of understanding between settler people and other more marginalized groups.

Questions to Guide the World Café Activity

To focus the discussions for the World Café activity, we identified broad questions that encouraged participants to respond from their various roles and lived experiences. In this case, I asked each group: Why are the rates of MMIW so high?

In response to the questions, participants shared stories about their understandings with one another. It was clear that their diversity allowed for a deeper examination of MMIW that included a recognition of intersectionality, understanding the matrix of oppressions, and a deep knowing about the effects of colonialism.

As participants spoke, group facilitators documented the findings on chart paper. One respondent began with a discussion about how Neoliberal policies including global issues of poverty, power, and the economy contribute to violence directed toward Indigenous women. Another participant added, that patriarchal systems of power, including legal systems, make violence socially acceptable. Within that patriarchal system Individualism is privileged at the expense of a community of care. This allows for greater levels of isolation, vulnerability, and violence, which are compounded by a lack of support networks. Individualism combined with social mobility is not attainable for all peoples and the myth of meritocracy.

In the second group, the discussion began with a conversation about the dehumanization of Indigenous women since colonization. They explored the evolution of stereotypes that devalue Indigenous women. Both groups addressed settler willful ignorance about

colonialism and its effects; including, racism, stereotypes, and discrimination. To go further, participants also addressed the naivety of young people who often believe that violence won't happen to them.

Both groups spoke in overlapping ways about patriarchy and colonialism. They wove together a story of how the interconnecting systemic issues of poverty, urbanization, over-representation of Indigenous peoples in the justice system, residential school impacts and the child welfare system all tie to lateral violence, and intergenerational trauma. At the same time, given that context, they wondered how when the "good life" is made unattainable, how do Indigenous people rise above. Participants reflected on how the messiness of colonialism and capitalism combined shift our focus to both individualism and meritocracy—ideals that only deepen the perception that victims of violence are responsible for their own troubles.

At various points in the conversation, participants refocused their attention toward an examination of white masculinity. They reminded one another that the issue of MMIW was not only a story about Indigenous women, but more importantly and often invisible in the discussion is the troubling ways in which white-settler masculinity has been created. The examples of Ternawetsky and Kummerfield were offered up for discussion. One participant relayed what she understood about this case. She described how the two students who killed Pamela George were described as boys by media and how they were simply looking to blow off some steam during the end of term.

Participants were also quick to note that not including queer and other ways of being a man also limited our examination of white-settler masculinity. Participants returned again and again to the question—how do we teach our boys to be men in ways that don't center on violence?

Participants were invited to take a short refreshment break. When they returned the facilitators asked them to consider the following question: What are the first steps that individuals and families need to take when a person goes missing? Participants said, trust your instincts—you know your family members best; if it feels wrong it probably is wrong and don't hesitate to begin to plan a response. This should include calling family and friends so that you can begin to document a timeline of sightings and a description of what the person was wearing. They suggested that you should check social media feeds to add depth to the timeline; begin to use social media to spread the word of a disappearance. Participants identified that concerned family members should also review the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and the Sisters in Spirit website. Participants identified the need to work with families to establish a communications strategy. They recommended that families identify community agencies to contact such as public health outreach nurses and police services. They suggested that the local Street Worker Advocacy programs should be contacted if that applied to the situation. They wondered if any of the community agencies had developed a check-list of actions to take in response to a missing family member. They suggested that before families contacted media, they should establish a system for communicating updates. For example, they suggested that the family have one family representative be responsible for speaking with police and media.

They also noted that talking about prevention in your families was necessary. They suggested that individuals be encouraged to check on family members and friends regularly and to encourage young people to use the Find A Friend Apps and GPS on their phones.

After the lunch break, participants were asked: Who are the stakeholder groups and what are their roles in addressing MMIW in Regina and area? Participants identified the justice system, provincial government ministries and local community agencies as important to preventing and responding to incidences of violence directed toward Indigenous women. They concluded that the justice system must challenge the status quo and move more quickly toward significant policy and procedural changes. They stated that the Minister of Social Services needs to prioritize sufficient staffing levels and address staff burnout rates. The Ministry of Social Services needs to increase funding to support families, aligned with the well-documented needs in the province, and offer consistency in file transfers so families don't have to continue to repeat themselves because of the lack of internal communication systems.

Participants suggested that Addictions and Counselling Services required more facilities for treatment, and different forms of addiction and trauma services. They need to ensure culturally responsive care and an increase in ethnic minority and Indigenous counsellors. Participants suggested that new access pathways to service and care that were designed with families and working people in mind would enhance service delivery.

One group suggested that there needs to be a community service hub to encourage inter-agency intervention planning with individuals and families in imminent danger. The other group suggested that while established governments, community agencies, and police services need to demonstrate commitment toward addressing this issue, they didn't want the general public and advocacy groups to feel that they played no role. They suggested that individuals use social media and a unified voice to re-educate

other members of society about the prevalence of violence directed toward Indigenous women. Participants pointed out that we need to mobilize to convince governments to spend the money now on prevention and education; and keep up constant pressure for policy reform.

As our day together drew to a close, facilitators redirected the participants to the final question: What actions are necessary to reduce the rates of violence directed toward Indigenous Women? Respondents reminded one another that change takes time. They called on one another to be dedicated, patient, and persistent. They said that we must work together to redefine notions of masculinity. They suggested that as individuals we needed to break down the dominant notion of individualism and move toward collective responsibility for all people and that we needed to reclaim empathy in our daily lives. Additionally, they suggested that settlers begin from an understanding of Indigenous traditional knowledges to disrupt colonial dominance and that, as Indigenous Peoples, we needed to reclaim, reaffirm, and recreate cultural identities.

Participants said we all have a responsibility to break down stereotypes in public education by liberating the positive stories of Indigenous peoples. They called on one another to establish long-term educational goals that included anti-racism and decolonization. They stated that we needed to educate about violence to transform all of our approaches to physical and sexual abuse; educate within professional programs. They suggested that all learners in K-12 as well as higher education be offered the opportunity to learn in northern, First Nation, and inner-city communities. The participants stated that youth need to be engaged in defining a way forward; one participant suggested that the Canadian Roots Exchange program could be one way of developing youth leaders. Another suggested that all learners should be introduced to diverse Elders; transformative curriculum practices; and should engage members of the dominant group in responding to the question: “What’s in it for us?” Participants did not shy away from challenging dominant colonial knowledges in education. They insisted that we transform the story of Canada to a more honest understanding of our collective colonial history and the resulting contemporary issues. They would like to see us engage in imagining a better Canada by reimagining what it means to be Canadian. Doing so would include a more honest examination of our racist past, white superiority, and ongoing colonialism.

Participants suggested that we utilize social media to tell different stories about Indigenous peoples and to challenge dominant ideas about them. They want us to transform media by telling a variety of stories and to re-centre stories of Indigenous women. They suggested that we could all play a role toward strengthening Indigenous identities and sense of worth and reform the dominant narrative about the lived experiences of Indigenous women.

As well, the participants were informed about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work and the long-awaited final report. The participants suggested that the path forward has to be framed by reconciliation. They suggested that all Canadians need to advocate to close the funding gap for Indigenous programs and to insist on poverty reduction among Indigenous Peoples.

As we drew closure to the day, we called both groups together. We created a circle and they were asked: What is the final message you want policy makers and others to hear? Each participant spoke in turn. One participant stated, “We need to decolonize our minds! We need to stop exoticizing the Indian. We need to teach about contemporary Indigenous lives.” Another affirmed the idea that MMIW were not just an individual issue and that this was a social societal problem. This idea was affirmed by another participant who stated that we have to work together, to create and sustain ally relationships. Someone said, “We need systemic change now,” and another person suggested that we needed resources allocated to redress violence, while the next person suggested we needed policies to address femicide and the institutional supports to entrench those policies.

As the day drew to a close, participants were asked to share one last reflection on the day and to make commitment for a take-away task. Kokum Brenda was asked to close the day with a prayer. As folks left the church, my administrative assistant (Moses Gordon) and I gathered the data together and reflected on the week. In the days that followed, we developed a final report for the Vice-President (Research); this chapter expands on that final report.

I found that the responses offered by the panelists and World Café participants provided helpful approaches to considering how to reform my own curriculum practice. As a professor actively engaged in enhancing our practice of academic Indigenization at the university, I feel that there is much we could be doing differently in relation to academic programming. I offer some suggestions that may be adopted by other universities and colleges.

Decolonizing Universities & Colleges

Universities and colleges need to ensure that academic Indigenization is respectfully resourced, not only financially but also through the creation of positions to drive these reforms. I recommend that faculties provide annual funding to Women’s and Gender Studies programs to develop and deliver MMIW courses. I suggest that university teaching centres promote anti-oppression and anti-racism teaching approaches to build the capacity of faculty to take up troubling dominant curricula and then require faculty to

report on courses that include a critical examination of colonialism in Canada. Teaching centres can promote workshops, events, and activities that support informal learning about Indigenous issues, experiences, and pedagogies.

A quick way to implement structural changes in the university is to ensure that Women's and Gender Studies and Indigenous Studies courses are privileged through naming them first in course catalogue elective offerings. We need to also encourage cross-referencing of courses across discipline to offer greater access and acceptance of Indigenous courses.

A longer term decolonial action would be to reframe the liberal arts to support interdisciplinary inquiry into large issues such as Indigenous land/water rights and on-going settler colonialism. These suggested approaches offer some approaches that could reform higher education in Canada, and they would allow for deeper levels of academic decolonization.

Troubling Curricula through Decolonization

I suggest that, in order for more systemic changes to be achieved, faculty must confront epistemic ignorance and cognitive imperialism through decolonizing practices that include the following: (1) Ensure that courses that address settling Canada also address the systemic racism that underpinned colonization, (2) explore the violence of settlement, and (3) unpack the colonial myth that we are a country founded on multiculturalism. Courses also need to introduce Indigenous worldviews as taught by local Elders and with traditional Knowledge Keepers and should model the use of Indigenous languages to describe concepts and experiences, recognize place names, and explore theory.

In order for faculty to take up decolonial work well, they must be prepared to respond to racisms as it emerges in the classroom. They will also need to be prepared to critique colonial constructions of masculinity and sexual orientation. Building faculty capacity to teach in this way means they will have to compile resource lists that support MMIW teaching and learning. They must also be prepared to seek out new relationships with Indigenous colleagues, guest speakers, public intellectuals/scholars/elders who may help them to continue to grow personally and professionally. Faculty may have to explore alternative pedagogies including arts-based, and Indigenous pedagogy in their own teaching work to reduce trauma and inspire a community of care. These new orientations toward teaching work may lay the groundwork for reforming teaching practices.

Indigenizing Teaching Practices

Indigenizing teaching practice should begin with re-centering Indigenous scholars and scholarship with an emphasis on the voices of women, youth, and members of gender diverse communities. By re-centering these voices, we cannot help but address the issues of gendered violence. Indigenizing teaching practices can also be informed by land-based learning experiences and by interacting with local community organizations, elders, and community members as sources of knowledge.

Conclusion

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Symposium responded to Prime Minister Harper's comment that MMIW issues were "not high on [his government's] radar." Since then, Canadians have seen a change in government, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) release of their Calls to Action (2015), and the completion of a national inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. With so much attention on these issues nationally, we, as educators, must play our part to correct systemic ignorance by actively participating in both institutional decolonization and Indigenization. We must engage in troubling curriculum. To not do so means we fail not only Indigenous Peoples but also fail members of the dominant group who do not understand their roles and responsibilities toward reconciliation.

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1. Author Note: The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Symposium (2015) would not have been possible without the generous support from the Vice-President (Research) at the University of Regina. The chapter is informed by the final report

presented to the Symposium planning committee by the author. The author acknowledges the support provided by Moses Gordon (term administrative assistant) and Mike Dubois (events planner). Moses was instrumental in collating the data gathered during the World Café event.Correspondence concerning this chapter should be addressed to Shauneen Pete, Indigenous Resurgence Coordinator, Indigenous Education Department, Faculty of Education, University of Victoria. ↵

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7.2: Pedagogical Considerations on Teaching “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women from a Global Perspective” 7.2: Pedagogical Considerations on Teaching “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women from a Global Perspective”Edit Update titlecancel

Brenda Anderson[1]

As a non-Indigenous person who has directly benefitted from the colonization of prairie soil into white settler farmland, I am confronted with the question of what roles and responsibilities I now have in my privileged position as a white feminist academic choosing to be a witness to the past and an ally for the future. The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women (MMIW) was the catalyst for turning my questions into action. The repeated horror of listening to news stories and reading posters on pharmacy windows asking, “Have you seen . . . Please call . . .” led me to ask Indigenous women—Elders, activists, mothers and daughters—what key lessons a non-Indigenous ally needs to learn about *standing alongside*, and how those with social privilege *can make space for things to happen*.

This chapter is a practical reflection on my experiences since 2008 of teaching a university course on MMIW with an emphasis on Indigenous and feminist methodologies and pedagogies. I write in the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation process, which has challenged all Canadians to locate themselves in the narrative of colonialism and commit to the full acknowledgement of our joint history, no matter how painful, as a means of beginning reconciliation. I write mainly for those who may wish to teach in this area, as I move back and forth between theoretical questions and personal observations from the classroom. I challenge readers, as I challenge students, to consider whether Canada needs to name our historic and current treatment of Indigenous women as *femicide*, as has been done in countries like Guatemala and Mexico, in order to acknowledge not only the violence but the complicit acceptance of this phenomenon within our social and legal fabric.

Three ethical questions guide my teaching: what are effective steps that can be taught to non-Indigenous allies to facilitate movement through the inevitable but immobilizing “white guilt” to a more productive and accountable position of witnessing or standing alongside; how do we teach about trauma without further traumatizing, particularly for Indigenous students for whom this has tragically become a personal journey or, to put another way, how do we equip our future activists with concrete tools for self-care to prepare them to redress violence and inequity; what theoretical feminist and Indigenous methodologies work well in bringing Indigenous and non-Indigenous students together in community-engaged research. These themes are reflected throughout this chapter as I discuss content and pedagogy. I conclude by offering a sample syllabus for a third-year Women’s and Gender Studies course called MMIW: A Global Perspective.

The course is designed to teach students about the history of colonialism in Canada and its effects on all Canadians in general, but Indigenous Canadians in particular and Indigenous women and girls specifically. A theoretical emphasis on the intersections of racism, sexism, capitalism, and neo-liberalism, among many other layers of oppression, demands that the students and I recognize our own personal location in the oppression or experiences of oppression. The majority of students are females from white settler backgrounds, along with a number of self-identified Indigenous and Métis students, and one or two from more recent immigrant backgrounds. We usually number about thirty students, which is ideal for table-talk exercises designed to blend analysis with personal debriefing opportunities.

From the Local to the Global and Back Again

The course is modelled after the goals and principles that guided a 2008 conference held in Regina, SK on missing and murdered Indigenous women. The conference created a forum for voices to be heard from a variety of social locations and professional perspectives that address this issue with their particular lens; to formulate a global analysis of colonialist gender violence from which we can recognize patterns of violence that occur in Canada; and to care for the whole person in this painful recognition that the problem goes far further and deeper than the individual acts of a few violent men. I bring those principles into the classroom with the 2008 MMIW conference proceedings, *Torn from our Midst: Voices of Grief, Healing and Action from the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women’s Conference, 2008* (Anderson, Kubik, and Hampton 2010). To move forward, we cannot afford to scapegoat any one group in Canada (e.g., police, media, government), lest it mollify our own complicity in a colonialist country. In fact, perspectives from all areas are needed to grasp the full complexity of how a colonialist and sexist nation was originally created and is currently perpetuated. The global nature of colonialist violence against Indigenous women and the subsequent resistance movements clarifies what happens in our own backyard and offers paths forward on redressing the problems.

We begin the semester by locating the history of Indigenous women within Canada's pioneering history through showing their relationship to white settlers. We discuss the Pocahontas-squaw motif described by Janice Acoose in *Iskwewak– Kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses Nor Easy Squaws* to illustrate how and why the fantastical Native is framed in our national imagination as either the noble, exotic savage to be conquered or as the beast of burden to be despised or pitied (49). We move to current media representations of Indigenous women, particularly the stories of victimized women, and pay attention to the language used and the assumptions made. These representations are juxtaposed with personal stories shared by family members who visit the classroom. Journalists also talk with us, and one in particular recounts how her representation of the issue has changed as she became more aware of Canada's history and of the personal stories from families. Journalism students accept the challenge to change the narrative when they enter the workforce. Resisting the historic pattern of blaming the victim is possible when white settler language and assumptions become recognizable and students see the opportunities they have to shape the national narrative of MMIW.

Although I begin the course with Canadian history, I frame violence against Indigenous women in the global context, examining Mexico, Guatemala, and Australia. Moving outside our own frame of reference illustrates that colonialism survives off violence against brown-skinned women everywhere, for even though each country has its own unique history, the violence is replicated in similar ways. For instance, the effects of neo-liberal trade agreements connect misogyny with economics. Activists in Mexico and Canada bring attention to the decline of local artisan's sales, particularly detrimental to Indigenous women, when multinational companies are allowed to become monopolies (Erno 2010, 57). They attest to the governmental and military violence perpetrated in Mexican towns, such as San Salvador Attenco where attempts to remove Indigenous people from their land in preparation for free trade plans, including premeditated kidnapping and raping women (Perez 2010). Pastor Kim Erno's analysis of the effects of neo-liberal economics on Indigenous women pinpoints their vulnerability for "exclusion, exploitation, expulsion, (and finally) extermination" (60). Students are asked to locate if, and where, these stages occur for Canadian Indigenous women.

Mexican gender roles were shaped by eighteenth-century wars between the Spanish, by Catholic conquerors, by the manifest destiny that gave "permission" for American frontiersman to expand and conquer the continental United States (M. Anderson 2007, 22), and by the Mexican revolutionaries. Continuing today as the hegemonic masculine ideal, the *caudillo* (military strong man) became "rooted in the family" as the independent breadwinner in contrast to the idealised feminine of domestic production (Healy 2008, 5). When neo-liberal economics no longer support traditional livelihoods, instead favouring young, easily coerced women as workers in sweatshops (Portillo), traditional machismo roles are displaced and increased domestic violence makes women vulnerable at home as well as at work (Healy 2008, 154). Women's deaths in the *maquiladoras* (sweatshops) in northern frontier cities, such as Ciudad Juarez, have been linked to the lethal blend of frustrated misogyny, neoliberal economics, political corruption, and drug cartels (Bowden 1998).

Recent works on Canadian Indigenous masculinities, such as Sam McKegney's (2014) *MASCULINIDIANS: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood*, mark a similar pattern for Indigenous men. The class discusses displacement of traditional male roles from an economic, social and spiritual perspective. The systemic exclusion, exploitation, expulsion and extermination of Indigenous people through Canada's reserve system, residential "schools,"[2] the 60s scoop, increased foster care and incarceration, and the resulting rise in gangs and exploitative forms of the sex trade and sex-trafficking reads like a global manual on colonialism.

Identifying global patterns of dislocation and alienation from traditional social values encourages students to see Canada's history differently. But distant stories aren't enough, so I invite professionals who work with MMIW to tell about their experiences and tell the stories of missing and murdered Indigenous women. Police officers from the missing persons unit discuss local cases; hearing about the lack of necessary resources and support for family members allow students to see how individuals often struggle within the systems purportedly designed to provide assistance. In contrast, government policymakers from the Saskatchewan Provincial Partnership on Missing Persons have shown what is possible when things are done differently, when all voices, including government official, representative from social organizations, and victims' families, are present at the table (Pottruff 2010). Speakers from local activist groups, such as Sisters in Spirit or Amnesty International, ensure we hear firsthand how systems of governance replicate the oppression against First Peoples generally and Indigenous women specifically. In one three-hour class, students see a PowerPoint presentation with the faces of Indigenous women from Saskatchewan who have gone missing or been murdered, listen to police and provincial government responses, and write names of those who have most recently been taken onto an Amnesty banner. It becomes not just a question of the need for correct information and education, but shows students the measure of power, or lack of power, those who work within government have. The students begin to ask what challenges they will face if they find themselves working in police, judicial, or social work capacities.

What I have observed over the years of teaching this class is the increasing number of Indigenous people employed in the professions who are able to bring their stories of what it is like working within a white-dominated profession on issues that may be near to their own experiences. How it changes the messages and perceptions when an Indigenous journalist or police officer tells the story! That problematic perception of white settlers "helping" Indigenous people dissipates when everyone is understood as an active and essential agent for change. The balance of power is slowly but incrementally shifting, and students take note of that change.

Moving beyond Canada again, the familiar pattern of British colonialism in Australia mirrors the historic violence against Indigenous women here. The racist notion of "breeding out" Indigenous blood inspired the creation of the half-caste system in Australia. It is a jolting reminder of the intentions and consequences of Canada's Indian Act and Bill C-31, particularly in its implications for Indigenous women who experience the double burden of sexist and racist ideologies (2010, 75). My class examines the Australian half-caste "school"[3] system through the 2002 film *Rabbit-Proof Fence* because it opens up space to speak about the potential of re-traumatizing people when their stories are told by outsiders (Noyce 2002). Is it helpful, harmful, or both to recount stories of girls being torn away from their mother's and auntie's arms and driven away to the school when the actors themselves experienced that very trauma when they were girls? Is it okay for a white male director, no matter how sympathetic, to direct Aboriginal girls to "get in touch with the pain" of trying to return to their families when they may suffer from intergenerational trauma?

In the Canadian context, the film *The Healing Circle* describes Canada's residential schools and the complicity of the churches in carrying out the government's program of cultural genocide. The film was created by the Anglican Church of Canada as one of their earlier reconciliation projects. It portrays the history of the schools and their lasting effects on the children and on the adults from whose arms the children were torn, who experienced such a massive cultural disruption in terms of family norms, cultural values, spirituality, languages, governance structures and land-based knowledge. The class discusses intergenerational trauma and connects today's increased domestic violence within Indigenous communities to the unaddressed trauma of the residential school system. The intentionality behind the deliberate actions of the residential school system is stark, and Canadians can no longer wilfully think of the present as an unfortunate and unintended consequence of centuries-old practices.

What students find most disturbing about the film, perhaps, are comments made by the teachers. Although most of the teachers in the film express considerable confusion over why they felt it was the right thing to do at the time, some say it was, and would still be, an appropriate response to "the Indian problem." Naturally, this raises the youthful ire of the classroom. However, it is not as simple as blaming people from the past. Anglican priest Cheryl Toth speaks to this response. She calmly notes to the class,

> While I understand you being upset at those types of comments, as am I, I'd like to suggest that many of us in this room, compelled to be here because of our sense of justice and wanting to make this a better world, might in fact have been amongst those who taught and worked in the residential schools. The sad and frightening fact is that many of those *well-intentioned* people genuinely felt they were helping those children.

This is met with silence because the next logical question is, "what am I doing right now that I think is helpful that might be looked at decades from now with similar horror?" Perhaps this is the strongest message to non-Indigenous students: the best role of an ally is to learn to stand alongside the efforts of those who have experienced the abuse and to ask what they need in order to reconcile the past and move forward.

The compelling notion of deep healing helps move students forward to a new narrative in Canada. To begin helping students discover that narrative, I first contrast it to the concept of deep colonizing as the covert "practices . . . embedded in the institutions that are meant to reverse processes of colonisation" (Rose 1996, 1), which Deborah Bird Rose raises in the Australian context of land claims procedures. She describes Aboriginal peoples' gendered relationships to the land and how deep colonizing continues to erase Aboriginal women when this relationship is ignored in modern land claims court challenges (3). Differentiated sacred spaces traditionally demand women's voices be present at the negotiating table, yet court practice has been to exclude them (4), which neglects knowledge to be gained from understanding which spaces, with their associated rituals, are, indeed, sacred to Indigenous women. Deep colonizing is the erasure of women's presence in sacred rituals and court systems alike under the guise of land claims talks. The questions students can pose in the Canadian context are, what form does deep colonizing take in Canadian legal treaty contestations and environmental challenges? And what does the absence or presence of women at our highest courts say about our national views on Indigenous women?

In contrast, deep healing becomes a form of active witnessing associated with everything from sacred rituals to legal procedures. Family members of the missing and murdered, Elders, and Indigenous leaders require intentional, deep listening from the rest of Canada. How do students imagine deep healing could happen in Canada's court systems during trials relating to missing and

murdered women? How will deep colonizing be replaced by deep healing in the Canadian context? Considering the original narrative, and how that can lead to important questions about systemic erasure of Indigenous women, helps students understand their role in changing harmful practices.

With this wealth of global and national stories interwoven throughout the semester, we arrive at a point where the class debates whether the word femicide fits our national context. My colleague, Leonzo Barreno, originally from Guatemala, describes that country's struggle with drug cartels and female mules (drug couriers who often don't know they are carrying drugs) who disappear along the drug routes to North America. He shows how activists in Guatemala and Mexico define femicide in terms of not only enculturated violence against Indigenous women and girls but also in the nation's complicity with its denial of any systemic problem (2010, 71). A national inquiry in Canada—particularly when led by family members and the findings and recommendations of Sisters in Spirit researchers and backed by legislative deep healing across the country—can redress Canada's femicide. Acknowledging its existence is the first step towards prevents it.

Weaving the local and global contexts together throughout the semester allows students to recognize patterns, reorganize their perspectives and priorities, learn about global efforts to end violence against Indigenous women, and commit to effective decolonizing and deep healing in Canada. The commitment is crucial for the well-being of all who call this land home—Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, settlers, and my students.

Accountability and Belonging in a Classroom Community

Locating ourselves in this issue is a thread throughout the course. I relate my story of growing up in a farming community that did not acknowledge its white privilege. Racism was assumed, rarely challenged. In its best light, this at least affords me an awareness of what white guilt and tears of shame are all about and how, as the late Elder Ken Goodwill advised me, they are neither required nor wanted. I learned that my heritage as the grandchild of a white Scottish settler from Prince Edward Island gives me certain insights into the task of reconciliation. I can tell where other's white privilege turns to white guilt. The class discusses those terms, and how neither can be the default position of an ally. When we learn about a history that has been withheld from us, despite twelve years of grade school and university classes, and learn of its direct consequences in every Canadian life, we often feel rage and shed tears. Tempered, that realization becomes motivational. Untempered, it can lead to dissociation, as evidenced in rhetorical questions like, "how could *they* have done that to other human beings?" Carol Schick and Verna St. Davis note the essential task of pressing students to realize the *they* is *them*, today, now (57). Just as men need to stand alongside feminists, non-Indigenous allies need to move from the historical to the present and from the "tsk tsk" to a personal awareness of, and accountability for, their own white privilege. That transforms pity into deep healing.

White guilt is often accompanied by its fellow traveller, trauma. The potential for triggering students who themselves have suffered from abuse is real. I am not a psychologist, nor should a professor assume a counselling role. What I can provide is a number of ways to become aware of our own trauma. I tell the students I am concerned about the effects that studying trauma has on our classroom community, including myself. I bring in a psychologist to talk about the symptoms of, and responses to, post-traumatic stress disorder. I ask students to carefully consider whether this class is suitable for them given their own experiences. It is not uncommon to have students in the class who have had a family member stolen from them. Students are asked to talk about what they already do in terms of self-care. What are the simple habits we do but usually forget at the peak of semester deadlines? When do we know that we need a break from the topic? We share our simple stories and ways, discuss the efficacies of friendship, support groups, spending time in nature, and, if necessary, speaking with counsellors available at the university. Students are required to continue to assess their own capacity to respond to trauma as part of their journal reflections.

I have to be comfortable with how *making space for things to happen* means relinquishing control. I don't know what the guest speakers are going to say or how the students will respond. Students tell me that they go home to "have a good cry." Sometimes what they hear is upsetting because they don't agree with the speaker—what a wonderful opportunity to analyze the problems! It makes a difference to the students to point out that the fact they are in this class means they are already contributing towards the reconciliation process.

The notions of accountability and belonging within the classroom are often new constructs for students. One transformative learning tool is the interactive "blanket exercise." This was developed by KAIROS to involve people in re-enacting the history and effects of colonialism on First Peoples and can be led by anyone who is comfortable working with groups and with sensitive material. My college has partnered with the Canadian Roots Exchange Program to form a reconciliation team of young adult leaders made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth. The effect of students sitting on blankets, only to be moved or removed from this Turtle Island of blankets as the history is recounted, including a narrative on MMIW, is profound. When followed by a

talking circle, the experience and learning time lead to a very personal accountability. The movement of the body engages and commits the whole person to the story. As one student noted to me, it made her feel physically connected to Canada's history.

This can be a painful experience for Indigenous participants. One student told me that, although his family was affected by the residential schools, he had been kept largely in the dark about the stories. This was the first time he had "felt" the history. Although it is a sobering exercise, it shows what educational decolonization looks like. Acknowledging the past moves the nation forward; the blanket exercise creates witnesses who are now accountable to the decolonizing process. A relationship is established between the past and the present, not to mention between the participants.

Recognizing the intersections of sexism and racism for Indigenous women is heavy work. Intersectional feminist and Indigenous practices both emphasise that the personal is political. Melding the two into Indigenous feminism combines principles of individual rights with social accountability and the theoretical understandings of the intersections of oppression and privilege. Indigenous feminism echoes traditional Indigenous practices, such as the talking circle and the teaching of balancing personal rights with social accountabilities. What has been particularly appreciated by students is my adaptation of Kim Anderson's work from *Life Stages and Native Women: Memory, Teachings, and Story Medicine*. Anderson uses the teachings from Elders to counsel inner city youth about how the four stages in life—birth, childhood, adult, and elder—bring membership and ownership to the whole community. In each stage, a balance is struck between personal accountability and the reciprocal knowledge that one belongs to a caring community. As babies bring joy, they require safety and nurturance. As youth bring energy and new questions, they require teachings and guidance. As the middle-aged provide material wealth, they require their children to be guided and sustained by Elders. Elders bring their time and knowledge; they require care and respect. Feminist? Indigenous? The labels matter not, but the teaching means a blending of the individualist and the collectivist with the aim of a healthy community. This portrayal of the ideal community is offered not to romanticize and locate Indigenous teachings in the past, nor is it to be understood as essentialist or normative. It is offered as non-gendered guiding principles that identify needs and gifts throughout our life journeys. Balancing notions of individual rights with accountability and social duty underscores what powerful decisions students can make in their lives.

An Indigenous feminist approach that redresses issues of violence against Indigenous women is found in Lina Sunseri's book *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization*. Laying the personal stories of women—mothers, daughters, Elders, activists—alongside the history of the Haudenosaunee nation, the book illustrates how Oneida women have negotiated the meanings of traditional womanhood as the drummers of the nation (2011, 16) and by "mothering a nation" (126), with the feminist commitment to non-essentialist gender roles. This understanding is not linked to reproduction but to all who "sustain the community and (support) women's achievement of self-empowerment" (131). The process of students evaluating methods of decolonization situated in women's self-empowerment speaks directly to redressing the vulnerability of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Who are our nation's drummers and mothers?

In her work on "de-centering damage," Indigenous theorist Eve Tuck calls attention to the damage that is done when the focus remains on the victimization of Indigenous people. Not only does it maintain the hegemonic meta-narrative of settler culture as the source of liberation from colonialist policies, language and systems, it instills and perpetuates the victim imagery in its language and very focus. For me, it even raises the question of whether it is appropriate or legitimate for an ally, a non-Indigenous person, to teach this class. Currently, I continue my commitment in the belief that it models a way of moving forward together, but to do this, I have to reiterate my commitment for making space for things to happen. Like Tuck, I believe the answer rests in showing the power within Indigenous knowledge systems and the roles of Indigenous female leaders both historically and currently. Readings, films and guest speakers can bring that forward every single class. Literature by Indigenous authors such as Teresa Marie Mailhot in her 2018 book *Heartberries: A Memoir* resonates with students, as do taped lectures on land and treaty rights by Mi'kmaw lawyer Pam Palmater (Woodrow Lloyd) or videos of the Algonquin *Water Song* (Jerome). Perhaps most importantly, finding ways for students to become involved in local and global Indigenous communities, spiritual ceremonies and activist work inscribes new ways of knowing and might prevent prescriptive colonialist practices. In ways such as these, change does not "rely upon the benevolence of the state or of the dominant in society" (Tuck *Toward* 17). Ultimately, it is my belief that the next person to teach this class must be herself Indigenous. This isn't merely a question of representation, it is about ensuring that we are not content with the consciousness-raising or educational phase of change, but rather, as Tuck again reminds us, be willing to radically question what "change" even means (*I Do Not Want to Haunt You*).

Conclusion

This is the most difficult course that I teach. The reconciliation process that academics can engage in—*must* engage in—makes us all vulnerable, as a nation, as a community, as an individual. But vulnerable to what? To painful and often unresolved stories,

certainly, but also vulnerable to change. A national inquiry on MMIW, the gifts from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the growing leadership from within Indigenous women's circles, means the nation's deep healing work can begin. There is hope. The students who, of their own initiative, bring the REDress Project to campus, who hold awareness nights on MMIW, who faithfully attend the Sisters in Spirit annual vigils, and who demonstrate, ring bells and say, "Not One More! Ni Una Mas!" show that each and every one of us has an integral part to play in countering and ending our nation's legacy of femicide. This is no fairy tale with a guaranteed happy ending, but we are capable of unwinding ourselves from the colonial project, and we are capable of weaving a new future. The evidence is already before us in the writing of this book.

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1. This essay was originally published in Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada and is published here with the permission of Demeter Press. ↵
2. I use quotation marks around school as a form of literary decolonization to raise the question of whether this term should continue to be used given the overall lack of education received by children. For more information on adult's experiences in trying to obtain jobs with their diploma, see Topahedewin: The Gladys Cook Story. For ease of reading, subsequent uses will not use quotation marks, but they are implied throughout. ↵
3. Mission schools in Australia, much like residential schools in Canada, were ways to manipulate and control Aboriginal adults and children. They were political, rather than educational institutions that were open from 1864 to 1964. Successive governments characterized Aboriginal people as “helpless children” who needed to be protected from themselves and integrated into white Australian society (McCallum 2017). ↵

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7.3: Indigenous Women's Literature- The Power and Truth of our Words 7.3: Indigenous Women's Literature- The Power and Truth of our WordsEdit Update titlecancel

Jennifer Brant

Woman's body found beaten beyond recognition.

You sip your coffee

Taking a drag of your smoke

Turning the page

Taking a bite of your toast

Just another day

Just another death

Just one more thing you easily forget

You and your soft, sheltered life

Just go on and on

For nobody special from your world is gone

(Sarah de Vries, shared in Maggie de Vries 2003, 233)

The above words are shared in "a poem that resonates with particular force now that [Sarah] is gone" (233). *Missing Sarah: A memoir of loss* honours the story of Sarah de Vries, one of the women who went missing from the downtown East side of Vancouver. Her sister wrote the memoir describing it as a "collaboration between two sisters, one living and one dead" (268). By drawing on Sarah's journals, Maggie brings forth a powerful message; one that Sarah wanted people to hear. For as Maggie writes "throughout her journals, she addresses a readership. When she wrote, she imagined readers. She imagined you" (xv).

Sarah's words express the lack of value placed on Indigenous women but also serve as a profound call for action. Indigenous women have been actively working to bring the issue of racialized and sexualized violence against Indigenous women and girls to the forefront. They have been doing so through creative acts of resistance such as poetry, literature, artwork, craft, and film. Their work not only raises awareness, demands action, and invokes compassion; it also serves as a counternarrative to the victim-blaming stories often presented about Indigenous women. Within a society that devalues Indigenous women, Sarah's poem demands that Indigenous women and girls are valued. Her poem also addresses an important truth—that too many people turn a blind eye to this crisis.

This chapter prompts readers to delve into the Indigenous women's literature that shares the hard truths expressed in Sarah de Vries' poem. I will reflect on my own experiences teaching Indigenous women's literature courses and offer a glimpse into the literatures that students are called on to theorize. My intent is to share the power and truth of Indigenous women's words and call upon readers to consider the lessons that are embedded throughout their stories. As we work to put an end to the racialized and sexualized violence that threatens Indigenous women and girls, Indigenous literatures must become part of the informed national dialogue.

I first became aware of the extent and severity of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls during my last year as an undergraduate student at Brock University in 2006. Later that same year, our community was planning a twenty-four-hour drum feast to bring awareness to Amnesty International's *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to the Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada* and ultimately to honour our stolen sisters, their families, and promote community healing. Two years later, I began working for student services at the local college where I noticed a poster on the wall of a missing woman from Six Nations of the Grand River, my family's home reserve. I did not know who Tashina General was at the time but coming from the small and close-knit community of Six Nations, I would soon learn that she was well known to family and friends from the Six Nations community.

I completed my master's degree and became more involved in the Indigenous academic community and attending academic conferences. There are many differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous conferences. For example, ceremony and the

presence of Elders and Traditional Knowledge Holders tend to be prominent at Indigenous conferences and the events are opened in a traditional manner to bring attendees together, establish relationship building, and honour the good mind teachings that are important to a successful gathering. A common occurrence during these traditional openings is a moment of silence to honour a young woman or girl who is missing from the local community or the community of an attendee. In these moments, we stand in solidarity and offer our support for the families who have lost a loved one. This is a disheartening reminder of the violence surrounding Indigenous women and girls. The moment of silence is also a constant reminder of the racialized and sexualized violence that all Indigenous women in the room are faced with. The shared threat of violence became strikingly clear as I pursued my research on Indigenous women's educational experiences.

My research involved revealing the barriers that Indigenous women face within university institutions and promoting both access and success. I learned general statistics on Indigenous women in education, and I quickly realized that the statistics I was using in my research mirrored the statistics of both Indigenous women in prison as outlined by the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies as well as Indigenous women who are missing and murdered as documented by Amnesty International. As I did my research, I developed a statement that reflects my reality as an Indigenous woman in Canada.

> As an Indigenous woman in Canada, I can anticipate a life-expectancy rate that is ten years less than that of other women in Canada (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996). Data from the Canadian Population Health Initiative tell me that I belong to the unhealthiest group in the country. As an Indigenous woman, I am likely to earn 30 percent less than non-Aboriginal women. I am three times more likely to contact HIV, and I am five times more likely to die as a result of violence (Amnesty International 2009).

In addition to the above statistics, I can reasonably expect to face racism from police officers, health care professionals, and the children's aid society. In fact, it is reasonable to fear that family and children's services will intervene in my life at some point; as a younger mom this fear was constant. The threat of state apprehension is common among Indigenous women regardless of our credentials as shared by the late Patricia Monture-Angus, lawyer and professor, in her work *Thunder in my Soul: A Mohawk Woman Speaks* (1995). In her book, Patricia shares her own experiences with the child welfare system, describing the time she took her infant son to the hospital for a broken arm, later found to be the result of a bone disorder. Noting that the doctors at the hospital "vigorously pursued the abuse allegation" and "laughed when they heard [her] professional credentials," she described her experience as being "of layer upon layer of racist treatment" (208). Her son was taken from her for eight days. Monture-Angus notes the fear of taking her children to the doctors knowing how easy another allegation of abuse can occur. In a country where Indigenous women are flown into a hospital to have their babies delivered and leave with tubal litigations as a result of being coerced into a procedure following birth, often during moments of vulnerability, the connection between fear and ongoing violence in the places we should feel safe is clear. I understand this threat as an extension of settler colonial violence as I will describe later.

As I moved forward with my research, the continued examples of violence haunted me. I was completing my master's thesis and in my first year as a sessional instructor teaching Indigenous women's literature when I found out that Loretta Saunders, an Inuk woman, was missing. Loretta had been working on her undergraduate thesis on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls when she went missing. Her disappearance brought a new lens to the issue of violence against Indigenous women and girls for the approximately twenty Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in my class. The class was delivered through a seminar style that allowed for engaged discussion and personal connections to course material.

The Indigenous women's literature course highlights the connection between stereotypes in mainstream literature, media and film to the high rates of sexualized and racialized violence against Indigenous women and girls. Extending this, I share the work Indigenous women are doing by counteracting these stereotypes and presenting positive images of Indigenous womanhood. The stories highlight the bravery, the warriorship, and the resilience of our women who overcome extensive tragedy and are still standing tall and sharing beautiful stories of cultural transmission. I have now taught Indigenous women's literature for seven years and other Indigenous-focused courses that cover the topic of violence against Indigenous women and girls. I teach to raise awareness and bring honour to the stories of the women and girls and their families and to position Indigenous women's literature as a counternarrative to racialized, sexualized and colonial violence.

In my first five years of teaching, I would survey the class to find out how many students were aware of the topic. In most classes, only one or two students would raise their hand to indicate they were aware of the extent of the violence. The students who were aware were among the Indigenous students in my class. In my sixth year of teaching, this changed; half of the class, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, raised their hands. For the most part this was because the launch of the National Public Inquiry had been all over the news. Finally a different kind of media coverage, or so I thought.

In August 2014, fifteen-year-old Tina Fontaine disappeared. Her body was later found in Winnipeg's Red River while police were searching for a missing man whose disappearance was unrelated to Tina's. I will not repeat all of the insensitive headlines of the news reports that were released when Tina's body was found, but I would like to highlight the words of Winnipeg's Police Sgt. John O'Donovan who declared, "She's a child. This is a child that has been murdered . . . Society should be horrified" (National Post). Tina's case became part of the push for immediate action as Indigenous women and allies across the country demanded action from the federal government of Canada. On December 8, 2015, the Government of Canada announced plans for the launch of an independent national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The government pledged $53.86 million over the course of two years for the inquiry and held a "pre-inquiry" to seek input from stakeholders across Canada.

In some ways, when I consider that over fifty reports with 700 recommendations have already been put forth, I am reluctant to put my faith in the inquiry. Moreover, we have seen a significant number of commissioners and other staff resign from the commission as it appears this is not the inquiry that Indigenous communities have asked for; Indigenous people and allies have a deep-layered understanding of why Indigenous women and girls remain the target of violence. Indigenous women's narratives echo this understanding, and, through literature, have been calling for attention to the misrepresentations of Indigenous women and girls for well over a hundred years, as I will elaborate below.

The legacy of Tina Fontaine also highlights this deep-layered understanding. Tina was failed by a number of people leading up to her disappearance. For one, she was a child who was in the care of Winnipeg's Family and Children's Services and she was being housed in a hotel with minimal supervision. For a moment, consider the word 'care' and remember that she was, in fact, a child left alone in a hotel room by child protection services. As a mother of a fifteen-year-old, I am horrified and heartbroken when I think about the lack of care for her safety and well-being. Tina was in contact with hospital staff only hours before her disappearance and was a passenger in a vehicle that was pulled over by two officers who let the vehicle go after asking a few questions. The officers allowed this man to drive off with Tina even though she was listed as a missing person.

Earlier this year, the Globe and Mail released a victim-blaming report titled: "Toxicologist testifies Tina Fontaine had drugs, alcohol in system when she died." This report, published on January 30, 2018, is only one more insensitive and shameful response to the death of an Indigenous child. As the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs noted, the article "helps shape the discourse on the bigger issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls." Moreover, as Grand Chief Arlen Dumas wrote, "it isn't until the fourth paragraph that the reporter reveals that the alcohol and THC levels could be artificially high." Further, Arlen Dumas pointed out that "most readers do not read that far into a story. . . . the public opinion has already been formed. It was formed with the headline" (Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, Open Letter).

As an educator on these issues, I am far too familiar with the kind of public opinion that demonstrates the effects of victim-blaming headlines when it comes to issues of racialized and sexualized violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Intertwined within the grand narratives that racialize and sexualize Indigenous women and girls are a slew of other ideas that manifest in the multiple stereotypes reflected in normalized experiences of racism. In *#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women*, stories of the effects of these stereotypes are expressed by Indigenous women. Co-editor Lisa Charleyboy dedicates the collection to "every Indigenous woman who has ever been called 'Pocahontas.'" I have personally been referenced by the name numerous times and, like the contributors of *#NotYourPrincess*, have been on the receiving end of seemingly harmless comments.

Similar stereotypes are initially held by students when they enter my courses. Now, with a distinct shift in the number of students who have heard of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, from one or two to nearly the entire class, I better understand the perceptions they hold about the reasons for violence against Indigenous women and girls in this country. One of the questions that I am often asked is why so many Indigenous women are involved in the sex trade. Yes, some women are involved in the sex trade at the time they go missing; this does not make their lives any less valuable than the lives of other women. The opening poem by Sarah de Vries makes this point clear. However, contrary to what media reporting has led the public to believe, only a percentage of Indigenous women are involved in the sex trade when they go missing. Others are children in state care and some are university students. Making assumptions that perpetuate victim-blaming narratives further removes settlers from the violence, which they believe exists in particular areas from which they are far removed. Perhaps this notion of being far removed allows others to remain untroubled and undisturbed; to completely ignore the violence and easily digest what is happening along with their morning toast as the opening poem by Sarah de Vries points out.

Surely such perceptions are, in part, informed by the prevalent victim-blaming headlines along with a long history of harmful stereotypes against Indigenous Peoples. Some students express their belief that Indigenous men are the perpetrators of the majority of violence against Indigenous women and make remarks about the consequences of the high-risk lifestyles that Indigenous people lead, akin to the "Indian Problem" narrative. Sarah Hunt articulates the connection between the media reports and the "Indian

Problem" narrative by asking: "Why are we so hesitant to name white male violence as a root cause, yet so comfortable naming all the "risk factors" associated with the lives of Indigenous girls who have died? Why are we not looking more closely at the "risk factors" that lead to violence in the lives of the perpetrators?"

As a counternarrative to the "Indian Problem" narrative and the associated stereotypes, I draw on the stories presented within Indigenous women's literature as a pedagogy of humanity and compassion. As Hillsburg (2015) expresses, Indigenous women writers have contributed to a particular kind of literature that brings "their experiences back into focus" while refuting "a long-standing pattern of policies and societal beliefs that naturalize racial segregation, reify the legacy of colonization and ultimately blame Aboriginal women for the violence they confront" (300). Moreover, as Hillsburg explains, settler responses to Indigenous women's writing involves a recognition of the "invisible and unearned privilege that many Canadians enjoy." Indeed, this recognition is certainly part of the counternarrative of Indigenous women's literature.

The Power of Indigenous Women's Words

I position Indigenous women's literature as a counternarrative to the stereotypical representations that continue to be propagated about Indigenous women. I do, however, acknowledge that Indigenous women's literature cannot simply be reduced to a counternarrative as it draws from something much deeper and exists as something much more powerful. Alongside themes of resistance and stories of survival are testimonies of resilience, cultural continuity, rebirth, and renewal. Some writings extend the Indigenous storytelling tradition. Moreover, the contemporary realities of Indigenous women, communities, and families shape Indigenous women's writing in moving and profound ways. The racialization and sexualization and the violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls is expressed in numerous stories that bring back the honour and humanity that is dismissed by the insensitive victim blaming reports. As Lisa Charleyboy expresses in *#NotYourPrincess:* "Too often I've seen, we've all seen, those headlines that send shivers down spines, spin stereotypes to soaring heights, and ultimately shame Indigenous women. Yet when I look around me, I see so many bright, talented, ambitious Indigenous women and girls, full of light, laughter, and love (Foreword).

Other stories do not speak of this violence but present the beauty of Indigenous cultures and the "light, laughter, and love" noted above. Some share memoirs of motherhood, stories of the land, voices of resurgence, and present "a recognition of being" (Anderson 2000) and a strong sense of Indigenous identities that are significantly different from the words that have been written about Indigenous women by others. For Indigenous women, as the late Beth Brant (1994) says, literature becomes a source of power: "Pauline Johnson's physical body died in 1913, but her spirit still communicates to us who are Native women writers. She walked the writing path clearing the brush for us to follow. And the road gets wider and clearer each time a Native woman picks up her pen and puts her mark on paper" (7–8).

The following quotations are from an Anthology titled *Reinventing The Enemy's Language: Contemporary Women's Writings Of North America.* I share them here to express the depth of Indigenous women's literature and to highlight the shared realities that call Indigenous women to write; the anger, the passion, and the wisdom:

> "The purpose of my writing has always been to tell a better story than is being told about us. To give that to the people and to the next generations. The voices of the grandmothers and grandfathers compel me to speak of the worth of our people and the beauty all around us, to banish the profaning of ourselves, and to ease the pain. I carry the language of the voice of the land and the valiance of the people and I will not be silenced by a language of tyranny." Jeannette Armstrong, Okanagan

"I write for the same reason that mountain climbers do what they do: because it's there. As a younger woman, I remember a few dreadful weeks when I wept and raged because all I did was write when there were so many ills to correct, so much to be done. Eventually, I came to understand that the pen is mightier than the law books, and that the image is where the action is begotten." Paula Gunn Allen, Laguna Sioux

"Ultimately, writing is a process of confronting what is human in oneself as well as in others. Good, honest writing makes us tell the truth about the oppressor and the oppressed in us all. This is also why we must write about "all our relations." Emma LaRocque, Cree and Métis

"I write about the issues that trouble me, stories of my family and my people and myself that keep me awake at night, the stories that call me to drive dark roads at midnight, to return again to the small lakes and streams that are lit by moonlight. I write to find understanding, to find peace. I write in the hope that I will give voice to those who have never had an opportunity to tell their stories. I write to give voice to myself." Debra Earling, Flathead

To further express the depth of Indigenous literature, I draw on the following passage shared in 1994 by Beth Brant:

> "The amount of books and written material by Native people is relatively small. Yet, to us, these are precious treasures carefully nurtured by our communities. And the number of Native women who are writing and publishing is growing. Like all growing things, there is a need and desire to ensure the flowering of this growth. You see, these fruits feed our communities. These flowers give us survival tools. I would say Native women's writing is the Good Medicine that can heal us as a human people." (9)

Since these words were shared in 1994, the number of books and written material by Indigenous women has certainly grown and continues to fill our bookshelves and feed our spirits. As Maria Campbell writes in the Foreword to Kim Anderson's (2016) *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood:*

> When I published *Halfbreed* in 1973 there were very few books about Native people and even less written by Native authors. I could walk into any bookstore and buy all the titles— and I did—saving money, going without so I could buy native authors' works. I did this because I was hungry to see myself and my people. Today I cannot go into a bookstore and buy all the books written by Native authors, as there are so many. Thousands in fact, and it is those books that have given me strength and inspiration to continue my work. (xi)

Campbell's work draws attention to the empowerment that comes through Indigenous literature. As she wrote, "recognition is powerful." Her work documents and positions Indigenous women's literature within a long history of confronting the colonizers and moving Indigenous women to action by organizing and marching. Campbell recalls the feelings that were stirred during a reading of nineteenth-century Mohawk poet Tekahionwake's (E. Pauline Johnson) *The Cattle Thief* at a 1990 women's gathering in Edmonton, AB. Campbell describes being "woken up" by the keynote speaker Maryanne LaValley who shared stories of Indigenous women, the aunties, the grandmothers, and the songs they shared. As Campbell noted, by the end of the day, they were so moved that they had organized a march to the legislature building. This is the power of Indigenous women's literature. It propels us into action by naming injustices and presenting or reawakening a strong "recognition of being." I have witnessed students in my class become propelled to action upon learning about the shared experiences of violence Indigenous women and girls face and organizing events on campus to spread awareness. Other students have now published work including academic essays and poetry to continue to spread that awareness.

Deconstructing the Squaw/Princess Binary

"Her ears stung and she shook, fearful of the other words

like fists that would follow. For a moment, her spirit drained like

water from a basin. But she breathed and drew inside her fierce

face and screamed until the image disappeared like vapour"

(Marilyn Dumont cited in An anthology of Native Canadian Literature, 436–437).

The above words are part of Marilyn Dumont's *Squaw Poems,* a poem in which she writes *"Indian women know all too well the power of the word squaw"* (437).

The princess/squaw binary that reduces Indigenous women's humanity through racialized and sexualized objectification is certainly not part of our own recognition of being but rather something imagined by the colonizer's gaze. However, this gaze filters into the everyday threat of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Within this context we understand what Beth Brant meant by the "survival tools" of Indigenous women's literature. The extent of the princess/squaw binary is the tragic and disheartening reality of the horrific numbers of Indigenous women who go missing. E. Pauline Johnson wrote about these stereotypes 125 years ago. In an essay titled "A Strong Race Opinion: On The Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," which was originally published in the Toronto Sunday Globe on May, 22 1892, Johnson spoke out about the images of the "Indian squaw" that were presented in mainstream literature and called on writers to move beyond their fantasies of Indigenous women: "Above all things let the Indian girl of fiction develop from the 'doglike,' 'fawnlike' 'deer- footed' 'fire-eyed' 'crouching,' 'submissive' book heroine into something of the quiet, sweet womanly, woman she is, if wild, or the everyday, natural, laughing girl she is, if cultivated and educated; let her be natural, even if the author is not competent to give her tribal characteristics (163) as cited in Fee and Nason).

Similarly, in her book, *Iskwewak — Kah'Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws* (1995), author Janice Acoose also draws attention to the racialized and sexualized legacy of settler colonialism that has led to an acceptance of violence. As Acoose wrote, these colonial attitudes have justified many of the legally sanctioned policies that have targeted Indigenous women and families, such as the Indian Act and residential schools. Indigenous women's literature bring the effects of

Canada's deep history of settler colonialism on Indigenous families and communities to the forefront to shape understandings of the pervasive mindset that fosters violence against Indigenous women and girls.

Indigenous women's literature—including autobiographies, short stories, and poetry—expresses the social, historical, colonial, and political contexts of Indigenous women's identities. The literature also includes Indigenous maternal identities, contemporary realities, and connections between the two. Powerful autobiographies include Maria Campbell's (1973, restored edition 2019) *Half-Breed* and Morningstar Mercredi's (2006) *Morningstar: A Warrior's Spirit*, which showcase the life stories of the authors who overcame oppressive forces that led them to prostitution and addictions and of their journeys toward recovery that brought them to their vocations as writers, mentors, and frontline workers. Beatrice Culleton's *In Search of April Raintree* (1983) and *Come Walk With Me* (2009) offer powerful narratives that highlight hardships to which many Indigenous women can relate and also inspire hopes and dreams through examples of perseverance. The short stories of Lee Maracle and Beth Brant weave in cultural and historical memory and connect it with contemporary realities. Poetry, from the earlier works of Pauline Johnson to the works of Chrystos, Marcie Rendon, and Marilyn Dumont to the recent works of Lesley Belleau, Katherena Vermette, and Sara General present cultural teachings that connect past, present, and future. Indigenous women's literature also provides a space for presenting queer Indigenous theory by drawing on the work of scholars such as Beth Brant (1988) and Chrystos (1988). For me, this body of Indigenous women's literature has become a teaching tool that inspires cultural identity development while also complicating the patriarchal influences that have suppressed the variations of gender performativity within Indigenous communities. Indigenous women's literature also offers a space to consider the threat of settler colonial violence, specifically a particular kind of hyper-masculinity that is rampant throughout society. Unfortunately, it is still not a recognized part of the threat by reporters and politicians as Sarah Hunt points out: "It seems that while reporters and politicians feel entitled to weigh in on what First Nations should do to address this issue, they are unwilling to name what is right in front of them. They are unable to see the culture of whiteness that excuses violence against Indigenous women and girls by blaming Native people for the violence they face" (2014).

A hyper-masculinity is now being confronted by Indigenous scholars who consider the ways in which it implicates Indigenous wellbeing (for example, see Innes and Anderson 2015). Through such work, Indigenous literatures help bring wholistic understandings of settler violence against Indigenous women and girls to the forefront. The power of Indigenous women's literature is such that it not only moves us to action but it unravels deeply ingrained misperceptions about our daily lives and serves as a pedagogy of humanity and compassion.

Indigenous Women's Literature: **A Pedagogy of Humanity and Compassion**

"To begin to understand the severity of the tragedy facing Indigenous women today you must first understand the history." Nick Printup, Director and Producer of "Our Sisters in Spirit."

The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada is as old as the development of Canada itself and must be understood within the historical context of settler colonialism that has led to the ongoing racialization and sexualization of Indigenous women. Historically, Indigenous women were sexualized and held against dangerous cultural attitudes that defined them as promiscuous and dangerous. Today, these stereotypes permeate many facets of Canadian society and Indigenous women and girls continue to be sexualized. My Indigenous women's literature course begins with reading Janice Acoose's (1995) *Iskwewak Kah'Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws,* providing an opportunity for the students to learn about White-Euro-Canadian-Christian-Patriarchy (WECCP) institutions and their associated ideological forces that have interfered with the lives of Indigenous women. Acoose writes about her points of contact with WECCP institutions throughout her life and connects the authority of WECCP institutions to the negative images of Indigenous women that have been expressed and maintained throughout mainstream Canadian literature. According to Acoose, literary representations describing Indigenous women as lewd, licentious, dissolute, dangerous, or promiscuous, along with those that lean more towards the polar opposite Indian Princess representation, trap Aboriginal women within a Squaw/Princess binary; one that simultaneously renders Indigenous women's identities highly visible and invisible. Indeed, such ideologies continue to inform public notions of Indigeneity through the troubling headlines noted earlier. As Acoose writes: "Indigenous women are misrepresented in images that perpetuate racist and sexist stereotypes. . . . [T]hose images foster cultural attitudes that encourage sexual, physical, verbal, or psychological violence against Indigenous women. Stereotypic images also function as sentinels that guard and protect the white eurocanadian-christian-partriarchy against any threatening disturbances that might upset the status quo" (55).

Acoose explicitly connects the derogatory images of Indigenous women presented in mainstream literature to the racialized and sexualized violence we continue to face. To explain this further she notes, "In much of canadian literature, the images of Indigenous women that are constructed perpetuate unrealistic and derogatory ideas, which consequently foster cultural attitudes that legitimize rape and other kinds of violence against us" (71). This is further clarified through the story of Helen Betty Osbourne

who was a nineteen-year-old student when she was abducted by four white men and killed in 1971. As Acoose explains, the young men who killed her were influenced by particular cultural attitudes and she draws on the Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba that notes: "the attackers seemed to be operating on the assumption that Aboriginal women were promiscuous and open to enticement through alcohol or violence. It is evident that the men who abducted Osbourne believed that young Aboriginal women were objects with no human value beyond sexual gratification" (70). It took sixteen years for any charges to be laid in the death of Helen Betty Osbourne and only one of the four men who abducted her was charged. As Holly McKenzie (2010) points out, such cases set a dangerous precedence as "these men may also choose to attack Indigenous women based on the assumption that they will not be held accountable by the justice system because of the indifference of white-settler society to the well-being and safety of Aboriginal women" (144). McKenzie's work connects this to Indigenous women's exclusion from Canadian society that has pushed women into vulnerable situations such as homelessness, poverty, and sex work.

The Violent Erasure of Indigenous Women and Girls

"Indian women 'disappear' because they have been deemed killable, able to be raped without repercussion, expendable. Their bodies have historically been rendered less valuable because of what they are taken to represent: land, reproduction, Indigenous kinship and governance, an alternative to heteronormative and Victorian rules of descent. Theirs are bodies that carry a symbolic load because they have been conflated with land and are thus contaminating to a white, settler social order." (Audra Simpson 2014, 156)

As Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, Cree lawyer and honourary doctorate expresses, "It is women who give birth both in the physical and spiritual sense to the social, political and cultural life of the community" (cited in Anderson 2007, 774). Her words describe the power of matrilineal and egalitarian societies that honour the role of Indigenous women. Consider this statement in light of the well-known Cheyenne Proverb: "A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground. Then it is done, no matter how brave its warriors nor how strong its weapons." These two statements on their own tell of the vulnerability of Indigenous Peoples when women are targets of violence; together they illuminate the intentions of settler colonialism and the multiple attacks on Indigenous women through both legislated policy and the dangerous ideologies that have governed the development of "Canada." Indeed, the ennoblement of the stereotypical beliefs and the associated policies that control Indigenous women's bodies have a long history rooted in assimilation and dispossession of land.

I familiarize students with the work of Sarah Carter (2008) who documented the increasing segregation of Indigenous peoples and settlers and described the 1880s as a time when there was a "sharpening of racial boundaries and categories" and "an intensification of racial discrimination in the Canadian West" (146). As Carter points out, assimilationist policies were justified by images of Indigenous women as "dissolute, dangerous, and sinister" (147) and these negative images were promoted by government officials, political leaders, and the national press. Students learn that these representations are not only upheld by WECCP institutions, but they have been used to justify many of the legally sanctioned policies that have targeted Indigenous women. If Indigenous women were deemed dangerous and promiscuous, the policies designed to control them were welcomed by settler society. I raise these conversations in the classroom to identify this particular form of racism and structural violence as ongoing and position it as a platform for understanding contemporary realities that continue to target Indigenous women and girls today. Indeed, as the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls concluded in a supplementary report: "Genocide is a root cause of the violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and girls, not only because of the genocidal acts that were and still are perpetrated against them, but also because of all the societal vulnerabilities it fosters, which leads to deaths and disappearances and which permeates all aspects of Canadian society today" (8).

Students learn about the gender discrimination embedded in The Indian Act of 1876, with emphasis on Section 12(1)(b)—the removal of status upon marriage to a non-status man; repealed in 1985 under Bill C-31 and they come to understand the ongoing forms of gender discrimination that still exist in the Indian Act today. Students learn about the eugenics movement, which involved the forced sterilization of women deemed unfit to have children. They learn that Indigenous women were specifically vulnerable to these racist and sexist procedures and often deemed unfit to have children. The Sexual Sterilization Legislation in Canada was repealed in 1973, however cases of forced and coerced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada continues today (Boyer and Bartlett 2017). Students learn that the pass system of 1882 to 1935 was created to control Indigenous movement off the reserve. Without a pass from the Indian Agent, Indigenous men and women could not leave their reserve. This severely limited their access to resources and employment opportunities and left them in positions that further justified intervention from family and children's services. Students also learn that the residential school system and the Sixties Scoop were attacks on the very rights of Indigenous women to mother their own children. Policies against Indigenous women were deeply entrenched in gender discrimination in the Indian Act. This continued through the pass system, residential schools, and the Sixties Scoop. They were the result of deliberate

and forceful efforts to assimilate Indigenous Peoples by restricting their movement to reserve lands so that development and settlement could quickly take place by non-Indigenous settlers across Turtle Island. This is a form of structural violence described as a deliberate "tool of genocide" (Leanne Simpson 2017). Many years later, the trend of targeting Indigenous women and girls continues and is reflected in the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in child protective services, the lack of protection for Indigenous women and girls, and the disproportionate rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Thus, as Acoose expressed, the dangerous ideologies embedded in mainstream literature media and film serve a purpose, one that is indeed connected to the racialized and sexualized violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls today.

The stories shared in Indigenous women's literature expose the everyday experiences of racism that are deeply rooted in the aforementioned history of Indigenous and settler relationships. As an example of what I mean by everyday experiences of racism, Francine Cunningham (2017) shares her experience in a poem entitled "A Conversation with a Massage Therapist," noting some of the comments that I think many Indigenous women have heard on multiple occasions. Her entire poem resonates with my own personal experiences in numerous settings. The poem describes a conversation with a massage therapist where a woman is asked about her identity, told she does not really look "Native," asked if she lives on a reserve and then told she is not a real "Native." When the woman explains she is pursuing a master's degree the response is "good thing you got the taxpayers to pay for it" and then told, "you're not a drunk or anything, good for you" (59). It is important to understand that these kind of offensive interactions take place so often and are not isolated incidents. Offensive comments similar to those noted above are made by educators, officers of the law, and health care professionals and reflect a grand narrative about the racialized and sexualized perceptions of Indigenous women. . This deep-seeded narrative remains rooted in the dominant colonial mindset and has existed for many generations. Keep in mind, this is the mindset that exists among the very people who Indigenous women and girls are expected to trust and turn to for safety This is evident in a 2012 interview with an RCMP officer and an Indigenous girl who was reporting a sexual assault. A video of the troubling two-and-a-half-hour interrogation was released in 2019 showing an RCMP officer asking the young girl if she was turned on by the rape and questioning the truth of her story.

As Maria Campbell declared during her opening address at the 2008 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women's Conference held in Regina, SK, "Patriarchy and misogyny are so ingrained in our society, and our silence makes them normal." These words describe the society we live in today: A society where women disappear and nobody seems to have seen or heard anything. The aforementioned Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba made this silence evident as it took 16 years for anyone to be charged with the death of Helen Betty Osbourne who was killed in 1971. In the same province today, Indigenous communities call for justice into the death of Tina Fontaine. There is a deafening silence that perpetuates the violence against Indigenous women and girls. The numbers of students I have taught over the years who had not heard of the Stolen Sisters report or the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls awareness are testament to this silence.

The slogan "Silence is Violence," highlighted on Amnesty International's 2004 *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to the Discrimination and Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada*, takes on a deeper meaning for students who are urged to reflect on the silencing of Indigenous women in spite of their powerful roles in matriarchal and egalitarian societies. I urge students to think critically about the Indigenous leaders written about or documented more widely throughout history. Names like Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse usually come to mind. The erasure of Indigenous women from dominant Canadian narratives is evident in the words of Marcie Rendon, Anishinaabe: "My own grandmothers have no names, their heroic actions erased from history's page. Freedom stories left untold . . . shared only in the deepest dreams. In lessons to the world, the enemy has recorded our greatest warriors' names: Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Geronimo, Cochise. Resistance fighters all . . . yet my own grandmothers have no names, their heroic actions erased from history's page."

I ask my students to consider the names of Indigenous women throughout history and the students usually name Pocahontas but no one else comes to mind even though they many played valuable and very powerful roles in traditional societies; there are few stories known to my students of Indigenous women leaders throughout history. To extend my argument and connect it to the binary described earlier, the story of Pocahontas that is most familiar to my students is one in which she is presented as the young highly sexualized virginal princess. By drawing on the squaw/princess binary that imprisons Indigenous women, I express the importance of literature written by Indigenous women as expressions of traditional and contemporary identities that provide true representations of Indigenous womanhood. With the story of Pocahontas, for example, Beth Brant (1994) offers a different version in "Grandmothers of a New World" where Pocahontas is described as a woman of authority who fought for her Nation until her final days. By deconstructing mainstream literature, Indigenous women can find liberation from the false images perpetuated by the squaw/princess binary (Acoose 1995) and today more and more Indigenous women writers take on this role.

Prevailing Attitudes toward Indigenous Women

In July 2015, two paintings appeared on a storefront window during the Hospitality Days cultural festival in Bathurst, New Brunswick. One painting depicted two Indigenous women with their hands tied behind their backs, their ankles tied and their mouths forced shut with what appeared to be duct tape. These images appeared during the height of the push for a National Public Inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. In response, social media backlash prompted the removal of the images. In an article published by The Halifax Media Co-op Miles Howe documented the reaction of Patty Musgrave, one of the hosts of the local annual Sisters in Spirit Vigil and Indigenous Student Advisor for New Brunswick Community College. Musgrave wrote a letter to city council "to address the appalling disregard to First Nation people in [New Brunswick] and across the country" and expressed that the paintings trivialized violence against Indigenous women. According to Musgrave, after an apology that links readers to the legend of the phantom ship, a sincere and suitable apology should be made as well as further action including consultation with Indigenous communities prior to such images being presented. President of the Bathurst Art Society, Rita May Gates expressed "We just didn't think at the time that the images would be painful and upsetting and of course we do respect their culture and stories very much. This depiction does open thought and dialogue regarding the plight of Aboriginal women, the abuse and femicide they have suffered over the centuries. We just send prayers for hope and healing going out to First Nations' people. It was never our intention to hurt anyone" (Howe 2015).

The issue of the paintings, especially at the height of the push for the national public inquiry demonstrate that there is much work to be done in many facets of society as prevailing attitudes have not changed much since the time when E. Pauline Johnson published "A Strong Race Opinion: On The Indian Girl in Modern Fiction," in May 1892. Nor have we seen an answer to the calls for justice into the death of Helen Betty Osbourne in 1971 that prompted the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba. Today, families across the country call for justice for Tina Fontaine and the thousands of Indigenous women and girls who have gone missing since contact.

Conclusion

A mother that wakes and finds her babies gone

A young girl with blood down her thighs

A grandmother without any daughters left

And a lone woman under a man that she loves

Breathing to the drum of one heart

And giving themselves to morning

To wash this all away and return to a place like home

Where these things never happen

Where men don't take these women

(Belleau, 55)

In *IndianLand* Lesley Belleau shares poems of home, of memory, and of missing Indigenous women and girls. Lesley's poetry is a profound expression of the home that Indigenous women and girls have always called Turtle Island and her words are testament to the memories that echo throughout the land and reverberate within our waters. In her poem Niibinabe she asks, "how many missing and murdered Indigenous women are there? . . . [f]amilies and memories speak thousands and thousands until our lips are closed." She asks readers to "Imagine a woman. Your mother. Imagine a woman that created your first stories. And then she is gone" (47).

For Indigenous women, Belleau's poetry resonates all too well. The extent to which stories of settler violence against Indigenous women are deeply rooted within Indigenous literatures tells us that these are not isolated incidents. Rather, they are powerful expressions of the violence that threatens all Indigenous women and girls. Settler violence is indeed a sociological phenomenon that has taken place on these lands since contact because theft of Indigenous lands has become intertwined with theft of Indigenous women's bodies.

Beth Brant's (1994) description of Indigenous women's writing as "recovery writing" against repeated attempts of "cultural annihilation" at the hands of the "State" (18), highlights Indigenous women's literature as a "survival tool" that serves as a weapon against colonial violence. In a recent class, a student furthered this sentiment by describing Indigenous women's literature as a powerful source of protection and spiritual medicine against the collective threat of violence. By serving as both a pedagogy of

humanity and compassion, and a weapon of protection, Indigenous women's literature calls attention to this ongoing and pervasive threat of settler violence and reawakens us to a time when "Turtle island women had no reason to fear other humans" as shared by Lee Maracle in *Daughters are Forever*.

I will end by drawing attention to the Haudenosaunee narrative "Thunder Woman Destroys the Horned Serpent" as described to me by Alyssa M. General and the stories of Jikonsaseh as shared by Sara General in *Spirit and Intent: A collection of short stories and other writings*. Inspired by Alyssa's artwork that covers the front of *Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada*, I consider the Haudenosaunee story of Thunder Woman to be a story of strength, determination, and protection. Thunder woman destroyed the horned serpent, offering a profound lesson about the threat of patriarchal violence and the strength and power of Indigenous women to call an end to colonial violence. Not only does the story of Thunder Woman teach us that we are survivors and we carry the strength to overcome the forces that bring danger into our lives, but it also teaches us that this is a collective strength. I was reminded of this vision of a collective strength when I read Sara General's short stories about Jikonsaseh who is referred to as the Peace Queen. As Sara eloquently expresses, in the work that Indigenous women are doing to collectively bring us back to a time of peace, safety, and love when we can freely write our stories, create our art, sing our songs, dance our dances, and speak our languages, perhaps Jikonsaseh is a part of all of us. Her legacy lives through us and, like Thunder Woman, our literatures will help us to destroy the horned serpent. Through connections of the past, present, and future, Indigenous women's literature shares deep-layered understandings of a long history of colonial violence through stories that bring humanity and compassion and honour the legacies of our missing women and girls. I dedicate this chapter to the spirit of Tina Fontaine and all of our missing sisters, daughters, aunties, and mothers. Their stories leave us with a powerful legacy of hope as we continue to do this work by destroying the horned serpents, naming the genocide we continue to face, and collectively calling for justice.

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7.4: Indigenous Masculinities- A Reflection 7.4: Indigenous Masculinities- A ReflectionEdit Update titlecancel

Danielle Jeancart

“You can’t understand the world without telling a story . . . there isn’t any centre to the world but story. . . . The thing I remember mostly about stories—whoever was telling them: my grandmother, my uncles, the kids, even my mother—the thing that I remember most vividly is the idea of being set free.”

-Gerald Vizenor

Tanshi, I am a Metis/Cree-Ukrainian woman originally from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. I work as the Coordinator of ê-sihtoskâtoyahk Indigenous Students’ Centre at Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Saskatoon Campus, but I have also developed and delivered a university course on Indigenous masculinities at Luther College, University of Regina. My course examines the ways that historical and contemporary constructions (or stereotypes) of Indigenous masculinity in popular culture have shaped Canadian society’s understanding of what it means to *act as* and *be* an Indigenous male in this country, particularly in the west. Students engage with and deconstruct colonial history, examining events and ideas like Indigenous autonomy, the settlement of the West, the construction of isinamowin (the Cree term for “Whiteman’s Indian”) in literature and film, and the ways Indigenous resistance movements over the past two hundred years have been framed by media discourse.

When I was invited to create a reflection piece about this course and my thoughts on Indigenous masculinities, I thought, “Easy enough, right? I can simply look at my syllabus and course notes, and it will all come together in some sort of coherent and eloquent way.” But months went by with little progress; finally, I decided to go and talk to the person who normally can help me through my writer’s block: my father, Gerald. I asked him, “How do I write about this? It all feels too technical and I don’t know what to say.”

He looked over my outline and agreed with me. He told me, “It looks like you’re missing the most important thing: how did you get here? Why did you do all this in the first place? You need to tell the story.”

The Story[1]

Growing up in Northern Saskatchewan in the ‘80s and ‘90s, I didn’t want to be Indigenous. Like in many small towns, racism towards First Nations and Métis Peoples was alive and well, and as a child I tried to hide the fact that my father, his siblings, and my grandparents were not white. Cultural days at school involved my toting a large picture of my Ukrainian great-grandparents to class or chatting about my French ancestry. And because I had fair skin, I only really had to confront the reality of my ethnicity when I was around my father or when we visited relatives in Prince Albert and Edmonton. Coming home from these visits, I always felt a great deal of shame—not because I didn’t love my family, but because I had come to associate being Indigenous with poverty, mental illness, alcoholism, and stories of violence. And while that was neither fair nor true, try telling that to a ten-year old who desperately wanted to live in the suburbs.

By the time I was a teenager, I realized that The Brady Bunch wasn’t really a thing and that people in the suburbs were dysfunctional too. I started identifying as ‘Aboriginal’ because that’s how my father identified, but there was a disconnection between what I said I was, and what that actually meant. I knew that my ancestors were originally from Red River and later settled in Green Lake, but that’s all I knew. My family seemed not to know why or how they came to be there, and if they did know, they weren’t talking. This included my grandfather, John Jeancart, who later became a focal point in my research on Indigenous masculinities. I remember, as a child, visiting his small cabin in St. Cyr. He would often speak French to me even though I didn’t understand him. But what I did comprehend, even at a young age, was his emphatic rejection of his own Indigeneity, often expressed in viewpoints that were prejudiced and bigoted towards First Nations and Métis peoples. His ideas about the world made for a strained family relationship, and over time my family grew increasingly estranged from my grandfather. This dynamic, coupled with an almost non-existent Indigenous curriculum in elementary and high school, only served to deepen my sense of how much I didn’t know.

It wasn’t until I began my undergraduate studies at the University of Regina that I first learned about colonization—oddly enough in an English literature course that focused on anti-colonial narratives and taught by a professor who had a profound impact on my academic life, Dr. Florence Stratton. From there, I gravitated towards Indigenous Studies, taking as many courses as I could. And while I learned a great deal, I found myself frustrated at times with some of the course content because I didn’t understand how my family’s history fit into the larger narrative of colonization. Much of the history and many of the works that I read didn’t speak to

the urban Indigenous experience or account for the stories of those who had become disenfranchised. This left me at times feeling exasperated: I wanted more than anything to be able to explain to my family why things were the way they were.

Looking for a deeper perspective on these issues, I started to consume works written by Indigenous women, particularly writers like Maria Campbell, Kim Anderson, Emma LaRocque, and Dawn Martin Hill. It was their writing that inspired me to pursue a graduate degree in Indigenous Studies at Trent University, with the goal of exploring Indigenous feminism and literature. But a course specifically looking at Indigenous women's issues actually provided the idea to shift the focus of my research to Indigenous masculinities. We had just finished reading Brendan Hokowhitu's article "Tackling Māori Masculinity: A Colonial Genealogy of Savagery and Sport," in which Hokowhitu "deconstruct[s] one of the dominant discourses surrounding Māori men—a discourse that was constructed to limit, homogenize, and reproduce an acceptable and imagined Māori masculinity" (Hokowhitu 2004, 262). Hokowhitu's discussion examines not only the ways in which many Māori men internalized such social and cultural constructions as a hyper-masculine physicality and "natural" Māori athleticism, but also how these constructions of masculinity become normalized by wider society. I had so many questions: how could this analysis relate to the construction of gender and sexuality in Canada? How have educational and governmental policies, as well as media discourse, contributed to creating notions of Indigenous male identity right here at home? Back in 2009, not a great deal of study had been performed in this area. I decided to switch the focus of my graduate work to masculinities, and while my professor, Dr. Paula Sherman, thought it was a great idea, she advised me that I needed to go about it in the right way, so as not to appropriate the stories of Indigenous men. With advice from my graduate advisor and my father, I decided that the most ethical way to pursue this area of study was to ground the research in my own familial narrative—*how did negative portrayals of Indigenous men impact my family's ideas of masculinity?*

In the summer of 2009, my parents, my brother, and I hopped in the car to do field research. We drove to Glen Mary, pêhonân, Winnipeg, St. Boniface, and Edmonton, exploring archives and cemeteries along the way. I spoke with my grandmother, Theresa Jeancart (nee Umpherville), and interviewed family members about their views on masculinity. They shared with me their thoughts, any genealogy or documents they had, and their stories from the past. I couldn't speak to my grandfather, as he had passed away in 2005. But he left behind numerous journals and manuscripts—including fiction that he wrote between the 1950s and the 1970s. From all of this shared knowledge and my grandfather's writing, I pieced together a narrative—one that unearthed a rich family history that had been deeply impacted by colonization.

My grandmother, Theresa, was originally from pêhonân. Her grandfathers were at the signing of Treaty 6 and took part in the Northwest Resistance. In the 1940s, however, her immediate family was relocated under the aegis of the provincial government's "rehabilitation" program, where they moved Métis peoples—those the government deemed destitute—to a newly formed colony at Green Lake. This was a program designed to get rid of the 'Indian problem' down south, in hopes that northern living would somehow 'civilize' the Métis peoples.

My grandfather, John, was originally from Jackfish, later moving to Green Lake when his father Fernand, a Belgian immigrant, was looking for work. He married Agnes Louisa Nolin, and I was told that all of their six children could speak Cree and French before they learned English. They were, however, sent to Catholic school where they stopped speaking Cree and were taught Latin instead. Fernand was not a kind man, and although he was married to a Cree/Métis woman, he would often make negative comments and perpetuate stereotypes about Indigenous peoples, further making harmful distinctions between "half-breeds" and the French Métis. Agnes' family was from Red River. Her ancestors were fur traders who settled at Red River Colony around 1815. They were active members of the community throughout the 1800s, from education and politics, to acting as interpreters and participating in the buffalo hunt.

By the 1950s, my family's stories of resistance and our connection to the land had faded due to the impacts of colonization and the inherent racism in the educational and political systems in which my family found themselves. Their stories of resilience were not captured by historians of the past, and that, coupled with the commodification of negative portrayals of First Nations and Métis peoples in popular culture, caused many Indigenous peoples, including members of my family, to feel disconnected from and/or ashamed of their past, culture, and stories.

This experience became integral to my research on Indigenous masculinities and culminated in my masters thesis, *Imposed Identities: The Colonial Construction of Indigenous Masculinity* that I defended in 2012. In 2013, I was back living in Saskatchewan and was asked by Luther College to create and develop a course on my thesis work. This was an opportunity for me to not only teach Indigenous history but to also tell a story that spoke to the disconnection and disenfranchisement in the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples—what I had felt was lacking in my own student experience.

The course I ended up creating discusses those shared experiences and further examines how and why detrimental stereotypes regarding Indigenous men have prevailed in Canadian society, even after such discriminatory ideas have been exposed as false. As

such, I chose texts and reading materials that highlighted the lived experiences of Indigenous men (from Indigenous perspectives) as well as works that analyzed depictions of Indigeneity in popular culture throughout the last two hundred years. For this, I used a host of supplementary materials—articles, films, videos, art, etc., with the two main texts being Sam McKegney's *Masculindians: Conversations about Indigenous Manhood* and *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers* by Carmen Robertson and Mark Cronlund Anderson. The course includes themes such as the establishment of Indigenous autonomy; theoretical considerations in Indigenous masculinities; the settlement of the west and early image makers; resistance movements (the Red River Resistance, Northwest Resistance/ ê-kî–mâyahkamikahk— "where it went wrong." Anishinaabe Park Occupation, Oka, etc.); representations of Indigenous men in popular culture from 1890 to present; Indigenous men in the global context; and Indigenous women.

Learning about how my family story connects to the larger historical narrative has not only had a deep impact on the way I teach, but reclaiming that story has anchored me to a place—a place from which I can better understand the legacy of colonization and engage with, and be proud of, the stories of resistance and resiliency that have often been marginalized in the interpretation of Canada's past. I am intensely grateful for the opportunity to introduce students to these themes as well as for the chance to teach Indigenous history, to help students engage with a narrative that has been often neglected by historians. My goal is for ê-sihtoskâtoyahk Indigenous Students' Centre to continue as an environment where students can come to a deeper understanding of their world through discussion of their own lived experiences, telling stories, and learning from each other.

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50 Excerpts have been taken from my graduate thesis, *Imposed Identities: The Colonial Construction of Indigenous Masculinity*, p 2-3, 2012.

1. Excerpts have been taken from my graduate thesis, Imposed Identities: The Colonial Construction of Indigenous Masculinity, p 2-3, 2012. ↵

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7.5: Afterword 7.5: AfterwordEdit Update titlecancel

Brenda Anderson

As at the start of this book, we find ourselves teetering between hope and despair. This book has been about looking back to mark progress and obstacles. The media continues to highlight the racism within our institutions. Before her death in October, 2020 at a Quebec hospital, Joyce Echaquan filmed the racial slurs hurled at her by hospital staff, revealing the systemic racism that had been documented in a provincial inquiry about the hospital less than a year earlier. The Chief of the Conseil des Atikamekw de Manawan, said, “The racism problems at the hospital did not start yesterday” (Shingler). That statement reflects the larger societal problem in Canada, and if left with this story alone, we would all have just cause to despair.

Yet, Indigenous leaders continue to move forward in hope. Our final words are reserved for one such leader, Judy Hughes. As President of the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Women’s Circle Corporation (SAWCC), Judy works alongside the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) and has devoted her career to supporting family members who have had a loved one torn from their midst.

Judy and I began our conversation by noting that readers will come to this work having experienced a global pandemic, something none of the authors had even thought about let alone written on. The obvious question is what impact such a life-changing phenomenon has had on Indigenous women. The obvious answer has been noting a significant increase in intimate partner violence. Women vulnerable from systemic poverty and the stresses of intergenerational trauma oftentimes have less capacity for multiple stresses that a pandemic presents. Support systems like shelters and counselling may weaken or be shut down altogether when governments and healthcare turn their attention to coping with Covid-19. For instance, Amnesty International released an urgent action memo stating that the Mexican government suspended funding for the CAMIs (Amnesty). The Casas de la Mujer Indígena y Afromexicana are a network of Indigenous women’s community organizations which operate nationally throughout Mexico. Common services include the provision of sexual reproductive healthcare, traditional midwifery, broader healthcare provision and referrals, psychological support, the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence, trauma-informed support and the provision of legal services. They are also often engaged in the wider promotion of women’s and Indigenous rights as well as Indigenous culture in Mexico.

In Canada, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls jostles for the federal government’s attention amidst health and economic demands created by the pandemic. Yet the work of Indigenous women and organizations has actively and relentlessly pursued the first of the 231 Imperatives from the final report:

1.1 We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and Indigenous governments (hereinafter “all governments”), in partnership with Indigenous Peoples, to develop and implement a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, as recommended in our *Interim Report* and in support of existing recommendations by other bodies of inquiry and other reports.6 As part of the National Action Plan, we call upon all governments to ensure that equitable access to basic rights such as employment, housing, education, safety, and health care is recognized as a fundamental means of protecting Indigenous and human rights, resourced and supported as rights-based programs founded on substantive equality. All programs must be no-barrier, and must apply regardless of Status or location.

Governments should:

- Table and implement a National Action Plan that is flexible and distinctions-based, and that includes regionally specific plans with devoted funding and timetables for implementation that are rooted in the local cultures and communities of diverse Indigenous identities, with measurable goals and necessary resources dedicated to capacity building, sustainability, and long-term solutions.
- Make publicly available on an annual basis reports of ongoing actions and developments in measurable goals related to the National Action Plan.

In 2020, no government plan exists. Instead of presenting the National Action Plan as promised in June 2019, the Federal Government only began to form committees in August 2020, to help develop the National Action Plan as stated in 1.1 above. In contrast, while Canada ‘continues talking’, NWAC has acted on the 231 Calls for Justice by producing a ten-point Action Plan and by establishing an unique first of its kind in Canada holistic healing lodge. For context, the Native Women’s Association of Canada advocates for and defends the rights of Indigenous women across the country. “Much like a ‘Grandmother’s Lodge, we as aunties, mothers, sisters, brothers and relatives collectively recognize, respect, promote, defend and enhance our Indigenous Ancestral laws, spiritual beliefs, language and traditions given to us by the Creator” (nwac.ca).

After giving a failing grade to the federal government's inaction on a national action plan, NWAC proceeded with its own ten point action plan, while calling for the following immediate steps to take place:

- A call for an independent national task force to open up unresolved files of missing and murdered women
- Ongoing work for a national data base to track the numbers of missing and murdered women
- Provision of funds for NWAC to establish its own MMIWG Oversight Unit to ensure implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice

> On a broader scale, NWAC envisions a multi-language report on genocide as well as an anti-racism and anti-sexism national action plan. All of these recommendations are offers from NWAC to work with the federal, provincial, territorial and Indigenous governments to ensure that any actions taken have been planned in consultation with the largest national body comprised of Indigenous women and gender diverse people.

Judy notes that NWAC has consistently undertaken international work to raise awareness of the genocide committed by Canada as concluded in the Supplementary Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls – "A Legal Analysis of Genocide". The organization envisions a "Best Practices Summit" where people from around the globe learn what works and why.

Such global learnings are evident in the most significant of NWAC's initiatives, the opening of its unique distinctions-based Resiliency Lodge. Situated on the traditional land of the Algonquin people in Chelsea, Quebec, the Resiliency Lodge combines on-the-land programming, Indigenous cultures, languages and spirituality to support Indigenous women and gender-diverse people to promote and foster wellness and resilience. The programs and services are accessible and culturally safe to survivors of trauma and violence. The workshops are developed to enhance the spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, social, and economic well-being of Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. Each person's resiliency journey is built on the concept of healing: Elder-guided healing, land-based healing, culture-based healing and holistic person-centred care. The lodge provides a safe space for women and gender-diverse people to engage in Indigenous ceremonies, languages, food, medicine baths, expressive art and learn how to navigate all the social services. It also has a safe space dedicated to commemorating and honouring all the missing and murdered women and girls on this land. The resiliency support and training continues year long with an in-person four session resiliency and wellness journey and virtual online services with access to Elders and ceremonial support. Such community-based and culturally distinct lodges are planned to be made available across Canada to meet these needs. Through these actions, intentional community leans into a future of strong Indigenous female leadership.

The concept of these lodges, Judy recounts, shows what can be done when global communities unite. The resiliency lodges parallel the CAMIS – *Casas de la Mujer Indígena* y Afromexicana (Houses of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Women). For Mexican women, the CAMIS provide a safe refuge from violent circumstances, again by providing culturally distinct counselling and support around gender violence. Lynne Groulx, NWAC's Chief Executive Officer, explains "It is notable that the positive experience of the CAMI experiment in Mexico has prompted other countries in Latin America to emulate their practices and to put in place similar structures with a view to more effectively providing Indigenous women and girls with an array of indispensable services. There are unquestionably multiple lessons and best practices which can be drawn from the Mexican CAMI model and be applied to the Canadian context, such as NWAC's Resiliency Lodge" (NWAC).

So, we conclude this book holding the urgency of despair and the power of hopefulness in each hand. When leaders like Judy Hughes and so many others cannot rest while "there are still bodies lying out there, and families still searching for their loved ones," as Judy powerfully notes, then there will be change. It is the collective will of individuals that generates the most healing and transformative hope. There could be no more fitting conclusion to this retrospective of a past decade than the commitment expressed in the Vision Statement for the Resiliency Lodge. May all readers worldwide grow into this statement:

"We envision a world where Indigenous women and gender-diverse people live a good life free of violence, and where our strength and healing grow from our culture and our connection to the land" (NWAC Resiliency Lodge Programme Guide).

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    - 1.1: Introduction - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
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    - 7.4: Indigenous Masculinities- A Reflection - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
    - 7.5: Afterword - *CC BY-NC 4.0*
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- Glossary - *Undeclared*
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