Indigenous Women and Girls' Rejection of Settler Statecraft Representation and Our Collective Reclamation of Narrative in Mainstream Media

By

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Abstract

This thesis argues that Canadian settler colonial statecraft and its hegemonic politics of recognition create the circumstances for Indigenous[1] women and girls to be negatively represented in mainstream media[2]. Mainstream media, especially news and journalism, have the power to pull audiences toward or push them away from a humanizing representation of Indigenous women and girls. I utilize the word 'representation' throughout my thesis in alignment with Kim Anderson's definition in "A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood". She notes that Indigenous women and girls are subject to widely circulated 'negative' and 'false' representation in dominant culture due to settler colonial mythologies (142). I argue that these negative and false representations of Indigenous women and girls Anderson mentions endure in Canadian mainstream media. Specifically, mainstream news media is a settler institution that reifies and upholds settler statecraft and the settler colonial project. I propose that combining the politics of recognition with self-recognition is a potential solution and path forward for Indigenous women and girls toward narrative reclamation. Though outright rejection of the politics of recognition may seem necessary, I argue that it is impossible to escape without it first coalescing with self-recognition, as we cannot enact our futurisms if we are not surviving. I provide context for the contemporary negative representation of Indigenous women and girls through an exploration of the colonial roots of systematic disempowerment associated

[1] 'Indigenous' is inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. This term is used throughout my thesis to not only ensure that all Indigenous cultures are included and acknowledged in the issues discussed, but also due to the settler colonial tendency of pan-Indigeneity. I will name specific Nations, but generally 'Indigenous' is used.

[2] The use of "mainstream media" throughout this thesis is referring to news and journalism specifically, though the negative representation of Indigenous women and girls is present in all mediums, such as film, art, and music.

with our representation as the 'squaw.'[3] This negative representation perpetuates stereotypes that ultimately result in higher rates of violence against us and settler apathy toward these injustices. To exemplify the reality and gravity of negative representations against us, this thesis includes a case study into the mainstream news media representation of the life and case of Tina Fontaine, which analyzes three Winnipeg news outlets from 2014-2019. The final chapter delves further into how the politics of recognition and self-recognition can work together for narrative reclamation and collective Indigenous re-empowerment.

[3] The use of 'squaw' throughout this thesis is not intending to harm, but using this degrading and problematic word is important for context. It is a bastardization of an actual Haudenosaunee word for woman (Vowel 7). I want to acknowledge its power to be a difficult word to engage with.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is for all of the amazing people in my life that bring me so much joy and love.

Josh and Brutus for your love, support, and our unforgettable adventures.

Those no longer with us.

My supportive and inspiring parents, siblings, niblings, and friends.

A sincere thank you to my advisors, Dr. Kiera Ladner and Dr. Mylène Gamache, for their guidance and support.

Content Warning

The following thesis contains topics that may be triggering.

I am sensitive to the difficulty of these topics and to the importance of protecting the reader. Due to this, I have chosen to be selective about words used. I have not included words explicitly relating to violence, but some themes are fundamental to the research.

Being truthful about experiences is important when we want to share the gravity of issues, especially with settlers. However, we as Indigenous peoples and researchers are constantly in contact with these very difficult and often traumatic themes, and I want to make sure I am not harming those reading my thesis or myself. I have vetted and included a list of resources to contact if a reader experiences harm (Appendix B).

- **Chapter One:** racism, gendered systemic violence, and sexually explicit stereotypes.
- **Chapter Two:** MMIWG, Tina Fontaine, and racism.
- **Chapter Three:** racism, Tina Fontaine, and gendered systemic violence.

Foreword

"Don't forget about me.
The wiya who wears her defeated heart on her sleeve.
An heir apparent fighting for justice her ancestors never received.
An outsider searching for peace of mind she may never reach.
A dreamer hoping to make ripples of change she may never see."
- *Red Horn Woman*

I entered graduate studies and wrote this thesis because I felt a call to address the ongoing harms perpetuated by settler statecraft through negative representations of Indigenous women and girls (Anderson, 142). Researching the incredibly pervasive harms we experience is deeply painful and it is, at times, very difficult to keep going. I continued writing this thesis for the Indigenous women and girls – my sisters and aunties – who will never get to read it. Their stories are now a part of me, and I will carry them throughout my life in attempt to honour all Indigenous women and girls. After reading this thesis, you will have a deeper understanding of the heartbreaking and horrifying legacy of oppressive impacts of settler colonial statecraft on Indigenous women and girls. Thank you for joining me on this journey of reading their stories. I implore you not to stay silent either.

Introduction

Indigenous women and girls are deeply aware of our insignificance and lack of safety in Canada from an early age, in part because of stereotypes and negative representations ascribed to us in mainstream media. Mainstream media supports and reifies settler statecraft priorities; they are not synonymous, but mainstream media is an important component of perpetuating colonialism in Canada. "Settler statecraft" is a concept introduced by Audra Simpson in her article "The State is a Man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the Gender of Settler Sovereignty" (1). A. Simpson argues that settler society is constantly seeking legitimization of their occupation of Indigenous land, and the concept of settler statecraft demonstrates how settler state initiatives, narratives, and acts come to be embodied through its citizens (1). Mainstream media is an important component of the indoctrination of settler statecraft into Canadian citizens because it is one of the main ways citizens receive information. I argue that the genocidal aims of settler statecraft permeate mainstream media, as media disseminates negative discourses and ideas about Indigenous women and girls in order to foster mainstream complicity in its readers. While mainstream media may seem on the surface to recognize Indigenous women and girls, it actually disperses negative representations which then influence public opinion and encourages apathy for injustices committed against Indigenous women and girls which can gravely affect our safety. In his book *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Politics of Recognition*, Glen Coulthard explores the ways racist recognition and representation in Canadian institutions have detrimental effects on Indigenous peoples in the form of internal and external expressions of violence (42). Indigenous women and girls are subject to these serious consequences when our stories are negatively represented by mainstream media.

There is deep fear associated with our negative representations, which is why fourteen-year-old Brianna Jonnie specifies in a public essay penned to the Winnipeg Police Chief entitled "If I Go Missing" that she "does not fit the demeaning descriptions mainstream media have assigned to MMIWG in the past – often to their loved ones' dismay" (CBC, "You can do better" para.4). It is disturbing to live in a country where Indigenous women and girls feel impelled to justify why they deserve to be looked for if they go missing. Three years later in the wake of the report on Tina Fontaine's life and disappearance, Jonnie directed her focus to the apathy surrounding MMIWG: "asking for the public's help sixteen days after an Indigenous girl went missing is equivalent to announcing publicly that her life does not matter" (CBC, "If I Go Missing", para.2). In 2019, Jonnie created a graphic novel to honour MMIWG2S and expose public apathy (2). As echoed in Jonnie's public declarations, not only are Indigenous women and girls more at risk to experience violence, but we are also compelled to declare our humanity and speak up for our relatives. We do this because Canadian statecraft, and often settlers, are unapologetically indifferent to the fates of our mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and aunties, as their apologies are constantly undermined by their "extractive and simultaneously murderous state of affairs" (A. Simpson 2).

I feel the fear of which Jonnie and many other Indigenous women and girls speak. My eyes dart over my shoulder while I walk dreading that I might have predatory eyes following me, and I am consumed with anxiety that it could be my family on the news pleading for justice one day. It is unsafe to be either an Indigenous woman or girl in Canada. In fact, our agency has been under attack since settler colonial contact, and we often have no control over our fates. Our survival continues to depend on our ability to enforce our agency and face these threats head on for ourselves and the women and girls we love. Such hyper-vigilance and uncertainty about my

future is why I am so passionately and intrinsically linked to this research – my loved ones' and my survival have always depended upon our being cautious and raising awareness. When mainstream media reaffirm the politics of recognition and represents Indigenous women and girls in a negative light, it can render us powerless yet again. I am hopeful that my research will support the empowerment of Indigenous women and girls by ensuring that, together, we can reclaim our own stories.

Positionality

By positioning myself, I acknowledge that it is important to recognize my subjectivity, cultural grounding, and to contextualize my knowledge (Anderson 21). In her chapter, *Situating Self, Culture, and Purpose in Indigenous Inquiry*, Margaret Kovach suggests that "Indigenous research frameworks ask for clarity of both the academic and personal purpose…What is your purpose for this research? How is your motivation found in your story? Why and how does this research give back to community?" (100). I position myself below in response to these three questions out of both respect and reciprocity to the ones who do incredible selfless work and whose shared stories I benefit from personally and academically.

My names are Sarah Olson and wîhkiskwa iskwesis (Sweetgrass Girl) and I use she/her pronouns. I am an Ininew/Cree woman from Treaty 1 territory in Manitoba with mixed-settler ancestry, and a proud member of Norway House Cree Nation. I am an intergenerational survivor of Residential and Day Schools from my father, grandmother, and great-grandfather, each of whom is and were so much more than that. I acknowledge my privileges as an able-bodied, lighter-skinned cis person who has access to education, healthcare, and clean drinking water. I also experience certain disadvantages, such as being Indigenous, a woman, a survivor of abuse

and an inheritor of trauma. While earning my Bachelor of Arts (Adv.) in Psychology and Indigenous Studies at the University of Manitoba, I came to understand that the shame I felt as an Indigenous woman was not mine to carry, and I began to address the way it affected my mental health. Identity and lived experiences are complex and I have been fortunate to be surrounded by people who care for me.

The complex lived experiences of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit women and girls in Canada are flattened in mainstream media, which overwhelmingly misrepresents them as victims of violence simultaneously deserving of their plight. The malevolence that is settler statecraft in Canada drives the ongoing oppression and victimization of Indigenous women and girls; symptoms of which manifest into degrading representations. When representations of Indigenous women and girls are limited to victimization and victim blaming in mainstream media, media consumers are conditioned to deem them less worthy of dignity and respect, as well as to view them as disposable and culpable for violences enacted against them. Ultimately, the public dehumanization of Indigenous women and girls in Canada reinforces our risk of being targets of violence from many different directions.

My intrinsic dedication to this work is due to the staggering fact that I, and every woman in my family, has been a victim of violence. When processing my trauma and feeling the heartbreaking stories of the women and girls I love, I am livid. The high school in my community, Norway House Cree Nation, is named after Helen Betty Osborne, an MMIWG from Manitoba who suffered an unimaginable fate. It felt like everywhere around me, Indigenous women and girls were being victimized and nobody cared. It was never seriously covered in mainstream media and when it was, victim-blaming rhetoric and character degradation coloured the narrative. Instead of continuing to feel hopeless, I channelled my heartbreak and anger into

this research because the resilience of my family, against all odds, has deeply inspired me to learn more about perseverance and narrative reclamation.

In many different spaces, I get to learn from and stand beside so many incredible Indigenous women. It pains me deeply that they are at greater risk of experiencing violence, being dehumanized, and represented as no more than a 'squaw.' Here, I strongly affirm Kim Anderson who writes, in her book *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood*, that she "would not describe my Native female relations as lazy and dirty. I don't know any squaws" (99). The enduring negative representation of Indigenous women and girls is not only false, but it is gravely dangerous and needs to be addressed. I decided to enter graduate studies as I wanted to research the origins of the racist and dehumanizing representation of Indigenous women and girls in Canada and how it has embedded itself so deeply into mainstream media and our psyches. I believe that the widely accepted negative representation of Indigenous women and girls not only affects our self-esteem and mental health but is also a contributing factor to MMIWG2S and systemic oppression. One of the main ways we can address this crisis is through both the self-recognition of Indigenous women and girls, and the collective reclamation of our narratives and voices.

My interest in representation began by trying to figure out why I had such low self-esteem and shame about my identity. I have come to understand that I am actually ashamed of the stereotypes and negative representations ascribed to us. Due to this, I have begun to understand the connection between the enduring stratification created by Canadian statecraft and the strategic dehumanization, violence, and apathy to which many are subjected (Coulthard 38). My motivation in pursuing graduate studies is to find purpose in trying to transform my experiences into something that might help other Indigenous women and girls overcome their

identity shame and to address the mental health effects associated with it. People can find solace and begin healing when they feel connection to those who have overcome similar experiences and traumas. I align with Linda Tuhiwai Smith's words: “Our survival, our humanity, our worldview and language, our imagination and spirit, our very place in the world depends on our capacity to act for ourselves, to engage in the world and the actions of our colonizers, to face them head on” (198). Sharing our stories and having our experiences validated is cathartic and can create connections of solidarity; telling our stories and collectively envisioning our futures through a lens of survivance is medicine (L. Simpson 34; Vizenor 21).

Foundation

Canadian statecraft and the politics of recognition have created the conditions wherein Indigenous women and girls are rarely represented through a humanizing, unbiased lens in mainstream media. This is because negative representations, including the discursive image of Indigenous women and girls as victims deserving of their plight, are useful tools to ensure mainstream complicity, prejudice, and apathy toward Indigenous bodies and matters (McLaurin 97). In *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls,* Call to Justice 6.1 called on mainstream media to take decolonizing approaches to their work and ensure accurate and appropriate representation of Indigenous women, girls, and Two Spirit people (187). This thesis also aligns with Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action 84-86 regarding “Media and Reconciliation” in their call for representative and journalistic transformation and education on the colonial harms perpetrated against Indigenous peoples (9).

Canadian mainstream media is complicit in a new wave of settler colonial oppression insofar as it continues to circulate images and discourses that dehumanize Indigenous women and girls. Thus, settlers have been subliminally instructed to dehumanize us, which puts us at greater risk of violence and elimination. I argue that in order to enact transformation in Canada and to create conditions in which Indigenous women and girls are safe, different narratives need to be shared in mainstream media through aspects of both the politics of recognition and self-recognition.

The negative representations of Indigenous women and girls in Canada are not mistakes – they were manufactured by mainstream media intending to degrade Indigenous peoples due to influence by settler statecraft. This thesis calls into question the politics of recognition as proposed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, engaged by Franz Fanon, and critiqued by Glen Coulthard. Furthermore, it interrogates whether recognition from mainstream Canada is needed in order to affirm Indigenous humanity (Hegel 7; Fanon 32; Coulthard 12). Coulthard's book, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Politics of Recognition*, engages the various arguments of the politics of recognition proposed by Fanon, Hegel, and Taylor (Coulthard 26; Taylor 17). Fanon's book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, examines situations of colonial domination and the effects of racism and dehumanization on the human psyche (21). According to Hegel in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, the politics of recognition is the basis from which our "existence as social beings is generated" (5). Coulthard argues that an analysis of the politics of recognition allows us to understand the more diffuse forms of oppression perpetrated by the settler statecraft against Indigenous peoples in Canada (34). Tactics of oppression have changed from the obvious forms of extermination and forced assimilation like Residential Schools. Coulthard posits that settler colonial strategies utilized now are less outwardly violent and more insidious (44). I argue

that mainstream media is one of the new tactics Coulthard could be referring to as it informs public opinion and bias in favour of settler statecraft which subjugate Indigenous peoples. He demonstrates how mainstream media representations of Idle No More were utilized to discredit the movement's work and to draw attention away from their aim to raise awareness and protest against the Canadian abolishment of environmental protection laws (Coulthard 161). When settlers are instructed to view Indigenous peoples as lesser than themselves, it is easier to excuse violence against us and to reinforce victim-blaming.

Coulthard believes the colonially imposed politics of recognition must be rejected by Indigenous peoples if we are to break free of Canadian subjugation, and I argue that doing so will enable us to reclaim our humanization and safety in Canada (44). Coulthard stands against the imposition of settler colonial-driven reconciliation efforts which reinforce the need for Indigenous peoples to be recognized and legitimized by Canada (48). Indigenous peoples have been relegated to a position of oppression in Canada, which makes it difficult to distance ourselves from the hegemony of settler statecraft and enact our sovereignty (Coulthard 172). This idea, along with Coulthard's proposal of self-recognition as a rebuttal to the politics of recognition, is aligned with Leanne Simpson's proposal for a radical resurgence project that is explored further in Chapter Three (131, 148).

I argue that we cannot simply reject the politics of recognition to move forward and away from Canadian statecraft. Unfortunately, Indigenous peoples are currently in a position, though each nation in its own way, in which we must coexist within Canada, meaning that we cannot yet simply reject and move away from settler colonialism – it is all around us. Indigenous peoples will have to work strategically with Canada to enforce our rights and change the narrative of our representation and recognition. As it currently stands, negative representations of Indigenous

women and girls keeps us subjugated and at constant risk of systemic and physical harm. Simply put, we cannot do the work to break free of settler colonialism if we are not surviving. Due to this, I believe I have found a pocket within Coulthard's work that needs to be addressed if true self-recognition and narrative reclamation can be enacted. The negative representation of Indigenous peoples in Canada must change if we are to live long enough to carry on the work of our ancestors and ensure the survival of our future generations. In Cree culture, there is a tradition of living in a way that honours seven generations – the three before you, yourself, and the three upcoming. We have a responsibility to our ancestors and future generations to conduct ourselves in ways which actively combat the ongoing effects of settler colonialism.

Thesis Statement

Indigenous women and girls have been negatively represented throughout colonial history and contemporary Canadian statecraft, which put us at greater risk of violence and social harms (*Reclaiming Power and Place* Executive Summary 28, 86). The aim of my thesis is to encourage transformation and accountability from mainstream media in their representations of Indigenous women and girls because this could affect the narrative of our inherent violability and disposability, thus addressing the genocide and crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (*Reclaiming Power and Place* Executive Summary 8, 28, 86). I connect these themes and attempt to inspire transformation through uncovering the history of Indigenous women and girls' negative representation, the conditioning that precipitates colonial effects associated with it, a discussion on how the politics of recognition keep us chained to this representation, a case study on Tina Fontaine and her media representation, and finally, narrative

and representational reclamation through cultural self-recognition.

Methodology and Chapter Outline

This section discusses the methods I have selected to research and write my thesis. At every stage of my thesis, I have opted to employ a strength-based and humanizing writing tone as a way to clearly reaffirm that these Indigenous women and girls are not just news stories – they are people. Due to this, I am deliberately selective about the words I use, especially those relating to violence. Being truthful about experiences is important when we want to share the gravity of issues, especially with settlers. However, Indigenous peoples and researchers are constantly in contact with these difficult, charged, and often traumatic stories. I want to make sure I am not harming those reading my thesis or myself, as well as ensuring that these women and girls are honoured.

In terms of research scope, I focus on Indigenous women and girls in Canada, but more specifically, in Manitoba, as my case study on Tina Fontaine attests. I want to acknowledge the limitations of this scope, given the broader issue of all Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives, as my thesis does not focus on men, boys, and Two Spirit people. While this choice was not made lightly, I understood that a focused scope would more likely strengthen and render attainable my own research objectives. This decision is further grounded in an understanding that my lived experiences play an important role in my research. Additionally, due to this limited research scope, I was not able to survey the enduring effects associated with the oppressive settler colonial representation of Indigenous women and girls, such as systemic racism in healthcare, human trafficking and sexual exploitation, poverty and housing issues, career and education barriers, and issues with Child and Family Services. All of these socio-economic and

colonial factors are symptoms of ongoing settler colonialism and I absolutely urge the reader to educate themselves and to process these heartbreaking and horrible linkages.

I had initially intended the main component of my methodology to be framed around sharing circles and interviews with Indigenous women about their Canadian mainstream media representation. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, I shifted my focus to engaging both the critical anticolonial, sociological, and feminist works of Indigenous writers and the findings in numerous published national reports. These writings have helped me to better understand the complexities and central themes of my thesis topic, including the pervasive effects of settler colonial statecraft and the important proposals for moving forward by Indigenous scholars and community members. Due to this, my thesis took on a more critical lens within Indigenous Studies discourse, rather than the community-based method I intended. While I believe that it is important to do qualitative and ethnographic research with participants—and to build relationships with those consenting to participate in my research—this altered route remains impactful because it is also essential to engage with critical anticolonial discourse and alternative futurisms from Indigenous scholars and community members. I also understand that the subject matter of my thesis is very sensitive, as it holds the possibility of (re)traumatizing members in our communities. I want to ensure that I am not causing harm to participants, so utilizing information and interviews already available will have less potential to (re)traumatize or contribute to damage-centered research.

The sharing circles I intended to conduct would be based on Canadian mainstream media's negative representation of Indigenous women and girls. I planned to create questions for the groups on how they felt about these representations, specific examples they recalled, and how they felt it could be remedied. While I consider their perspectives and experiences to be essential

to this work and to Indigenous futurities, I decided not to include youth, as the topics involved are quite sensitive and I did not think it ethical to cause potential harm. One of the first groups I was to create sharing circles with was Indigenous women students, staff, and faculty from the University of Manitoba's three Winnipeg campuses. Not only would this create a diverse and interesting group due to the different ages, nations, disciplines, and roles, but I thought it would be an opportunity to encourage community-building. Next, I had hoped to create sharing circles with women from Norway House Cree Nation as it is my family's community and gaining community perspectives is vital to this type of work. For interviews, I had hoped to discuss Canadian mainstream media representation of Indigenous women with those who have expertise in this area, such as KC Adams, because her critical and community focus plays an important role in tying the politics of recognition and self-recognition together. I also intended to interview women who are personally invested and working on MMIWG2S, like NDP MLA Bernadette Smith or NHCN Councillor Darlene Osborne, who are both family members of a MMIWG2S. While I was unfortunately unable to carry out the research I had initially intended, it is still important to understand what had been envisioned as it shows the evolution of a thesis from proposal to actual research and writing, and the flexibility that is needed in an ever-changing world and in dealing with emotionally difficult content.

Chapter One: Indigenous Women's Historical and Contemporary Media Representation and the Politics of Recognition

This chapter seeks to understand the harmful effects that the 'squaw' representation has had on Indigenous women and girls. I focus on the colonial representation of Indigenous women and girls, as it reflects deeply ingrained racism, sexism, and dehumanization. These

representations endure today in the mainstream media representation of Indigenous women and girls and serve as justification for victim-blaming in cases of violence against them. This chapter will help to gain a deeper understanding of the contemporary pervasive effects of the politics of recognition, the myriad of gendered and socio-economic issues and vulnerabilities Indigenous women and girls face, and how the dehumanization of Indigenous peoples in the minds of colonial settlers has led to the contemporary Canadian approval of Indigenous oppression (LaRocque, *When the Other is Me*, 13).

Chapter Two: Media-State Apparatus and a Case Study of the Media Representation of Tina Fontaine

The second chapter focuses on the case study of Tina Fontaine who experienced harrowing levels of public scrutiny and abuse. I argue that this case exposes how Indigenous women and girls experience victim-blaming and racism in Canadian mainstream media. As this case study critically assesses mainstream media's representation of Tina Fontaine, I gather information from the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth's (MACY) report on Fontaine entitled "A Place Where It Feels like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine." In addition, I analyse two media outlets: The Winnipeg Sun (WS) and The Winnipeg Free Press (WFP) during important years in her case. During the years of 2014, 2018, and 2019, two articles from each year were randomly chosen from each news source. A micro-analysis using word clouds determines the most-frequently appearing words and mimics retention of the reader. A macro-analysis explores the content of the article to establish tone, perspective, and the historical and societal context provided to the reader.

Chapter Three: Reclamation and Self-Recognition

After focusing on the removal of our voices, it is important to finish this thesis engaging with Coulthard's proposal of self-recognition and considering efforts from Indigenous peoples to transform representation and collectively work toward a brighter future. The chapter features discussions of self-recognition, narrative reclamation, kitchen-table politics, and settler-nationalist mythology. After conducting an analysis in Chapter Two of whitestream media[4] coverage in Tina Fontaine's case, I contrast in Chapter Three reportage from The Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN), and utilize the same methodology to assess whether or not gendered Indigenous representations offered by an Indigenous-based news source adhere to narrative reclamation and community-based recognition. I will also be sharing Winnipeg Indigenous communities' actions and how they want Fontaine, and MMIWG2S more broadly, to be remembered, as humanization is vital to reclamation.

Conclusion

In addition to offering a summary of key arguments and issues discussed heavily in these three chapters, the conclusion finishes this thesis with important questions moving forward. For instance, it considers Leanne Simpson's proposal of a radical resurgence project which contemplates Indigenous futurisms as those which are simultaneously happening alongside reconciliation initiatives.

[4] "Whitestream media" refers to the production and perpetuation of mainstream views with a bias for white people and their histories and perspectives.

Appendices

This thesis has been emotionally difficult to write, and it felt it was important to offer something actionable. In the hope of providing a helpful resource that encourages change, I have offered a "Wise Practices in Writing about Indigenous Women and Girls" resource for media, institutional, and public use. I end with this practical guide because throughout the researching and writing process, I have become familiar with the many mistakes made in Canadian mainstream media when representing Indigenous women and girls. This thesis addresses an important aspect of settler colonial statecraft that utilizes the politics of recognition to further subjugate Indigenous women and girls, and in doing so, I seek to counter and eliminate violent practices in/advertently perpetuated by mainstream media (Appendix A).

As I am sensitive to the difficulty of these topics and to the importance of protecting the reader and myself, I offer a list of Indigenous- and women-specific mental health supports. Readers are strongly encouraged to consult this list of resources, especially if they experience harm due to the subject matter of this thesis (Appendix B).

Chapter 1:

Indigenous Women and Girls' Historical and Contemporary Media Representation and the Politics of Recognition

I have long experienced shame about my identity as an Indigenous woman, though I did not always know why. As a youth, I often wondered why public opinions of Indigenous peoples were so negative and I felt embarrassed to claim my Indigeneity, though it is written all over my face. In my dark features and high cheekbones, I saw everything I hated to be associated with; I felt repulsive and wished I were whiter. Growing up, I internalized that being Indigenous meant I am considered different and lesser, but why does this status-quo-belief exist? I eventually came to deduce that Canadians were informed of my inferiority through settler statecraft misinformation, and erasure and purposeful negative representation in history lessons. I, too, am forced to sit through these whitewashed accounts of history, to endure hearsay from peers and their families, and mainstream media articles wrought with disparaging language and missing context. I began to feel angry about my Indigenous family's negative representation and rebelled against the systems that reinforced it. This thesis is a testament to my awakening. On my face, I began to see my grandmother's eyes, my father's big smile, and my auntie's freckles. Their physical features aside, I began to appreciate their tenacity, resilience, and pragmatism – they made it through everything that is thrown at them and so will I.

I consider the ways the colonial negative representation of Indigenous women and girls created the conditions for their ongoing dehumanization and vied-for elimination. Recalling the politics of recognition referenced in the introduction, our negative representation is deeply rooted in the narrative created by the settler statecraft. Mainstream media reifies settler statecraft's

politics of recognition by perpetuating stereotypical depictions of Indigenous women and girls, which fuels both public apathy and the assumption that we are culpable for the violence we experience. Stereotypes of Indigenous women and girls in Canada, especially that of the 'squaw,' are deeply rooted in its colonial history and in settler nationalist mythology. Due to this, the settler colonial-imposed misogynistic hyper-sexualization of Indigenous women and girls sets a precedent for the justification of violence against us. Settler statecraft and institutions birthed and continue to uphold the degrading mainstream characterization of Indigenous women and girls. While it may not always be named directly, we are still being degraded and defined by the 'squaw' trope. In her article, "Shining Light on the Dark Places: Addressing Police Racism, and Sexualized Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls in the National Inquiry," Pam Palmater, Mi'kmaq lawyer and professor, argues that Indigenous women and girls are subjected to damaging character judgements about their 'save-ability' in Canadian mainstream media, as a result of damaging and pervasive racial constructs (270). These racist and misogynistic stereotypes ascribed to Indigenous women and girls work in tandem to oppress us in Canada.

This chapter explores the negative representation of Indigenous women and girls throughout colonial history and the ongoing effects of this representation. Within this, I argue that as both historical and contemporary tools of the settler colonial project, negative representation and mainstream media are partly to blame for the ongoing harms against Indigenous women and girls. The methodology of this chapter focuses on sociological, literary, and historical works by select scholars engaging in critical anti-colonial discourse. When discussing the hegemonic power that settler statecraft wields against Indigenous peoples, I suggest revisiting and assessing critiques of the politics of recognition as proposed by Glen Coulthard. Coulthard's theories on recognition are well-developed through engagement with

revered critical race theorist, Frantz Fanon, and philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, which were discussed in the introduction. Coulthard's work is also heavily informed by trusted Indigenous scholars like Kim Anderson, Patricia Monture-Angus, and Leanne Simpson, whose contributions to critical anti-colonial discourse and cultural self-recognition are discussed throughout this thesis. Collectively, their works are schools of thought that ground me and provide context on how I connect with the themes of Indigenous women and girls' representative oppression in Canadian statecraft, and narrative reclamation throughout my thesis.

Indigenous women and girls have been subjected to gendered systemic violence, marginalization, and dispossession due the intergenerational and ongoing effects of colonialism, in that they experience the misogyny of Canada's patriarchal roots in tandem with its racism. It was this perfect storm that created the representation of the 'squaw,' a degrading stereotype that will be a central theme of this chapter. In the first section, I explore the colonial roots of the misogynistic and racist representation of Indigenous women and girls as the 'squaw' through the works of Emma LaRocque, Mary Eberts, and Sarah Carter. I reference *When the Other is Me* and "The Metis in English Canadian Literature" by Emma LaRocque, a Métis scholar and long-standing voice on the settler colonial dehumanization of Indigenous peoples through representations as the 'savage' and the 'squaw.' LaRocque draws important connections between historical representations of Indigenous women and girls and the ways we continue to be represented in contemporary society. I attempt to build upon her work through the added layer of how settler statecraft influences settler institutions, such as mainstream media, to be complicit in reinforcing Indigenous women and girls' oppressive representation. Eberts is a constitutional lawyer whose career focused on creating equality for women and girls under the Canadian Charter of Rights. I infuse her understanding of how Indigenous women and girls were

subjugated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by colonial leaders and settlers who disapproved of Indigenous notions of womanhood as they were not aligned with Victorian values. This era of history reinforced the 'squaw' representation and put it into action as Indigenous women faced the effects of gendered discrimination in *The Indian Act* (148). Carter is a Canadian historian who focuses on the settler colonial history of the prairies and gendered oppression. Her research builds on the arguments presented by LaRocque and Eberts in that she discusses the image of the 'squaw' and the history of the Indigenous women's subjugation in Canada, and connects them to the victim-blaming we experience for the crimes committed against us. Brought together, the interface of these scholars' disciplines and arguments provide a foundation for understanding the impact of the colonial representation of Indigenous women and girls as the 'squaw'.

The second part of this chapter discusses the contemporary effects and vulnerabilities that Indigenous women and girls face due to the deeply ingrained 'squaw' trope, which is further elaborated by Kim Anderson in *A Recognition of Being*. Anderson engages with the themes of Indigenous women's recognition, the interference of settler colonialism in our representation, and the vital importance of rejecting our dehumanization (12). Anderson's work provides an important grounding for Indigenous women and girls' contemporary representation, and the effects of settler statecraft and the indoctrination of Canadian citizens. I then turn to Pam Palmater for her perspectives on the issue of victim-blaming of Indigenous women and girls in relation to MMIWG, and because she was a vocal Indigenous leader rejecting the mainstream media and legal system's treatment of Tina Fontaine—the case study of this thesis. This foundation connects to my hypothesis that Canadian statecraft utilizes mainstream media as a tool to further the settler colonial project and manipulate citizens to be complicit. This

manipulation is intended to ensure apathy toward Indigenous issues, which I argue prey on psychological processes, such as availability heuristics. I explore this theory through the 1974 heuristic works of Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, and critical media analyses of Tom Tyler and Fay Cook in the fields of behavioural and social psychology. Finally, I utilize Chacaby's arguments about the representations of Indigenous women and girls as hypersexualized targets for settler violence to create a link to the next section's exploration of violent settler statecraft and the politics of recognition. I have included the above authors as their work contributes to my exploration of how gendered violence against Indigenous women and girls throughout colonization is genocidal and continues to cause us to face dehumanization and deeply harmful systemic oppression.

Third, I demonstrate how the settler statecraft and the politics of recognition operate together to remove Indigenous women and girls' agency in Canada. I engage with a combination of scholars who focus on the colonial representation of Indigenous peoples and women, such as Audra Simpson and Glen Coulthard. A. Simpson's argument that settler statecraft vies for and requires the elimination of Indigenous women builds the basis for this section as it provides context into the purpose and gravity of Indigenous women and girls' negative representation. Building upon A. Simpson's theories on settler statecraft, Coulthard's arguments on settler colonial politics of recognition provide clarity on the structures and processes that reinforce our narrative degradation. I then discuss the Canadian Association of Journalists' Ethics Guidelines as they provide context into the responsibility of journalists and connect Chapter One's exploration of Indigenous women and girls' representation to the case study of Tina Fontaine in Chapter Two.

Indigenous Women's Historical Representation: Savagery and the "Squaw"

Since contact and throughout colonization, the dehumanization of Indigenous women and girls has been embedded into the fabric of Canadian culture through the politics of recognition and settler statecraft. Settlers and historians have taken many liberties with the reputations of Indigenous women and girls – the repercussions of which are still felt today. *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG* links the legacy of Canadian colonialism to systemic violence, subjugation, and ongoing violation of Indigenous women and girls (9). The relationship between Indigenous peoples and colonial settlers in Canada has always been characterized by white superiority and Indigenous subjugation. Throughout the history of colonization in now-Canada, Indigenous peoples have been dehumanized and represented as the savage counterparts to the civilized colonizer. In 1983, Emma LaRocque coined the term "Civ/Sav Dichotomy" which reaffirms that "...behind the dichotomy of civilization versus savagery is the long-held belief that humankind evolved from the primitive to the most advanced, from the savage to the civilized" ("The Métis in English Canadian Literature" 86; *When the Other is Me* 39). LaRocque surveyed many historical and contemporary settler works of literature, including American lawyer-ethnologist Lewis Henry Morgan and Spanish Jesuit Jose de Acosta who both placed Indigenous peoples at the lowest level of human evolution (39). Accordingly, for LaRocque, Indigenous peoples have long been regarded as uncivilized and heathenistic, further positioning Europeans as superior. In *When the Other is Me*, LaRocque argues that "civilization" is constantly compared to "Indian savagery," wherein savagism is considered to be "a psychosocial fixed condition" and in contrast to progress (41). She argues that colonizers felt justified in their pursuit of land possession because Indigenous peoples were seen as undeserving of the land they inhabited. Eurocentric philosophy

emerging out of the enlightenment period framed Western-Eurocentric civilization as pinnacle. This long-held belief effectively degraded Indigenous peoples, as they were assigned by European evolutionary standards to an earlier and lower level of human development (LaRocque 41).

While savagism is a trait regarded as being shared by both Indigenous men and women, Indigenous women and girls were additionally branded with the pejorative term 'squaw' (Hubbard 67). The added layer of gender forces Indigenous women and girls to the doubly subjugated position of a sexualized savage, which causes them to not only be dehumanized, but also renders them fair game for violence. In her 1990 report to the *Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* hearings, LaRocque included examples about the historical representation of Indigenous women and girls as the 'squaw' and its enduring significance. In settler colonial historical writings, the 'squaw' is characterized as immoral, violable, unfeeling, and lusty, which is deeply aligned with the politics of recognition (LaRocque 65). LaRocque notes that in colonial writings "…the representation of the 'squaw' is one of the most degraded, most despised and most dehumanized anywhere in the world" ("The Changing Image of Aboriginal Women" para.2).

LaRocque surveyed historical and contemporary settler works of literature through archival sources and western Canadian historical and literary writings in the nineteenth century (38). Through this exploration, LaRocque observes that negative representations of Indigenous women and girls centered as sexual and dehumanized beings has persisted (65). Regarding the settler colonial objectification of Indigenous women and girls, LaRocque breaks down how they come to be represented as indiscriminate, sexually unrestrained, and servile in the time of early contact (*When the Other is Me* 65). The colonial representation of Indigenous women and girls is

painted with falsehoods and shame regarding their sexual expression. In one chilling passage, LaRocque recounted from Mort Forer's, a social worker in Metis communities for many years, book entitled, *The Humback* (1969), that "Metis women merely serve as biological but blurry-eyed vehicles for sex" (65).

LaRocque posits a connection between the racist and sexist stereotypes Indigenous women and girls experience and the violence committed against us, significant enough that it needed to be included in the report ("The Changing Image of the Aboriginal Woman", para.3). According to LaRocque, the grotesque dehumanization which Indigenous women and girls experience renders us at risk of physical, sexual, and psychological violence (para.4). The negative representation of Indigenous women and girls in colonial historical writings serves as fuel to target us and justify violence against us (Acoose, 59). I argue that our supposed lack of worth, which is reinforced by colonial systems and literatures, results in our humanity being blatantly undermined. Forming an understanding of the origins and the purpose of the 'squaw' trope of Indigenous women and girls through the paradigms proposed by LaRocque helps one to understand the gravity of its ongoing influence.

In her article, "Victoria's Secret: How to Make a Population of Prey," Mary Eberts provides insight into how colonial settler men transplanted Victorian notions of womanhood onto Indigenous women and girls who often had opposing beliefs and values about femininity and culturally appropriate behaviour (150). It is evident throughout settler colonial writings that Indigenous women and girls were represented as lacking purity and propriety, thus supposedly justifying their ill-treatment by settlers (Eberts 150). At the time, some settlers expressed concern about Indigenous lifeways regarding women's agency and egalitarian family models (Eberts 151). Thus, many settler and religious leaders opted to position white women and Indigenous

women against each other to highlight the differences between them to the masses and to reinforce our poor moral character, protect the settler patriarchal family ideals, and support white superiority and Indigenous subjugation (Eberts, 150). Settlers of this time disapproved of Indigenous women having agency and that we were not submissive to their often-negative treatment. Beginning in this era, Indigenous women and girls are derogatorily represented as hyper-sexual and available for the taking. Our negative representation informed and endured in 20th century settler literary works.

In her article, "Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West," Sarah Carter posits that the image of 'the immoral squaw' serves an important purpose to colonial leaders as it has been employed to manipulate settlers and prompt moral panic about the Indigenous threat to Euro-Canadian lifeways (70). More specifically, this tactic served as justification of systemic measures intended to keep Indigenous women and girls on-reserve (Carter 70). The colonial perception that Indigenous women and girls were sexually indiscriminate and sinful has caused the ongoing phenomenon of casting blame onto us for the violence we experience. Indigenous women and girls have been held accountable for the violence perpetrated against them, while our negative representation by early settlers and the politics of recognition created the hostile conditions for this violence (Carter 71; Coulthard, 25).

Indigenous Women's Contemporary Media Representation: The 'Squaw', Victim-Blaming and Stereotypes

Canadian mainstream media perpetuates disparaging depictions of Indigenous women and girls, which leads to societal apathy, victim-blaming, and many settlers believing we are culpable for what happens to us. The second part of this chapter focuses on the ongoing racist

and misogynistic representation of Indigenous women and girls in contemporary Canada and the myriad of affects it has on our lives. Kim Anderson questions: "where did these images come from? How did they become so widespread, and how do they affect the day-to-day living of contemporary Native women?" (99). In considering these important questions, this section explores the ways Indigenous women and girls' representation in Canada has caused us to be more at risk of systemic and personal violence. My arguments are based on select scholars that engage in critical discourse on settler colonial impact, such as Anderson, Palmater, Tversky and Kahneman, and Chacaby.

Indigenous women and girls' marginalized identities, experiences, and pain are categorized into stereotypes, which are used against us to victim-blame and provide justification for the white supremacist violence. Viewing Indigenous women and girls as less deserving of respect, negating our humanity, and treating us as inherently violable causes us to be vulnerable to personal and systemic violence. Stereotyping and discrimination have tangible repercussions in our lives. Mainstream media's representation of Indigenous women and girls who have been victims of violence often includes the stereotypical 'squaw' tropes of sex work, substance use, and a general moral threat to settler lifeways. Anderson argues that stereotypes are essential to the dehumanization and apathy toward the experiences of Indigenous women and girls (109). Indigenous women and girls' lifestyles are used to create a narrative of her level of deservingness in crimes perpetrated against her (*Reclaiming Power and Place* 27). For example, Palmater exposes the disturbing reality of the gravity of media representation and how it is used to create and reinforce negative character judgements of Indigenous women and girls deeply aligned with colonial historical writings of the 'squaw' and our "high-risk lifestyles" (270). When Indigenous women and girls' images are limited to victimization and victim-blaming in

mainstream media, this leads settlers to deem them less worthy of dignity and respect, and therefore they become regarded as disposable (Palmater 270).

The second part of this section pivots away from critical Indigenous literature toward an analytical psychology perspective on Canadian statecraft and mainstream media. There is a clear social issue of Indigenous women and girls' disappearances and murders, and the settler apathy and permissible attitudes toward said crimes (Palmater 342). Victim-blaming perches on the notion that a person's identifiers can decide whether they are responsible for their fate, regardless of true culpability. Viewing Indigenous women and girls through the myopic lens of inherent lower morality and disposability does not consider the greater systemic powers at work. As such, I argue that when settlers view us as deserving of the circumstances and violence we experience, it is primarily based on stereotypes and prejudice. Most individuals are horrified by gendered violences and fear that similar situations may happen to them or their loved ones. I question whether this is why privileged groups try to separate themselves from Indigenous women and girls who 'deserve' misfortune, in order to make themselves, in turn, feel safer. This phenomenon can arise from a psychological process called system- or group-justification, which contributes to "…the preservation of existing social arrangements even at the expense of others" (Jost & Banaji 31). I argue that the negative representation of Indigenous women and girls has created a collective consciousness about our lack of humanity and deservingness of the injustices we experience.

Building on the work of Tversky and Kahneman in the field of psychology, I wish to suggest that the fallacy of Indigenous women and girls being deserving of our fates can be partly explained by the impact of colonial media strategically playing on citizens' cognitive process of availability heuristics (24). Heuristics are general cognitive frameworks that are built based on

information gathering and past experiences in order to make quick decisions (Korteling, Brouwer, & Toet, 17). In short, heuristics help people to speedily figure out a situation, as well as to gauge its level of danger. Availability heuristics work by prioritizing events based on recency and vividness (Amos & Kahneman, 207). For example, catastrophic events like plane crashes come to mind easily and can make people afraid of flying, even though they are relatively infrequent. In their article, "The mass media and judgments of risk: Distinguishing impact on personal and societal level judgments," Tyler and Fay discuss how media coverage can produce a "greater influence than it would in an entirely rational calculation" and cause "unintentional discrimination" (47). Throughout Canadian history, positive representations of Indigenous women and girls have not been made readily available in mainstream settler media. What is available are negative mainstream media representations and anecdotes about the shortcomings of Indigenous women and girls. Images circulated in mainstream media of damaged and sexualized Indigenous women and girls create a pornotropic narrative of us being unsavable and fair game for and consenting to physical abuse (Chacaby, 126). Thus, when settlers think about Indigenous women and girls, their availability heuristics are much more likely to be negative. Chacaby argues that Indigenous women and girls tend to be quickly and harshly judged, as if we are deserving of the treatment received. It is easier to victim-blame than to see peoples' behaviours as reasonable responses to horrific life circumstances (126). Canadian mainstream media provides the weapons used to indoctrinate the masses and reinforce settler complicity against Indigenous women and girls, which strengthens the pursuit of control and sovereignty. Mainstream media's indoctrination tactics not only dehumanizes Indigenous women and girls; they also inform the public that crimes against us do not matter, therefore making us easy targets (Chacaby 127).

When Indigenous women and girls commit crimes or make allegedly 'poor' life choices, the context of ongoing settler colonialism is erased from systems such as mainstream media and the judicial system, and we are not afforded compassion, or the excuses continually made for white and privileged people. The status quo stance on the epidemic of MMIWG defines Indigenous women as nothing more than victims and as the ones to blame for their victimhood. In 2011, Judge Brent Klause of Saskatoon callously states to an Indigenous female defendant that, due to her lifestyle, she is "a prime candidate to become a missing Aboriginal woman" (Charles para.3). His comment makes a clear connection between her life choices and the settler misperception that Indigenous women and girls are culpable for the violence they experience. Thus, in order to critically understand the circumstances Indigenous women and girls experience, I argue that settlers must consider enduring colonialist structures and both the social inequities and systemic violence that can force people into situations they likely would not have chosen for themselves.

Indigenous Women's Representation, Settler Statecraft, and the Politics of Recognition

Indigenous women and girls' negative representation is determined by Canadian statecraft, and it directly informs our intentional dehumanization and position in settler society's stratification. These injustices are not simply civilian crime and casualty: they were birthed by and embedded into every stratum of decrepit Canadian settler colonial, white supremacist, and hegemonic systems. Systemic racism and sexism against Indigenous women and girls are rooted into all levels of legislation, institution, and mainstream media by settler statecraft which requires the oppression of Indigenous women and girls (A. Simpson 10). Canadian structures that are influenced by settler statecraft, particularly mainstream media, work to reinforce the

ongoing subjugation and oppression of Indigenous women and girls through stereotyping and negative representations. We are reduced to tropes that continue to align with the historical representation of Indigenous women and girls as the "'easy squaw' and the 'objects of no human value beyond sexual gratification'" (Eberts 4). Why is this a necessary representation for Canadian media to perpetuate? Harms against Indigenous women and girls are deeply rooted in Canadian-sponsored genocide, and contemporary systems maintain the legacy of early settler oppressive practices (A. Simpson 3).

Indigenous women and girls are a threat to the sovereignty of Canada and the ongoing settler colonial project. The survival of Indigenous women and girls poses a threat to the Canadian statecraft as our ability to give life ensures their extended responsibility to treaty relationships and reminds them of their illegitimate claim to Indigenous lands. As Audra Simpson argues: "Canada requires the death and so called "disappearance" of Indigenous women and girls in order to secure its sovereignty" (12). Subsequently, we cannot safely know or live in our bodies because expressions of women's bodies, especially as life-giving, are a threat to the settler patriarchal Canadian statecraft. Dangerous spores are fomenting in Canada that have long-regarded Indigenous women and girls as the 'squaw' and subject us to violence of all kinds, which inhibits our ability to exist safely in the world. Settler statecraft not only subjugates Indigenous women and girls, but it actually incites Canadian citizens to enact its extermination bidding, which accounts for the genocide and crisis of MMIWG (A. Simpson 9). Through mainstream media and education, settler statecrafts' priorities come to be visible in the attitudes and violences of its citizens (1). As long as Indigenous women and girls are around to continue Indigenous bloodlines, we are at risk of systemic and personal violence from leaders and citizens of the settler colonial project.

The hegemonic relationship between Indigenous peoples and now-Canada began at first contact and has subjugated Indigenous peoples to a position of relative powerlessness, thus requiring paternalistic Canada to provide us with our rights, opportunities of livelihood, and societal recognition (Coulthard 37). The settler colonial project is multi-faceted and has spread poisonous tendrils into every aspect of the Canadian system, including media. Mainstream media is a tool of settler colonial statecraft and has pervasive influence on shaping societal opinions of events, groups of people, and social issues through the operations of the politics of recognition (Coulthard 26). Due to mainstream media's significant contribution to Canadian statecraft, its adherence to settler colonial values has grave effects on those most subjugated. Referenced in Coulthard's notes, Stuart Hall was a Jamaican-born renowned cultural theorist and sociologist specializing in media influence and its relationship to those in power (206). In his book, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Hall posits that media reportage affects the stereotypes and treatment of social groups, and that "gatekeepers," like colonial leaders and governments, use media to wield power of social control (11).

Given the incredible amount of information available for Canadian journalists to draw from, ignorance in mainstream media to the societal and personal violence Indigenous women and girls experience is willful. According to the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethics Guidelines released in 2011, journalists have a duty to society to provide accurate and humanizing reportage (para.7). Specifically, journalists must abide by rules of fairness that do not allow for biases to impede on accurate reporting or that could create a public perception of bias ("Canadian Association of Journalists Ethics Guidelines", para.7). Despite these guidelines, this thesis argues that many journalists continually fail to uphold this important responsibility when writing about Indigenous women and girls. This conversation is expanded upon in my

analysis of the media representation of Tina Fontaine in Chapter Two.

Conclusion

Negative representation of Indigenous women and girls in Canada perpetuates racism and sexism, thus reinforcing oppression, dispossession, and genocide. There is a concerted effort by Canadian statecraft to ensure acceptance and complicity from citizens in the ongoing colonization efforts against Indigenous peoples. I argue that the framing of Indigenous peoples as "The Indian Problem" and countless other blatant efforts of propaganda to subjugate Indigenous peoples have directly informed Canadian citizens to believe that we are nothing more than a drain on the system and this country would be better off without us.

This chapter confronts colonially derived stereotypes and policies as they continue to influence the treatment and misrepresentation of Indigenous women and girls. The engineered representations of the 'savage' and the 'squaw' have created an environment where the subjugation and oppression of Indigenous peoples, particularly women and girls, is rendered permissible by colonizers. For hundreds of years, the history of relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers is retold from a Eurocentric colonial perspective of conquest and progress, according to which Indigenous peoples are merely an obstruction. It is through this monopoly on history, policy- and law-making, of which mainstream media is not exempt, that Indigenous peoples remain inferior in Canada.

Canada's performative benevolence of 'reconciliation' is unwaveringly shoved into our faces in such a way that the very people Canada oppresses are seen as deserving of their abuse, especially when we do not appreciate their help or adhere to their expectations. The devaluement of our roles and constant threat to our lives leaves our bodies vulnerable and in survival mode.

Indigenous women continue to be represented as inherently inferior and violable, thus creating a condition where we are vulnerable yet excluded from state protection (Simpson 3). I align with Audra Simpson's arguments regarding Canada's motivation for the elimination of Indigenous women and girls. As it relates to mainstream media, even if journalists and news outlets are not explicitly consenting to the murder of Indigenous women and girls, they are frequently guilty of upholding and disseminating the negative representation formed by Canadian statecraft that Indigenous women and girls are not worthy of the same consideration, respect, and humanity afforded to settlers.

Canadian citizens are indoctrinated with colonial fabrications at all levels of their education to such an extent that these biases are embedded in journalists' reporting on Indigenous issues. However, as more and more Indigenous peoples begin telling our own stories, as more reports and cultural safety training programs are made accessible, and as more national mainstream news stories regarding ongoing settler colonialism are released, such as those about the unmarked graves at Residential Schools throughout Canada, there is no reason why reporters should not be seeking this information and upholding their responsibilities to accurate reportage, as required by the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethics Guidelines. This is why narrative agency and education on Indigenous issues matters. If we change the voice and prioritize humanization, we get a story of truth and transformation.

Chapter 2:

Media-Statecraft Apparatus and a Case Study of the Media Representation of Tina Fontaine

Indigenous women and girls are red willow branches that bend but refuse to break. We, like water, find routes to flow in the face of obstruction. We are the depths of land strata – keepers of stories, complex systems of nourishment, and holders of life six feet above and below. Our bodies often experience love, but sometimes also pain and violence. Our sacredness and fortitude ensure we are both admired and targeted. Due to a purposeful lack of protection, our bodies are subjected to settler statecraft-sponsored violence which aims to exterminate every generation before us and unfortunately, likely many after (A. Simpson 3; Chacaby 126). Despite mainstream media's focus on the brokenness of Indigenous women and girls, we are so much more than our victimhood. The harms perpetrated against us by settler colonialism are outshone by our inimitable strength; we do not accept this treatment. We owe our survival and tenacity to our ancestors, which is why we continue, relentlessly, to protest these harms and protect future generations.

The previous chapter explores the roots of the historical subjugation of Indigenous women and girls and the origins of the term 'squaw', the contemporary societal effects of our negative representation through the media-state apparatus, and the settler colonial reliance on the politics of recognition to oppress us. This chapter argues that Canadian mainstream media perpetuates the ongoing racist and misogynistic representation of Indigenous women and girls in modern-day Canada. Due to this, mainstream media contributes to the myriad of effects that our continual treatment as the 'squaw' has on our lives. This representation has enduring effects,

such as systemic oppression, higher statistical likelihood of violence perpetrated against us, and the epidemic of MMIWG (LaRocque, "The Changing Image of the Aboriginal Woman", para.8). The disparaging stereotypes ascribed to Indigenous women and girls by Canadian statecraft and that are perpetuated by mainstream media, are more than symbolic: they facilitate our multifaceted abuses (LaRocque, "The Changing Image of the Aboriginal Woman", para.8).

Indigenous women and girls have been negatively represented throughout colonial history and contemporary Canadian statecraft, thus informing Canadian citizens of our gendered and socio-economic marginalization and putting us at greater risk of violence and social harms. The aim of my thesis is to encourage transformation and accountability from mainstream media in their representations of Indigenous women and girls because this could affect the narrative of our inherent violability and disposability, thus addressing the crisis of MMIWG. I connect these themes and attempt to inspire narrative reclamation through a case study on Tina Fontaine and her media representation.

This chapter considers the role of the settler colonial media-state apparatus in the ongoing disparaging representation of Indigenous women and girls, and is exemplified in the case study of Tina Fontaine and her representation in mainstream media after she is reported missing. In 2014, fifteen-year-old child Tina Fontaine is found deceased, wrapped in a duvet weighted by rocks in Winnipeg's Red River. Fontaine's death is immediately deemed suspicious but does not spark sympathy in many Manitobans; instead, a victim-blaming narrative emerges as a direct result of how she is represented in mainstream news outlets. When Fontaine goes missing, the image released of her by mainstream media is not the one provided by her grandmother; it does not show a vibrant fifteen-year-old girl and aspiring academic who is attempting to reunite with her mother. Instead, it depicts the painful last few weeks of her short life when she is exploited

and left to fend for herself by Child and Family Services despite repeatedly seeking aid (Penrose 81). In her article, "Shining Light on the Dark Places: Addressing Police Racism and Sexualized Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls in the National Inquiry," Pam Palmater discusses how Fontaine's life and case has become synonymous with the phenomenon of MMIWG2S while also fueling systemic apathy toward crimes against Indigenous women and girls (Palmater 254). Fontaine's case is extremely important in the movement of MMIWG2S and is very widely publicized, thus providing significant content for this analysis.

The Canadian Association of Journalists released Ethics Guidelines in 2011, three years before Fontaine died. I argue that there are several guidelines that are often ignored by journalists writing about Indigenous women and girls. For example, the section on "Fairness," states that journalists must "not allow [their] own biases to impede fair and accurate reporting" ("Canadian Association of Journalists released Ethics Guidelines", para.6) When Indigenous women and girls are consistently represented as prostitutes, runaways, and substance abusers, I argue that journalists are lazily feeding into stereotypes that dehumanize us and are clearly writing unobjectively. This derogatory narrative has tangible and extreme consequences when one considers how it dehumanizes Indigenous women and girls and worsens the conditions that have made them more at risk of experiencing violence or becoming MMIWG.

In this chapter, I explore Fontaine's disparaging and dehumanizing representation from some of Winnipeg's most trusted news sources and journalists, especially in the early months and years of her case. Fontaine's treatment in media is directly related to the ways in which journalists have become alarmingly comfortable disparaging Indigenous women and girls across public forums as a result of their own indoctrination within Canadian institutions designed to oppress and eliminate us (Coulthard 37). This chapter considers the ways stereotypes and

negative representations are utilized to reinforce settler apathy toward crimes against Indigenous women and girls. This chapter provides a digital news media analysis which first 1) re-stories Fontaine's background and case in an attempt to humanize her, 2) demonstrates how visual representations are used within mainstream media to perpetuate negative stereotypes against Indigenous girls, and 3) provides a detailed assessment of Fontaine's representation within mainstream media from the Winnipeg Free Press and the Winnipeg Sun. This analysis demonstrates that her dehumanization within whitestream media is evident in the ways many WFP and WS journalists chose to report on her case, opting to represent her as no more than a substance abusing runaway youth. These sources are selected because the WFP and WS are two of the most popular and long-standing primarily settler-led whitestream news sources in Winnipeg, thus providing insight into the ways settlers are generally informed about Indigenous issues. It is important to note that while they are both settler-based, WFP tends to be more left-leaning, while WS operates with a more conservative perspective.

This methodology is mirrored in Chapter Three when discussing the culturally self-recognizing reportage of the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN). It is notable that WFS and WS are primarily print media and APTN is not, however, I argue that the majority of contemporary news is increasingly being consumed in various mediums and therefore requires a cross-platform analysis. Though based in television news and digital media, APTN provides an important sample to include because they feature varied Indigenous national voices and offer different perspectives not based in whitestream media. All articles sampled in this thesis were accessed via digital media.

Three important years of Fontaine's case (2014, 2018, and 2019) are focused on because I aimed to determine if the sources' reportage improved, worsened, or remained consistent over

time. Two random articles per source and year were selected to create a more representative sample, so as to not rely on outliers chosen through my own potential bias, such as exceptionally negative or positive articles. In addition, word clouds were generated for each of the articles to show objective data of Fontaine's representation. To create a word cloud, an article is uploaded into a cloud generator, such as in Microsoft Word, that sorts words based on frequency of appearance (minus general words such as "the") so that the reader can quickly deduce the article's priorities and themes.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Mainstream Media

The next section of this chapter explores the intersection of the epidemic of MMIWG and Canadian mainstream media. The work being done around MMIWG2S by Indigenous peoples and organizations is incredible and heart-shattering, and I am sincerely grateful to these people. This section aims to understand the larger systematic and sociological phenomena involved, humanize victims and raise awareness about the crimes committed against them, and how media plays an important role in the epidemic of MMIWG. Released in 2019, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, has been an extremely helpful resource and framework for those doing work around MMIWG. This report is selflessly informed by families of victims, survivors, and people committed to finding justice for victims and ensuring that this epidemic comes to an end. Within the overarching findings, the MMIWG final report notes that the cause of the disappearances, murders, violence, and genocide experienced by Indigenous women and girls is the result of,

> "The significant, persistent, and deliberate pattern of systemic racial and gendered human rights and Indigenous rights violations and abuses – perpetuated historically and maintained today by the Canadian state, designed

> to displace Indigenous Peoples from their land, social structures, and governance and to eradicate their existence as Nations, communities, families, and individuals" (*Reclaiming Power and Place* 174).

In 2021, an additional report is released entitled, *National Action Plan: Ending Violence Against Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People*, that is meant to plan immediate and long-term steps to address MMIWG2S.

As the aforementioned reports highlight, Indigenous women and girls are at great personal risk of experiencing violence in Canada. Indigenous women and girls experience violence 3.5 times more and are 12 times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women and girls in Canada, and 16 times more likely to be murdered than white women and girls (NWAC 3; *Reclaiming Power and Place* 3). In 2014, the RCMP reports that there were nearly 1,200 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls between 1980-2012 (Anadolu Agency, "Canada releases plan on missing, murdered Indigenous women, girls", para.4). It should be noted that this data is not reliable as RCMP did not begin noting ethnicity until recent decades. More recently, the Native Women's Association of Canada conducted their own research and put the number closer to 4,000 missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (NWAC 3).

There are countless compounding factors that make Indigenous women and girls vulnerable to various types of violence, but all of them can be related back to the ongoing effects of settler colonial statecraft and how it determines the ways we continue to be represented in mainstream media. Within recent decades, the high rates of disappearance and homicide of Indigenous women has come into focus in Canadian mainstream media. Apathy and lack of attention to these crimes is fueled by pervasive misinformation within the Canadian mainstream media. The epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls is the result of

colonial violence and the dehumanization of Indigenous women that makes them fair game to predators. There have been theories and significant research created to attempt to understand why Indigenous women are rarely presented through a decolonized lens in the mainstream media.

Aligned with the theory that the settler state requires the removal of Indigenous women and girls to ensure its sovereignty and survival, the enduring representation of us being deservingly victimized can be a useful tool of reinforcing the moral ideals of settler colonialism (A. Simpson 12). The function of this tactic is to ensure societal complicity in prejudiced and apathetic responses toward Indigenous injustices, thus putting Indigenous women and girls at greater risk of violence than any other demographic. Journalists participate in the perpetuation of the negative representation of Indigenous women and girls whether or not they are conscious of their bias and reinforcement of settler colonial degradation of Indigenous women and girls. The Canadian Association of Journalists explicitly states in several areas of their Ethical Guidelines that journalists must address their biases and ensure that their reportage is fair and accurate (para.8). I argue that crimes against Indigenous women and girls are not being taken as seriously in mainstream media as those against settler women. Kristen Gilchrist's article "'Newsworthy' Victims?' Exploring differences in Canadian local press coverage of missing/murdered Aboriginal and White Women" features interesting and tangible findings in unequal reportage based on race (7). I chose this source as Gilchrist conducted years of research with families of MMIWG2S, and though she is a settler, she provides an informed and compassionate view of those reported on. She argues that news items are not simply selected, but rather, that news shared with the public is a constructed reality that is manufactured by journalists and approved by their funding sources (Gilchrist, 7; Tuchman, 93; Stanley & Jock, 43; Schudson, 265).

Gilchrist's study focuses on six women who were missing; three of them were Indigenous and the other three were white. The study attempts to mitigate potential causes of bias by selecting victims who all fit into a "pure woman" stereotype, insofar as none were involved in the sex trade or substance users, and all were close with their families (Media Smarts, "Media Representations of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women", para.6). As seen in Chapter One's discussion of the term 'squaw', the stereotypes of pure and impure women play an important role in the ways Indigenous women and girls are misrepresented in Canadian mainstream media. There is a startling difference in the ways Indigenous victims are reported on in comparison to white victims. This degradation begins with the imposition of settler colonialism in Canada and our misalignment with male Eurocentric ideals of womanhood (Carter 72). Indigenous women and girls are perpetually represented as "fallen" and this creates conditions that have dangerous implications for the safety and well-being of Indigenous women across Canada.

This section has addressed the myriad ways that historical colonial representations of Indigenous women and girls as the 'squaw' or 'savage' contribute to Canadian statecraft, indoctrinate settlers, and put us at great personal and systemic risk of experiencing violence. The negative ways in which Indigenous women and girls continue to be represented in mainstream media, as deserving of the violence we experience, is a contributing factor to predators seeing us as fair game. Dehumanizing stereotypes are not only extremely problematic and racist, but they are also dangerous insofar as they add to the long-standing vulnerability of Indigenous women and girls. When mainstream media reports in this way, representations of Indigenous women and girls' identities are particularly criminalizing and degrade us yet again to the position of 'squaw', which is deeply aligned with the settler colonization project. The purpose of media in shaping

public opinion is based in reifying the privilege of settler colonial statecraft logics and pursuits.

Re-storying Fontaine's Life and Case

This section is an attempt to humanize Tina Fontaine and engage with cultural self-affirmation, which is a means of evading coloniality, and repudiate the ways Fontaine was represented unfairly by many Canadian mainstream media outlets (Coulthard, 78). The tragic fate of Fontaine is disturbing and painful to read; for this reason, I deliberately try to refrain from using triggering words and offer acronyms when possible. It is undeniable that Fontaine's life and her treatment before and after her death within settler colonial systems like CFS, policing, and healthcare will have a lasting effect in Canadian history. Fontaine's life experiences were not unlike the stories of countless Indigenous youth who have lived through family tragedy and are subjected to systemic harm. In March 2019, Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) released a report on Tina's death entitled *A Place Where It Feels like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine*. The report summarizes that the prevalent lack of necessary supports and services that should have been provided to her by CFS, policing, and healthcare were major factors in putting Fontaine in the circumstances that led to her death" (Penrose 8).

The MACY report provided a comprehensive analysis not only of Fontaine's life and experiences with harmful colonial systems, such as Child and Family Services (CFS), but also her parents' lives and involvement. Fontaine's parent's lives were difficult and touched by the intergenerational trauma associated with the colonial legacies of Residential Schools and CFA agencies (Penrose, 15). Her father left his reserve, Sagkeeng First Nation, at the age of twelve to move to Winnipeg where he was houseless (Penrose 15). Fontaine's mother became a permanent ward of CFS Agency 1 at the age of ten and had a birth alert placed on her at age fourteen when

she became pregnant with her first child, who is also apprehended (Penrose 15). When Fontaine is conceived, her parents had tried to positively change their situation and were able to care for her (Penrose 17). However, Fontaine and her younger sibling were apprehended and placed in a hotel several times before they were eventually placed into a foster home in 2001 (Penrose 18). Fontaine and her sibling then lived in several different homes with family members, until she went to live with her paternal great aunt (whom she called grandmother), Thelma, who is "a stabilizing force" in Fontaine's life (Penrose 21). When her father died in 2011 as a result of a head injury from an assault, her world is changed forever. Fontaine's father had stayed consistent in her life, even though she is living with her grandmother. She spoke frequently about how much she missed her father and is going through a serious period of grief (Penrose 24). During this time, there were concerns from Fontaine's family, Victim Services, and CFS about how she is coping with her father's death during the criminal processes (Penrose 26). Despite their knowledge of her difficulties, CFS and Victim Services did not provide Fontaine with aid (Penrose 21).

Penrose argued that Fontaine would have greatly benefitted from receiving support for her mental health, which should have been provided by Child and Family Services and/or Victim Services, but it was never afforded to her (9). Difficulty accessing these resources is especially common and dire toward the end of her life, as they were either unavailable or ill-coordinated (Penrose 9). It is particularly troubling that even though she is experiencing serious mental health needs after her father's passing, she is "…never provided with a single counselling session or other cultural healing, despite ongoing assessments and recommendations that this is a critical need in her life" (Penrose 9). This is a significant example of an important intervention necessary for Fontaine's health and wellbeing that is not offered by the system in control of her life.

Unfortunately, likely in part due to the lack of supports she received, Fontaine developed acute addictions in her final months of life (Penrose 9).

Fontaine had an increasing urge to spend time with her mother, possibly due to her navigating the loss of her father. Her grandmother promised that if Fontaine worked diligently in school and continued to receive high marks that she would be able to spend a week with her mother in Winnipeg. Fontaine is subsequently off to visit her mother and, as we now know, this would be the last time Thelma would see her granddaughter. During her short time in Winnipeg, Fontaine is ousted by her mother, experimenting with drugs and alcohol, experiencing increased violence, and is sexually exploited by adult men who preyed upon her (Penrose 9). The MACY report looked closely at Fontaine's experience as an exploited youth and how she is taken advantage of by adults around her. The report stated that "…it is a difficult fact that Tina is exploited by adults and that Manitoba has a shameful reputation for the numbers of children and youth who are preyed upon every year in our province" (Penrose 10). Ultimately, systemic neglect, numerous tragedies, and negative influence of select adults culminated in the loss of Fontaine's short life.

Tina Fontaine is found deceased in Winnipeg's Red River on August 18, 2014, one week after she is reported missing. An investigation swiftly began, and it became clear how multiple settler colonial systems had failed Fontaine. Katie Nicholson, an Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN) journalist, wrote an article detailing that, while it is not known the exact date Fontaine left this earth, on the last day she is seen alive the police, medical system, and child welfare system all came into contact with her and none of them threw her a direly necessary lifeline ("Tiny Girl, Big Movement", para.3). In fact, Winnipeg Police Services (WPS) had contact with Fontaine twice after her name is flagged as a missing person and failed to provide

meaningful intervention to ensure her safety. Fontaine's death has been characterized not just as a crime but as an “abject failure of the child welfare system” (Nicholson, para.4). As mentioned, the child welfare system also had contact with Fontaine during this time and did not act in accordance with their safety mandates for children in their care, thus leaving Tina vulnerable to predatory influence. In a chilling video clip, Kerri Irwin-Ross, the Manitoba Minister of Family Services (in 2014) commented on Fontaine’s death a month after she is found. Irwin-Ross can be seen visibly smiling throughout her comments when she stated that, “I’m always upset when a child has been murdered” (Ward, “Latest revelations in Tina Fontaine case leave many believing ‘system failed’”, para.4). With a slight titter in her voice, she went on to say, “that’s not okay. No Manitoban will accept that” (Ward, para.4). It is not my intention to speculate on why she may have been smiling or laughing, but Irwin-Ross is clearly not acting in a way that showed she understood the gravity of what she is commenting on or lending much care to this incredibly tragic and important case. With an ill-informed and tactless comment, Irwin-Ross finished by saying, “so, what I think we need to do now is ensure we are supporting the police so they can do their investigation and Family Services is fully cooperating with them” (Ward, para.5). The APTN journalist notes that Irwin-Ross admitted that “she is not aware the police had contact with Fontaine hours before she is last seen alive” (Ward, para.6). The public had already been made aware that WPS had been in contact with Fontaine on the last day she is seen, so it can be argued that Irwin-Ross is ill-prepared to speak on Fontaine’s case, which is undoubtedly part of her position’s job description. Between her inappropriate behaviour during the interview and advice to the public to trust the police and stay out of their way while they investigate a case that their negligence may have had a hand in causing, Irwin-Ross’s negligence calls into question not only her capacity to be Manitoba’s Minister of Family Services, but also the depth of attention

that is paid to crimes against Indigenous children.

Representation

When Tina Fontaine was found, her treatment conforms with representations of most missing Indigenous women and girls by mainstream media outlets. There are articles that affirm her dignity, and others which represent her as a troubled at-risk youth, runaway, sex worker, and substance abuser. While it is true that Fontaine is an exploited youth, it should be a priority for police and media sharing information about missing people to ensure that they are humanized and that their representation is not limited to stereotypes. The image released of Fontaine did not show an intelligent fifteen-year-old girl who is attempting to reunite with her mother. Instead, it depicts the last few weeks of her short life when she is exploited and left to fend for herself by Child and Family Services, despite seeking aid. The photo used widely by media resembles a mugshot, which is taken after Fontaine had been in Winnipeg for a couple of weeks and is not provided by her family. I have purposefully decided not to include this photo as Fontaine's family has asked that it no longer be used and because I refuse to perpetuate her negative representation (Simpson 10). Instead, I will objectively describe the photo because there are particular markers of race and class that right-wing news sources sought to capitalize on in Fontaine's case. The photo shows Fontaine donning a blunt and edgy haircut, large hoop earrings, and her skin appears darker. I argue that the strategic over-representation of this photo in mainstream media, insofar as it reinforces damaging and erroneous stereotypes about Indigenous girls, aligns with settler statecraft's racist politics of recognition and promotes apathy toward crimes committed against us.

In one Globe and Mail article, this photo is accompanied by the heading: “Tina Fontaine had alcohol, drugs in system when she is killed: toxicologist.” The title has since been changed to “Expert tells Winnipeg murder trial he could not determine cause of Tina Fontaine’s death,” amid outrage for its language that evokes victim-blaming as though she is somehow culpable for her fate (The Globe and Mail). The Winnipeg Free Press and The Winnipeg Sun generally used the same images in the beginning of Fontaine’s case. As time went on, The Winnipeg Free Press did share photos that were less evocative of stereotypes, but The Winnipeg Sun continued to use the photos from Fontaine’s time in Winnipeg in summer 2014. APTN consistently used photos provided by Fontaine’s family, as well as many from rallies and walks in her honour.

Figure 2: Photo of Tina Fontaine shared by her family.

As one would hope, the photo used by Manitoba Youth Advocate on the cover of their report, ‘A Place that Feels like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine,’ is from Fontaine’s grandmother. Tina’s skin appears lighter, and she looks like an average, thoughtful 14-year-old

girl. This image is taken by Fontaine herself and due to this, one could say this is how she wanted to be seen and represented. Fontaine's voice and dignity have been overwhelmingly ignored, so it is important to consider her agency and wishes when sharing her photos.

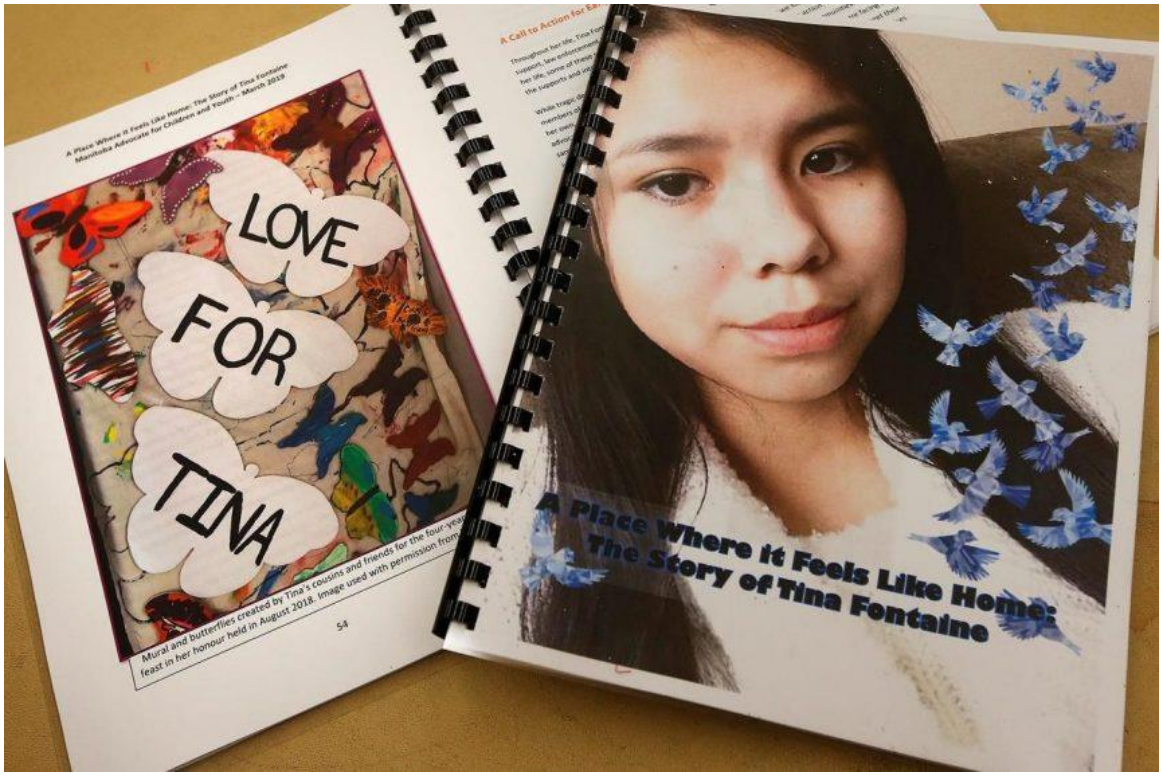


Figure 3: Photo taken by Tina Fontaine that is used as the cover of the MACY report.

In Fontaine's case, one can consistently see how Canadian mainstream media perpetuates disparaging depictions of Indigenous peoples, which often leads to societal apathy and to many non-Indigenous people believing Indigenous peoples are to blame for what happens to them. In fact, a family member who participated in the investigation told the MACY office that they "had been disturbed in the photos of Tina from this time" (Penrose 48). They spoke of the photo used in the media release (Figure 1), in which Tina's hair is cut short. It actually shocked the family member who notes that Tina had always been so proud of her long hair and had prided herself in its care (Penrose 48). The family member told MACY that "…this image is significant to them

as it represented for them how drastically Tina's life had changed since she had been in Winnipeg" (Penrose 48). The images and character judgements released in mainstream media about Fontaine undoubtedly shaped, not only how people viewed her case, but also the blame that is placed upon a child for her fate.

Analysis of Fontaine's Media Representation

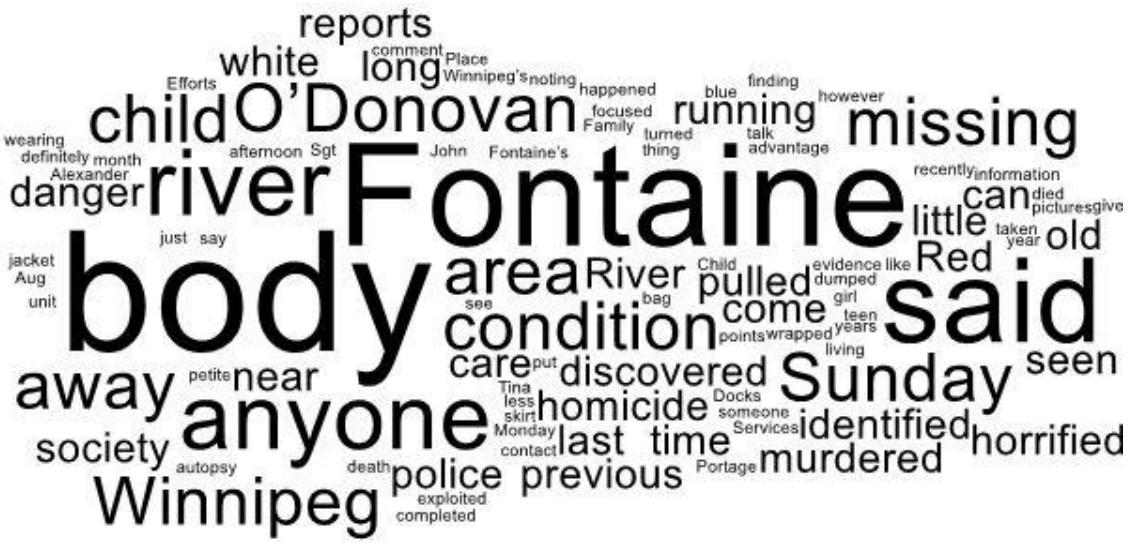
Methodology

This chapter aims to critically discuss the media representation of Tina Fontaine's death from two Canadian mainstream media sources: The *Winnipeg Free Press* (WFP) and The *Winnipeg Sun* (WS). As two of the most popular and long-standing news sources in Winnipeg and as primarily settler-led, the WFP and WS are featured as both provide insight into the ways settlers are generally informed about Indigenous issues. It is important to note that while they are both settler-based, WFP tends to be more left-leaning, while WS has a more conservative perspective.

The articles discussed were obtained through each news outlet's online source rather than print media. In order to understand the perspective of each outlet, relevant history and political leaning is noted. Two articles from three noteworthy years in Fontaine's case are analyzed from WFP and WS (and APTN in Chapter Three). The years in question are 2014 when Fontaine is found; 2018 when Raymond Cormier, the alleged perpetrator in her death, is declared not guilty; and 2019 when MACY released their report. Three separate analyses of the media outlets are presented, rather than presenting findings by year. Each article is chosen at random so as to not allow personal subjectivity to play a role in selection process. Within this analysis, information is presented about whether historical and humanizing context is included. A word cloud generated

for each article through Microsoft Word provides evidence of which words are used more frequently. Word clouds are a widely used and objective computer-generated data analysis process. I decided to apply this visualization technique because I find it interesting to consider which keywords readers remember most from articles, consciously or not; word clouds mirror our retention practices. The method was created by social psychologist Stanley Milgrim in 1976 in an effort to share text-based study data in a comprehensible way (Cao 7). To eliminate redundancy, frequently appearing words used in all of the word clouds (below), such as "the", "a", "and", etc. were not included.

The content analysis includes a micro-analysis into the types of words used and whether care is placed into respectful and Nation-appropriate language. The word-cloud micro-analysis works to determine whether the article properly refers to Fontaine as "Indigenous," as a "child," if she is called a less socially acceptable term for Indigenous peoples, if she is not identified at all, or if she is referred to as an adult woman. A macro-analysis evaluates the content of the article to determine how Fontaine is represented and if contextually relevant information informs the reader of the ways in which settler colonialism and racism condition her death and case. In addition, the macro-analysis is intended to gauge whether the journalist in question utilizes a compassionate or judgemental tone. This methodology allows me to analyze articles pertaining to Fontaine from qualitative and quantitative lenses, which forms a more holistic and complete understanding of her representation.



Cumulative Winnipeg Sun Word Cloud

Cumulative Winnipeg Free Press Word Cloud

Analysis: The Winnipeg Sun

The first mainstream media outlet to be analyzed in this thesis is the *Winnipeg Sun*, which is a division of Post Media, located in Toronto. It originally came to be in the fall of 1980 when

the *Winnipeg Tribune*'s publication is closed after ninety-years, which would have left the *Winnipeg Free Press* as the city's only newspaper (*Winnipeg Sun*, "About Us", para.2). It is branded as "A New Voice" and continues to share many features of a typical Sun tabloid paper. It generally focuses on local news stories, a conservative editorial stance, sports, and of course, a daily "Sunshine Girl" photo, which many find problematic to feature in a newspaper, though I was unable to find any critical work on this topic (*Winnipeg Sun,* "About Us", para.2). The *Winnipeg Sun* describes the "Sunshine Girl" feature as "Photos of Sexy Girls'; the Toronto Sun says, "Browse Hot Photos of Sexy Models"; and the Ottawa Sun names it "Sexy Photos of Beautiful Women" (The *Winnipeg Sun* Wikipedia, para.6). For the "Sunshine Girl" feature, a woman over eighteen years of age can upload up to twenty photos (historically just one in print media) and two sentences of information about themselves. The process of becoming a "Sunshine Girl" is consensual and many women may view it as a steppingstone into modelling. Whether or not the Winnipeg Sun is conscious of it, I argue that the inclusion of this feature in The *Winnipeg Sun* functions to embed, normalize and empower the male gaze while also devaluing women's societal value as sexual objects. I remember seeing these photos in the newspaper as a child, feeling insecure about my appearance, and internalizing the idea that women should strive to attain these standards of beauty and femininity.

The *Winnipeg Sun*'s inclusion of such a feature calls into question its ability to appropriately write about gender and cover stories on Indigenous women and girls' experiences, as their reportage is informed by and upholds settler colonial patriarchal statecraft. As is evident in the first chapter's discussion on historical colonial writings, Canada has long been writing about Indigenous women and girls in a dehumanized, sexualized, and fetishized way. Given their predominantly white male journalist and reader base, *Winnipeg Sun*'s sexist inclusion of the

"Sunshine Girl" feature sets the tone for readers, priming consumers to engage with misogynistic and whitewashed content which views Indigenous women and girls as dehumanized fodder and clickbait[5]. Unfortunately, this is exactly how Fontaine is represented in the forthcoming Winnipeg Sun news articles.

One former columnist for the Winnipeg Sun, Tom Brodbeck, who now works for the Winnipeg Free Press, wrote many controversial and right-wing pieces concerning Indigenous peoples that may be construed as quite offensive. His highlight reel includes an article praising Dave Wheeler, a contentious radio host who has been fired in the past for making racist, sexist, and transphobic remarks, for his "hard-hitting" interview berating Nancy MacDonald for her McLean's article, "Welcome to Winnipeg: Where Canada's racism problem is at its worst" (Billeck, para 2; Brodbeck, "Many flaws in Maclean's story about Winnipeg's race problem", para.1; Macdonald). Interestingly, his current reportage features very different sentiments, such as that we all have a part to play in reversing the damage of Residential Schools. Did he become more informed and change his opinion, or did he simply change his tune because it is less trendy to be politically incorrect now? Moreover, tone is generally set by the news source itself, meaning that journalists know what is expected of them and what they can get away with.

Winnipeg Sun: 2014, Article 1

The first article featured from the *Winnipeg Sun* is written on August 18, 2014, by Kristin Annable on the day after Fontaine is found, and is entitled, "Teen runaway's body found in Red River" (para.1). The word cloud for this article features words such as, "child", "homicide",

[5] "Clickbait" refers to the practice of writing sensationalized or misleading headlines in order to attract clicks on a piece of content on the internet.

"runaway." Annable does not include whether Fontaine is Indigenous but does include quotes that refer to her as a child. While describing the retrieval of Fontaine, Annable states that "all evidence points that her body is dumped there by someone else" (para.2). The usage of the word "dumped" connotes imagery related to garbage dumps and disposal, which is undoubtedly a distasteful way to refer to the loss of a life, especially a child. Annable quotes Sgt. John O'Donovan, of Winnipeg's homicide unit who notes that Fontaine had, "definitely been exploited and taken advantage of", referring to the high likelihood that she had been involved in trafficking (para.3). Annable also included Donovan's comment that Fontaine "had a history of running away and rebelling from the care she is in" (para.5). In addition, the missing person's report falsely stated that Fontaine frequented Winnipeg, which is an exaggeration as it is known that this is her first trip there alone. Annable's representation of Fontaine being an exploited runaway who is dumped in the Red River is not aligned with the portrait already released by her family. It is interesting that Annable chooses only to include information provided by Sgt. John O'Donovan and not the words or pictures provided by those that loved her, even though her family had already attempted to humanize Fontaine during their pleas for her safe return.

Winnipeg Sun: 2014, Article 2

On September 27, 2014, the *Winnipeg Sun* prints an article by Tom Brodbeck[6] entitled, "Still much we don't know about Tina Fontaine's death." The word cloud for this article highlights the words, "runaway," "killed," and "streets." Brodbeck begins the article by begging the question, "What do you do with a troubled, runaway teen caught up in a seedy lifestyle who

[6] Through my random selection process, Tom Brodbeck came up the vast majority of the time. I was unable to find many articles about Tina that he did not write, suggesting that he was summoned by the *Winnipeg Sun* as their voice on the Fontaine case.

refuses help, has little to no family support and is bound and determined to return to the streets under almost any circumstances?" (para.1.) Through his style of reportage on Fontaine's case, one can already surmise that Brodbeck is ill-informed not only on her life and case, but also on the systemic racism and harms Indigenous people face. In addition, his language seems negatively biased against Fontaine, and calls into question his reliability to write about her in an objective, reasonable, and dignified way. His response to his own question is: "if anyone has the answer to that, they may be in a position to start casting blame on police, child and family services and society in general for the death of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine" (para.4). It seems he understood that people make the connection between at-risk youth and systems having a part to play in their vulnerabilities. However, Brodbeck states that anyone who believes police and CFS workers are at all responsible or do not care about Fontaine's death "should be ashamed of themselves" (para.6). Due to comments such as this and Brodbeck's deep dive into police protocol and opinion that police are without blame, Brodbeck's pro-police ideology clearly informs the way he is representing Fontaine. I argue that a person does not need to be against humanizing Indigenous children in order to be pro-police, but this type of opinion demonstrates how deeply embedded settler statecraft indoctrination is in Canada. In addition, he states that people who criticize the police and CFS have "very little credibility," however he does not state why he perceives them as such, thus providing no reasons as to why settler colonial systems do not play a part in cases such as Fontaine's (Brodbeck, para.7). It is also important to note that Brodbeck is influenced by and feeding into a narrative that is largely unquestioned by white settlers who are rarely, if ever, subjects of racial policing.

The way Brodbeck writes about Fontaine is oozing with victim-blaming rhetoric, as when he falsely states that "Whatever the real story is, Fontaine is not receptive to help…she is intent

on breaking free of CFS" (para.9). It is very well-documented that Fontaine did attempt to access supports from CFS and shelters but is turned away. However, Brodbeck could not have known whether Fontaine sought help, so him deciding that Fontaine is not receptive and is intent on being a runaway is not only incredibly irresponsible journalism, it also culpabilizes Fontaine and takes accountability away from the murderer and the systems responsible for her. Brodbeck is intent on representing Fontaine as an unreachable, troubled youth, as when he writes: "Fontaine would have been back on the street eventually, unless somebody is able to make a connection with her to turn her life around" (para.9). Fontaine's grandmother and family had already shared many pictures and humanizing stories of Fontaine that indicated she is a vibrant and intelligent youth who had very recently moved to Winnipeg. The tone of police reportage on Fontaine's case does not change with the information provided by her family because of the Winnipeg Police Service's intent to protect their own agents from accountability. It has also been found that other mainstream media were not as egregious as the Winnipeg Sun in their representations of Fontaine. Brodbeck purposefully chooses to share a false narrative with the public – one that aligns with the racist and sexist stereotypes he approves of, and the settler statecraft indoctrination that informed his opinions of Indigenous women and girls. While Brodbeck unjustifiably places blame on a child for their own vulnerability, it is equally disturbing that he could rationalize publicly asserting this stance about a very recently murdered child.

Winnipeg Sun: 2018, Article 3

On February 22, 2018, another article by Tom Brodbeck is released entitled, "Tina Fontaine murder case never had a chance". The word cloud for this article prominently features the words, "Cormier," "evidence," and "verdict." Brodbeck begins the article by acknowledging

Fontaine's Indigeneity and that she has been "let down by a lot of people" (para.1). However, he immediately argues that she has not been let down by the police who investigated her case or the justice system (para.1). In Brodbeck's opinion, the case against Cormier is doomed from the outset, due to a lack of evidence and testimonies from "unreliable, drug abusing criminals" (para.2). He goes as far as to state that it is "amazing the case even went to trial" (para.2). This comment stands in stark contrast to Palmater's opinion that the jury could have found Cormier guilty based on the evidence presented to the court, and that many people (namely, people of colour) have been convicted on much less evidence (APTN InFocus, "Tina Fontaine: The life and the legacy").

Brodbeck makes unfounded claims about Fontaine's case, including that there is no evidence that she is assaulted. I argue that this is incorrect for two reasons: 1) Fontaine could not have put herself in that situation, thus there is no denying that she is assaulted, and 2) her body is in such a state, due to the water and time lapsed before she is found, that the coroner went on record stating that they were unable to retrieve a sample which would definitively prove whether or not she had been assaulted (Penrose 57). Due to these points, it is inappropriate for Brodbeck to wrongfully share with the public that she did not endure an assault, especially as he is making erroneous assumptions.

Brodbeck goes on to note that if people are attempting to draw parallels between the case of Colton Bushie and Fontaine, that they should be careful to do so because "there aren't any" (para.4). Palmater, who is a legal expert, stated that there are many similarities in how these two cases were handled and mishandled, and that both are instances of prosecution of settlers in crimes against Indigenous peoples being carried out improperly (APTN InFocus, "Tina Fontaine: The life and the legacy"). However, it seems that Canadian legal processes are being carried out

exactly as they were meant to – to uphold settler colonial statecraft, white supremacy, and Indigenous subjugation, which accounts for the overrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples within the Canadian Justice System. Canadian statecraft laws and policies are intentionally designed not to secure justice for Indigenous, economically disadvantaged, and racialized peoples (Palmater 271). The same is true for settler colonial statecraft's influence on the construction of mainstream media – it is yet another system that harms and encourages the distribution of negative representation of Indigenous women and girls.

It is not appropriate for a journalist to propose conclusions for public consumption, as Brodbeck is not an informed or reliable source on Canadian law or Fontaine's case. Brodbeck's opinions about Fontaine and her case have not changed from his article above from 2014. He is still intent on placing character judgements on Fontaine and representing her as someone who is deserving of the treatment she received due to her life choices. By denying Fontaine's assault, he took it upon himself to absolve the perpetrator of this crime. Brodbeck also compared Fontaine and Bushie's cases, likely in an attempt to evoke similar judgement from settlers for Fontaine as is present against Bushie. In short, Brodbeck knows the audience of the *Winnipeg Sun* would not bat an eye at whitewashed and misogynistic reporting, and he is intent on deliberately fomenting division and othering between settlers and Indigenous peoples.

Winnipeg Sun: 2018, Article 4

On March 19, 2018, Tom Brodbeck wrote another article about Fontaine entitled "No grounds for public inquiry in Tina Fontaine case." The word cloud for this article highlights the words, "inquiry," "police," and "system." He begins the article with the following statement: "It's hard to imagine what a commission of inquiry into the death of Tina Fontaine would

accomplish" (Brodbeck, para.1). Brodbeck argues that Fontaine's case does not warrant an inquiry because they should be reserved for learning about systemic failures and to generate solutions to ensure such tragedies are not repeated (para.2). He notes a case of a white woman killed in a hit-and-run by an off-duty police officer that he considers to actually be worthy of further inquiry. Brodbeck believes this case is worthy of a report because of "corruption in policing, cover-ups and a failure by police to properly and effectively investigate one of their own" (para.3). However, it has been well-documented that all of the same issues are present in cases of MMIWG2S, whether the perpetrator is part of the police community or not, including in Fontaine's case, wherein police never admitted to the public that they had been in contact with Fontaine, a known missing person, during a traffic stop. Only one month after her death, CBC reported that police had been in contact with Fontaine twenty-four hours before she was reported missing in several articles, so Brodbeck would have been aware of this when he wrote this article four years later as he was the main journalist reporting on Fontaine's case for the Winnipeg Sun (CBC, "Tina Fontaine died because police, CFS failed her, family says"). This is, once again, an example of police cover-up and failure to investigate properly and effectively one of their own in cases involving Indigenous women and girls. He also notes that there were "deep-rooted problems within the policing culture," which he refers to in the past tense, as if to imply that this is no longer an issue (Brodbeck, para.4).

Brodbeck then recalls the case of Phoenix Sinclair in disturbing detail, in order to affirm that this case, in his opinion, warranted an inquiry, and possibly to avoid being accused of favouring non-Indigenous cases. He goes on to note how expensive and time-consuming inquiries are, thus ascribing colonial values to cases deemed worthy of further investigation. Brodbeck argues that the decision not to hold an inquiry does not mean that Fontaine's life isn't

valued, but that the money would be better spent "improving the child welfare system and on ameliorating conditions in First Nations communities" (para.6). This sweeping argument is a gross oversimplification which plays on the reader's emotions and 'common sense' in a way that diminishes the importance of Fontaine's life. Not only does Brodbeck notably position himself as an authority in allocating funds in cases like these, but it is also extremely unlikely that the funds in question would ever be funnelled towards both options proposed. This is yet another example of a settler removing agency from Indigenous peoples to be able to decide how a so-called improvement such as this could be implemented. Furthermore, why should a choice need to be made between these options and an inquiry? Recalling Coulthard's arguments about the politics of recognition, Brodbeck re-imposes a reductive settler solution while insidiously treating Indigenous peoples as "wards of the state" (34).

Winnipeg Sun: 2019, Article 5

On March 16, 2019, Brian Giesbrecht, a retired judge and Senior Fellow at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, wrote an article for the *Winnipeg Sun* entitled "The sad legacy of Tina Fontaine." The word cloud for this article highlights words such as, "Indigenous," "agencies," and "women." His article outlines his opinions on the MACY report of Fontaine's life and how it "…resulted in media acceptance of the Advocate's focus on systemic issues rather than laying primary responsibility on her family and Indigenous community" (Giesbrecht, para.1). It is clear to the reader that Giesbrecht is not only writing from a place of bias, and that he has an agenda to alter what the public is hearing from mainstream media. Jeanenne Fontaine was murdered in 2017, three years after her cousin Tina Fontaine. Giesbrecht compares the two cases, noting that both were meth users who were murdered, but that the "one essential difference between the two

cases" is that Jeanenne's assailants were Indigenous males whereas Tina is allegedly murdered by a white male (para.5). Noting that Tina became the poster child for MMIWG2S, he states that Jeanenne's case is much more representative because "…the majority of abused, missing, and murdered Indigenous women are victims of Indigenous men, only a tiny minority are victims of non-Indigenous men" (Giesbrecht, para.6). However, the claim that Indigenous men are the ones mainly responsible in the abuse and deaths of Indigenous women is proven to be false. Further, this representation is deeply aligned with that of the 'savage' and violent Indigenous man, which, according to LaRocque, began appearing early in settler colonial historical writings as a "psychosocial fixed condition" (41). Bernard Valcourt, the federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for the Harper government from 2013 to 2015, opposed the need for an inquiry into MMIWG and claimed that Indigenous men made up 70 percent of crimes against Indigenous women, which allegedly left non-Indigenous men to make up 30 percent (CBC, "Former Harper-era minister doubles down on calling MMIWG inquiry report 'propagandist'", para.13). Even if this false statistic is true, 30 percent will never hold up as "a tiny minority" (McIntosh, "We fact-checked a viral claim about who's killing MMIWG. It is wrong", para.2). Regardless, Cindy Blackstock, Gitxsan activist for child welfare, executive director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, and professor at McGill University, has gone on record as stating that the people declaring said statistics are "cherry-picking unreliable evidence without context that is not factually based" (McIntosh, para.3). In addition, the RCMP has never revealed how they arrived at that statistical figure, which also has never been included in any of their reports. In fact, until very recently, RCMP did not actually record whether victims

or offenders were Indigenous, thus also calling into question the contentiously low ~1200 figure of MMIWG[7] also released by RCMP.

Giesbrecht continues on to say that the MACY report is "egregiously bad" and that "Spoiler alert: from the Advocate's view all the bad guys are non-Indigenous" (para.6). He believes that Fontaine's family and her community should be blamed for her death, due to his assertions that her band council have high salaries and that her parents failed her with their "binge-drinking lifestyles" (Giesbrecht, para.6). Giesbrecht questions why the report did not place responsibility on Fontaine's Winnipeg relatives, arguing that in their care, she ended up "dying as an underweight, drug-addicted prostitute" (para. 7). It is shocking and disturbing that Giesbrecht would choose to refer to a murdered child in such terms. He is undoubtedly using language that appeals to likeminded and white readership. In his conclusion, he questions whether MACY is guilty of racism to "blame only non-Indigenous people and agencies," while seemingly giving Indigenous people "a pass" (para.8). In addition, he argues that the MACY report promotes a "victim-narrative" because of how they assert that colonialism and residential schools caused systemic inequities for Indigenous people that continue to harm us (Giesbrecht, para.9). The Winnipeg Sun's decision to print such a hateful and factually incorrect article is appalling. Further, it is important to clarify that reverse racism does not exist; these techniques are increasingly used by right-wing settlers to further the settler statecraft project. While *Winnipeg Free Press* reportage improves throughout the years of this analysis, in comparison, the *Winnipeg Sun* appears emboldened to spew increasingly racist and sexist material over this shared span of time.

[7] Not MMIWG2S, as girls and Two Spirit people were not included in the RCMP figure.

There were no other articles or opinion pieces written about Tina Fontaine released by the *Winnipeg Sun* in 2019. It should be noted that this is also the year that Tom Brodbeck, known as the main source for writing about Tina's life and case, became a *Winnipeg Free Press* columnist. Following Brodbeck's departure, the *Winnipeg Sun* begins releasing articles written by the Canadian Press rather than reporting on Tina's case themselves. The MACY report is released in 2019 and mainstream media has a responsibility to inform the public about important case updates, especially in one like Fontaine's that has a pervasive and local effect.

Analysis: Winnipeg Free Press

This analysis begins with a brief history of the *Winnipeg Free Press* to understand its usual stance and political leaning. Known as the oldest newspaper in Western Canada, publishing since 1872, the Winnipeg Free Press also boasts of having the largest newsroom west of Toronto (Winnipeg Free Press, "About Us", para 1). Their "About Us" page states that, "The Free Press creates strong and trustworthy journalism that is committed to truth, transparency and democracy" (Winnipeg Free Press, para.2). This declaration connotes that the newspaper works diligently to be unbiased and fair in the stories it covers and to the reader. As a centrist news source, the WFP is working hard to represent themselves as trustworthy and humanizing, but are they truly? This question is discussed further in the article content analyses.

It is worth noting that in the second line of their "About Us" statement, they note that they publish on Treaty 1 Land and the Homeland of the Métis Nation, though it is not publicly known when they included this information (*Winnipeg Free Press,* para.3). Based on their commitment to Indigenous inclusion and raising awareness about Indigenous issues being within

recent years, it is likely that is not on the website in 2014 when Fontaine went missing, and definitely not when publication began in 1872. Regardless, although territorial acknowledgements are relatively common nowadays, its inclusion legitimizes the Winnipeg Free Press' commitment to prioritize reconciliation, even if potentially performative, and it shows that they understand their responsibility as a major Winnipeg mainstream media outlet.

Winnipeg Free Press: 2014, Article 1

On August 18, 2014, the *Winnipeg Free Press* published an article entitled, "Missing girl identified as body pulled from river," the day after Fontaine is found, but did not name the author. Besides the aforementioned general words found in all the articles, the word cloud created for this article highlights the words, "wrapped," "run away," and "missing," but did not specify her ethnicity. However, in the accompanying video from the police press conference, they acknowledge that she is "Aboriginal." In addition, they note that she is a child in "care" when referencing her status as a child under the care of CFS. Despite their knowledge that she is child in care, they still refer to her as a woman (WFP, para.2). In the first sentence, they refer to her as someone who "r[a]n away from care," which they then mention two additional times in the short article. This repetition instructs the reader to culpabilize Fontaine herself rather than the perpetrator or the colonial structure. The article does not comment on the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirit people, systemic harms of settler colonialism, or racism.

Winnipeg Free Press: 2014, Article 2

The second randomly chosen article, written by Bruce Owen from the Winnipeg Free Press, is entitled "Slain teen's CFS file to be reviewed: Fontaine placed in city foster home, had run away before." This article is released on August 20, 2014, two days after Fontaine is found. Within the title, the article already introduces the reader to the representation of Fontaine as a runaway. The most visible words in the word cloud are "Aboriginal," "suffering," "vulnerable," and "inquiry." The article uses the word "Aboriginal" a total of six times, but not "Indigenous" or nation-specific language for Fontaine. This is common terminology for WFP reportage during this time, however, media outlets like APTN had already made the important move toward nation-affirming language. Owen's article focuses on Manitoba Children's Advocate's (MCA) plan to investigate Fontaine's death, which led them to create the MACY report covered earlier in this chapter. Owen notes that it is MCA's responsibility to investigate all child deaths in the province, it has the authority to conduct special investigations if CFS is involved in the child's life, and it should determine the quality and type of service that is provided (Owen, para.3). The article also notes that Fontaine's case reignites the call for a national inquiry into "missing and slain aboriginal woman" (Owen, para.5). While this article appears to be more aware of the larger social discussions about MMIWG2S, they repeatedly use the word "slain" and did not capitalize "Aboriginal."

The article includes quotes from Manitoba Aboriginal Affairs Minister Eric Robinson at the time of Fontaine's death, regarding the tragedy of the case and the need for an inquiry to help the families get answers (Owen, para.6). It also mentions that the Native Women's Association of Canada supports an inquiry, but that Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Federal Justice Minister Peter MacKay both reject such a need (Owen, para.6). Owen includes

statistics about the overwhelming prevalence of Indigenous women as missing or murdered persons. He raises questions about CFS's involvement and capacity when he states that "…in the last three years, 28 children have committed suicide while under the supervision of social workers and six children with open or recently closed child welfare case files were killed in homicides" (Owen, para.7). In addition, a quote featured from Progressive Conservative MLA Ian Wishart also questions CFS, their culpability in Fontaine's death, Fontaine's quality of care, and whether they have addressed the ~1000 recommendations that were made in the past decade from coroner's inquests (Owen, para.8). Wishart adds that "if anything is to be learned by Fontaine's death, it's that the system needs to do a better job of protecting vulnerable children" (Owen, para.9). Indeed, it does, but "the system" Wishart refers to is built upon and deeply steeped in settler colonial ideology and power.

Overall, this *Winnipeg Free Press* article reflects awareness of Indigenous issues and includes a compassionate perspective, not only of Fontaine's case but of MMIWG2S more generally. Owen uses of the term "Aboriginal" and the absence of nation-specific language conveys lack of understanding about preferred terms at the time. However, Fontaine being reduced to 'a runaway' several times is problematic and works to stereotype Fontaine in the mind of readers. The informative and lingering effects of this trope upon readers are not to be underestimated.

Winnipeg Free Press: 2018, Article 3

Three and a half years after Fontaine is found, an article by Katie May of the *Winnipeg Free Press* entitled "Tina Fontaine's drug use under microscope at murder trial," is published on January 30, 2018. The word cloud for the article highlights "alcohol," "drugs," and "levels." The

article factually recounts the details of Cormier's trial without conveying a detectable bias on the topic. May properly refers to Fontaine as a "girl" but does not identify her as Indigenous. It is important to note that Cormier's substance abuse issues are not discussed in the article, and that readers are never informed that Cormier was the one to provide Fontaine with drugs (May, para.3).

May delves into the trial against Raymond Cormier for the alleged second-degree murder of Tina Fontaine, and considers whether Fontaine's use of gabapentin, an anti-seizure medication, could have caused her death. Despite not being detected in her toxicology report, May reports that the Crown's case suggests that Fontaine's use of gabapentin could have been fatal. While there were levels of alcohol and marijuana detected, the forensic toxicologist confirms that drug levels could be exaggerated due to the state of Fontaine's body when she is found (May, para.4). In addition, no traces of cocaine or methamphetamines were detected (May, para.4). However, the forensic toxicologist "would not rule out completely" the possibility that Fontaine died due to substances, despite having no lethal drugs in her system, which is considered a major win for Cormier's defence team (May, para.4). While it would have been easy to add in stereotyping language or tone in an article about Fontaine's substance use, May does not engage in it, unlike Cormier's lawyers and many other journalists who do at the time. She does not provide any colonial context or structural understanding that may be useful when discussing an Indigenous person's substance use. May seems to focus exclusively on the details of the day in court in order to maintain an impartial reading. However, settler readers would benefit from added context about the effects of colonization in this instance. The article provides a shallow account of Fontaine's substance use as scrutinized in court. It would benefit from deeper engagement with the structures and agents which enabled the substance use in the first

place, including the murderer's abetment, in a way which would mitigate public scrutiny of Fontaine, who is a child.

Winnipeg Free Press: 2018, Article 4

Jessica Botelho-Urbanski's article in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, entitled "Tina's voice brings courtroom to tears: Sadness overwhelms proceedings as teen's call to 911 played," is also released on January 30, 2018. The word cloud for this article underlines words like "Favel" (Tina's Grandmother's last name), "family," "Cormier," and "Indigenous." Botelho-Urbanski opens the article by stating that "a deluge of words has already been spilled about Tina Fontaine," which reads as an acknowledgement of the various perspectives, opinions, and judgements placed upon this child who will never get to tell her own story or have agency in her representation (para.1). Not only does the article properly refer to Fontaine as a child, Botelho-Urbanski also notes her Indigeneity and the community she came from, Sagkeeng First Nation.

The article recalls how difficult it is for Thelma Favel and Fontaine's family to hear her voice on an audio recording in court. Botelho-Urbanski visually and emotionally guides the reader to understand the pain endured by Fontaine's family as they are called in court to bear witness. The first responders testifying were visibly upset while recounting the state in which they found Fontaine. Botelho-Urbanski adds: "hearing the bleak testimonies stung for relative strangers, so one can only imagine how Tina's family is feeling" (para.3). Statements like these generate meaningful responses from WFS' readership, which stand in stark contrast to the previous WFS 2018 article written by May. Rather than providing a detached account of a court day, Botelho-Urbanski strives to evoke empathy and understanding in a horrible situation that helps to humanize Fontaine and her family. Journalism and media are cornerstones of sharing the

human experience, which is what Botelho-Urbanski is able to do. She acknowledges the red ribbons visible on Fontaine's family's lapels and how Fontaine has inadvertently become the MMIWG2S poster child (Botelho-Urbanski, para.5). She handles the subject matter carefully and seems to empathize with families affected by the genocide of MMIWG2S. While discussing this crisis, she states that "hundreds of other families with missing or murdered loved ones are reading about Cormier's trial, hearing about it on the radio or watching news excerpts on television, as they anxiously await their own days in court" (Botelho-Urbanski, para.6). She goes on to mention Cherisse Houle, Glenda Morrisseau, Hillary Wilson and Cheryl Duck, "whose bodies were found, but their killers never apprehended," and how difficult it must be for their families (Botelho-Urbanski, para.8). In addition, Botelho-Urbanski names and acknowledges "the families of Sunshine Wood, Claudette Osborne-Tyo, Fonessa Bruyere, Sylvia Guiboche, Felicia Solomon and Jennifer Catcheway — women who vanished, leaving their relatives in a perpetual, agonizing wait to see them again" (para.8). Botelho-Urbanski humanizes Fontaine and ten other MMIWG2S victims when she acknowledges the pain of their families. While she does not explore historical detail of what brought society to this point or outright name settler colonialism, she seems sympathetic about and brings attention to the epidemic of MMIWG2S, utilizing a compassionate and humanizing lens to a mainstream media news story (AFN MMIWG Submission 1).

Winnipeg Free Press: 2019, Article 5

On March 12, 2019, Niigaan Sinclair, Winnipeg Free Press columnist and University of Manitoba Professor in the Department of Native Studies, wrote an article entitled "Don't fail Tina again: Well-meaning words will come out of today's report. What's needed is action." The

word cloud for this article prominently features the words “Indigenous,” “system,” “report,” and “change.” Sinclair, who is present in the court room, starts the article by recalling that it had been just over a year since Raymond Cormier is found not guilty in Fontaine’s murder. Sinclair invites the reader to accompany him on his first-hand recollection of that heartbreaking day in court and in the community march for Fontaine. He discusses how Indigenous communities in Winnipeg and beyond have worked to commemorate Fontaine’s life in ground-breaking grassroots attempts to try to ensure that Fontaine’s fate is not shared by others. Sinclair mentions *Drag the Red*, Tina’s Safe Haven 24/7 drop-in centre, the Bear Clan Patrol, and *Meet me at the Bell Tower* as examples of a few selfless community action groups. Sinclair also discusses the Manitoba Advocate for Children & Youth report on Fontaine’s case and the four recommendations proposed within it, which are based on changing systemic barriers and harms Indigenous peoples face and altering the mindsets of non-Indigenous Canadians. Specifically, there is systemic and wide-spread mistreatment of Indigenous women and children, which is exacerbated, in Sinclair’s words, by a “lack of safe places to go, inadequately trained front-line workers, and inappropriate representations that lead to stereotypes and racism” (para.4). He notes at the base of this problem is:

> Indigenous peoples - particularly women and children - face violence no one else in Canada does. There is a reason for massive over-incarceration rates, overwhelming rates of poverty, and the disproportional removal of Indigenous children and it’s simple. Canadian society believes that Indigenous peoples are problems that need solving. The problem is that Indigenous peoples are not problems. Seeing them as problems is. (Sinclair, para.5)

Sinclair’s article provides important context for the reader, as he directly engages historical and ongoing societal effects of colonization. The inclusion of this information assists in transforming the narrative from what the public is used to hearing about Indigenous peoples.

Sinclair finishes his article by pleading with everyone who holds in their hands the MACY report on Fontaine to understand the importance of this Call to Action (para.9). There have been countless reports created with recommendations addressing how to break barriers and protect Indigenous peoples, but it is clear that their implementation is never completed as we are still plagued with the same problems today. This article is well-informed and features an important message: action is the only way forward.

Winnipeg Free Press: 2019, Article 6

Melissa Martin's article, entitled "Tina's tragic life laid bare," is also released in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on March 12, 2019. The word cloud for this article features the words, "report," "child," "life," and "death." She appropriately refers to Fontaine as a "girl" and "child" rather than as a woman. Though she does not directly identify Fontaine as Indigenous, she does share imagery of Fontaine likely "scampering" within a gymnasium in Sagkeeng First Nation. Martin narrates her own experience while sitting in that same gymnasium during a press conference after the release of the MACY report on Tina's life. Martin provides a compassionate and concise summary of the report, which includes the systemic failures Fontaine faced in her short life; that she is under the care of five different child and family agencies and in contact with four different settler systems in the days leading up to her passing, including the Winnipeg Police Service, healthcare professionals, CFS workers, and a youth shelter (para.3). She guides the reader through the final days of Fontaine's death in a way that evokes pain and fear as there is no way to change what happened. Martin uses powerful imagery to foster compassion in the reader throughout, as when she issues the following response to all those who came in contact with Fontaine in her final days: "your chest aches to

shout at them through the pages, praying for a different ending than the one that is coming, the one we have borne witness to for the last five years running, the one that cannot now be undone" (para.7). When compared to other mainstream media columns Martin's writing style is distinctive, as it cultivates humanizing relationality. She appears to understand that the onus is on people in positions like hers to beg the public to care and to act accordingly.

Media Representation Analysis Summary

The mainstream media representation of Tina Fontaine is difficult to read as she is consistently degraded, victim-blamed, and reduced to being a clickbait opinion piece. It is important to remember that this is only one MMIWG case of the ~4000 we know, of which many will never be written about. Even when they are, they are often subject to racist, sexist, and problematic reportage. These were people whose lives came to an unjust and abrupt end with families who are forced to read negative reportage of their loved one, and who deserve to be humanized, not blamed for their fates.

The *Winnipeg Sun* and *Winnipeg Free Press* offer similarly dismissive representations of Fontaine in the early years of her case, which diverge, as I argue, once the court case of her alleged perpetrator drew near in 2018 More specifically, the *Winnipeg Sun* becomes increasingly unapologetic in their egregious commentary and pro-settler colonial rhetoric, which champions, among other state apparatuses, the Winnipeg Police Service, while the *Winnipeg Free Press* moves toward implementing humanizing and culturally-safe reportage.

Unfortunately, the *Winnipeg Sun's* coverage of Fontaine's life and case is consistently wrought with disparaging language and character judgements. Inappropriate and unethical

language is repeatedly used when memorializing deceased persons, especially children. While the use of the word "Indigenous" becomes more prevalent over time and while Fontaine is mostly referred to as a "child," she is also consistently identified as a "runaway" or "subtance abuser." In my analysis of WS' reportage, I conclude that this platform does not shy away from conveying controversial and often pejorative opinions about Fontaine's case, Indigenous peoples, and any one who questions authoritative systems. The WS's choice to include disparaging articles from columists, including the extremely negative opinion piece by Giesbrecht, shows a lack of compassion and understanding of their responsibility to inform the public in a way that maintains the dignity of these subjects. Their consistent representation of Fontaine is unsurpisingly aligned with their general whitewashing of mainstream media. In addition, recall WS's inclusion of the "Sunshine Girl" feature to further substantiate their one-dimensional views on issues surrounding gender and the place of women and girls in Canada.

While earlier articles on Fontaine's case released by the *Winnipeg Free Press* are not always accurate in their use of language or inclusion of societal and historical context, it is evident with time that they make concerted efforts to improve by employing Indigenous writers and those knowledgeable about her case to cover her story. Earlier articles refer to Fontaine as "aboriginal," without capitalizing this now outdated term. They also often refer to her as a "woman" rather than as a "child" or "girl." This is problematic as it takes away the importance of recognizing that a child, who was under the care of CFS and who was exploited by adult men, was murdered. Calling Fontaine a woman can connote a sense of potential consent or adult agency in her lifestyle and choices. As years went on, the writers were much more diligent about recognizing Fontaine as an Indigenous child. The word clouds reflect such shifts in language, initially featuring words like "runaway" and "substances," and ultimately magnifying words like

"system" and "family," which helps to remove culpability from this child, who should have never been reduced to such terms in the first place. Over time, the *Winnipeg Free Press* works to be more conscientious and compassionate about the words and tones featured in their articles, thus ensuring that Fontaine is humanized and that she retains her dignity in and between the lines.

Clear differences in reporting can also be discerned when we consider the reporting journalist's race and gender. Brodbeck and Giesbrecht from the *Winnipeg Sun*, both white cis males, embody a tone influenced by settler statecraft and ideologies. They are unapologetic in their defamation of Fontaine's character, as well as apathetic toward both the crimes committed against her and the neglect she endured from those who should have been prioritizing her care. More favourable representations were provided by women (Annable-WS, Botelho-Urbanski-WFP, and Martin-WFP), despite race, but Niigaan Sinclair-WFP, the only Indigenous journalist, was the most humanizing in his reportage. I conclude that the most truthful and fair representations of Fontaine came from journalists who were either Indigenous or who were knowledgeable about her case. These journalists upheld their journalistic ethical guidelines and did not choose to burden a child with their biased character judgements, but instead chose to consult her family and community to ensure that they wrote about her from an accurate and humanizing lens.

Audience is a very important component when discussing media because there is a feedback loop: while journalists tailor their reportage to suit certain demographics, they also inform those same demographics and can steer opinions (Heikkila & Ahya 12). This means that the type of narrative shared by mainstream media has the power to divide, or else, to educate and create connections across communities. When journalists choose to humanize subjects and intend

to educate the public accurately, transformative reportage flourishes, with the power to help us understand one another. In conclusion, it is important to remember that the story of Fontaine's death does not encompass who she was. She laughed, hugged, danced, and felt the sunshine on her cheeks. It is crucial to be careful when storying Indigenous women and girls' lives so that everyone understands them as more than their victimhood and remembers to celebrate their lives. It is important to carry this forward into the next chapter where we consider how to move forward in reclamation and self-recognition.

Chapter 3:

Reclamation and Self-Recognition

Indigenous women experience a unique combination of sexism, racism, and ongoing issues from colonization that result in countless violations of our embodied rights (Green 20). We often speak of these issues theoretically, but it is important to remember how it affects our communities and people on a personal level. In Yvonne Johnson's co-authored autobiography entitled *Stolen Life: The Journey of a Cree Woman,* the reader comes to understand the gut-wrenching and often disturbing ways settler colonial violence and systemic racism impact and shape the lives and narratives of Indigenous women (Johnson 304). Johnson is a woman in prison who finds that writing her story in countless notebooks is a cathartic part of her healing journey, no matter how difficult it is. Johnson's media representation was consistently disparaging and judgemental; efforts to reclaim her narrative after experiencing many dehumanizing traumas helped to not only make sense of everything that happened to her, but also to shed the shame that should never have been hers to carry (Johnson 304). Johnson and her co-author Rudy Wiebe use restorying and transformative renewal of self as the foundation of this book; methods that are deeply aligned with the concept of self-recognition which is a central theory discussed in this chapter.

Despite experiencing countless hardships that I truly cannot imagine a person surviving, Johnson is a strong Indigenous woman, a fierce and loving mother, and a beautifully expressive writer. Most importantly, Johnson is so much more than a victim and survivor of her circumstances and experiences – she is a whole, complicated, and flawed human being who finally got to write her own story. This is by far the most important thing to remember when we

embark on the complexities of storying an Indigenous person's life. Indigenous women and girls are often reduced to our victimization or culpabilities, but this representation is limiting, one-dimensional, and dehumanizing.

This chapter works to inspire transformation through narrative reclamation, self-recognition, and community action. The narrative degradation of Indigenous peoples in Canada has grave effects on our social status, rights, and most importantly, on our survival. The negative representation of Indigenous peoples, specifically, of women and girls, began at colonial contact and endures as a malignancy at the center of relations between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Canada. As outlined in Chapter One, colonizers intended to damage and interrupt Indigenous lifeways, but we need to practice self-recognition and collective narrative reclamation in order to move forward. Coulthard defines collective self-recognition as transformative desubjectification and a re-positioning, not as colonial subjects, but as critically self-affirming cultural beings who offer innovative and important principles of reciprocity and respectful coexistence (Coulthard 48). He cautions that Indigenous peoples must ensure that self-recognition is directed away from the status quo and the politics of recognition's assimilative lure – we must center imaginative futurisms that are informed by ancestral and contemporary Indigenous ways of knowing (Coulthard 48). I agree that self-recognition is a central tenet to rejecting the harms of settler statecraft, however I argue that it must occur in tandem with the politics of recognition as made to work for us. This chapter will focus on how Indigenous peoples are finding a way to both self-recognize and change colonial narratives because it is the only way to garner a transformative representation that will foster understanding, compassion, respect, and the reduction of harm against Indigenous women and girls.

As previously outlined, Indigenous women's complex lived experiences are overwhelmingly reduced in mainstream media when we are cast as victims of violence, of inescapable vulnerability, and as deserving of our plight – a representation deeply aligned with that of the 'squaw' trope (Anderson 99). The mainstream media is not, in and of itself, settler statecraft, but it is supports and reifies the ideologies and goals of the settler colonial project. Indigenous media confronts and disrupts the colonial representation of Indigenous peoples and moved to not only change the story itself, but also changes the story to challenge the settler colonial project. In turn, this humanizes Indigenous women and girls, exposes the horrors of colonialism, and challenges the assumptions of the colonial present.

Restorying our lives and reclaiming our narratives is a complicated process because it relies on the affirmation of our humanity from people raised to believe in and to enforce settler colonial myths. Coulthard's rebuke of the politics of recognition has brought to light settler statecrafts' insidious structures and processes which intend to keep Indigenous peoples reliant on recognition from the powers that be. The systems and people that uphold the settler colonial national agenda are still publicly dispersing racist rhetoric and stereotypes which are indoctrinating the next generations. Indigenous peoples are rising up, as our ancestors always have, and are not tacitly allowing this colonial hegemony to persist. This chapter highlights the importance of reclaiming Indigenous women and girls' voices in spaces of mainstream media that has historically solely been informed by settler statecraft. We need to be careful when storying Indigenous women and girls' lives to represent them as more than their victimhood and to celebrate their existences. This is important to carry with us as we consider how to move forward in narrative reclamation and transformation.

This chapter highlights some of the main issues Indigenous women and girls face in restorying and voice reclamation. After the previous chapters' focus on the removal of our narrative agency, it is important to conclude with an emphasis on self-recognition and to feature some of the leading Indigenous women's voices on narrative transformation, such as Patricia Monture-Angus and Leanne Simpson. Monture-Angus' work critically examines and confronts settler patriarchal structures, such as the Canadian legal system, that systematically disempower, revictimize, and discredit Indigenous women and girls and perpetuate stereotypes aligned with settler statecraft (42). L. Simpson reminds us that Indigenous women are central agents in Indigenous nation-building and activism, but that our positive representation in mainstream media is erased, silenced, and leaves us unrecognized for our contributions and labour (33). I argue that their work is a representative base to dive from because though they come from different disciplines, such as sociology, law, and political sciences, their arguments form a well-rounded understanding of the gravity of the issue of Canadian statecraft and recognition for Indigenous women and girls. In this thesis, I direct their lenses toward Coulthard's discussion of the politics of recognition and self-recognition.

First, this chapter explores the ways that the imposition of racist and sexist colonial policies critically impacts Indigenous women's roles within communities and their narrative agency (Thomas 10). Next, the chapter considers issues and barriers we face when it comes to actualizing narrative resurgence, such as institutional racism and the co-optation of reconciliation. Next, kitchen-table politics and women's circles are discussed because Indigenous women face a myriad of issues in Canadian society, but maintaining our strength as a cohesive circle and collective provides the support and solidarity needed to continue our important work (Child 40). Next, I share heartfelt responses and actions from the Indigenous community in

Winnipeg following Fontaine's death. This chapter offers recommendations about reclaiming our voices and narratives from Indigenous women community members who are trailblazers in representation. Finally, this chapter features examples of Indigenous peoples, such as KC Adams, working toward Indigenous narrative reclamation and raising awareness about the harm of stereotypes.

Recalling and building on our ancestors' inherent strength and resilience is especially important now as we decolonize and reignite our positive representation, communities, and relations (Scalp Lock 67). Indigenous women have a grand and unique role to play in combatting the colonial legacy of violence and sexism that exists in our communities (Ladner 64). It involves us coming together as nations in solidarity, as we have always done, to collectively shape a society free of harm and exclusion (L. Simpson 43). We are powerfully equipped to tackle matters such as decolonization and self-governance. Whether ethnographic literature and settler historical records included our voices does not matter, as we were always there and have always been leading. Indigenous women and girls are engaging the public through social media, writing, and mainstream media in a way that counters and challenges the mainstream narratives. By doing this, we are working to challenge not only the story itself, but also the statecraft which historically malignant narratives reify.

In grounding the ideas of representation and recognition, I briefly engage with Glen Coulthard's proposal of self-recognition and the important part it plays in releasing Indigenous peoples from subjugation, as well as in the transformation of representation. The methodology for this final chapter mirrors that of Chapter One in that I am focusing on sociological and critical Indigenous works. However, I am also including the important contributions of Indigenous community members like KC Adams and community organizations like Winnipeg's

Mama Bear Clan and Bear Clan Patrol. In addition, this chapter's methodology includes the same media studies analyses used in Chapter Two, such as word clouds and micro- and macro-analyses, but it is now used to analyze the Indigenous-based digital news source the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN) to discuss humanizing reportage in Tina Fontaine's case. Brought together, these scholars, community members, and journalists create a strong understanding of self-recognition regarding the settler colonial representation of Indigenous women and girls. The interface of these sources allows me to create critically explore and advocate for Indigenous self-recognition and collective narrative reclamation.

Self-Recognition

The tone of positive collective narrative reclamation throughout this chapter is heavily based on Glen Coulthard's alternative to reliance on the politics of recognition, which is that of self-recognition. In *Red Skin, White Masks*, he explores self-recognition as a collective commitment and action of anticolonialism wherein Indigenous peoples prioritize our values and representative freedom as an effort toward "turning away" from our oppressors (Coulthard 43). Coulthard reminds us that self-recognition and empowerment are extremely important and permanent fixtures of critical Indigenous decolonization projects, such as Leanne Simpson's radical resistance project (23). Self-recognition is evident throughout the works chosen for this thesis in that they are working to expose and rebuke negative representation and replace it with empowering, accurate narratives. For example, Kim Anderson explores how notions of Indigenous womanhood has been skewed and tarnished in settler statecraft to themes of the 'savage' and 'squaw', and she works to change this narrative and demonstrate self-recognition through interviews with Indigenous women on what it truly means to be us and do this work

(*Recognition of Being* 23). For Audra Simpson, Indigenous women are represented and commodified as violable, like the land Canada seeks to control ("The State is a Man" 4). Settler statecraft is reified by the apparatus of mainstream media and its influence on public opinion. Our dehumanization has caused us to be more at risk of systemic and personal violence, which is why self-recognition and changing our narrative is so important (A. Simpson, 7). Brought together, Coulthard, Anderson, and A. Simpson shed light and clarity on the gravity of reclaiming our narratives and changing our representation – Indigenous women and girls' lives depend on it.

I argue that Indigenous-based worldviews often center the idea that our ancestors and our future generations are our reasons for living and working in a good way. I want the best for my people and for them to be able to live a meaningful, healthy life, and to shed the shame that settler colonialism embeds into us. I and many feel this call to action and justice – we all do this often extremely difficult and alienating work for our people. Centering self-recognition means rejecting the harmful and oppressive representations of "squaw" and "savage" that settler colonialism created, and instead collectively and personally choosing our own narratives, as well as empowering one another to shine the way we were meant to and the way we always have.

Settler Nationalist Mythology and Narrative Reclamation

Indigenous communities and organizations consistently devise dynamic solutions to the many problems faced within colonial systems; however, they are often disregarded due to settler nationalistic attachments and their fixation on the optics of being a peace-keeping nation. Canadian governments' and citizens' obsession with their representation as "the good colonizer," compared to the USA, is deeply ironic as they consistently utilize disparaging and oppressive

representations of Indigenous peoples in an attempt to legitimize their unfounded sovereignty (Ladner 12). It is essential to remain vigilant to ensure the spirit of our work does not become tarnished or disappear due to unwavering settler nationalistic fervor (Mackey 58). For example, the extensive work done for the Final Report of MMIWG2S was swiftly disregarded by mainstream media due to settler political leaders' ludicrous fixation on the word "genocide," as they are too cowardly to concede to any wrongdoing (Elliot, "Canada Asked for A Report on Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls. Now It's Ignoring It", para.5). These leaders do not believe that Indigenous women experience genocide by the Canadian state, although this assertion is aligned with the United Nation's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' definition of genocide (TRC, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Final Report*, 4). It is discouraging that the MMIWG2S family testimonials and work done by the report committee was undermined and disregarded, but the silencing of Indigenous women and girls is deeply aligned with Canadian statecraft and the settler colonial project.

In Canada, stereotypes and racism against Indigenous women and girls affect us in a myriad of ways, including a higher likelihood to experience violence, poorer mental health, compromised safety of our families, increased difficulty in acquiring a job or home, among many other issues. In her book, *Thunder in my Soul*, Patricia Monture-Angus, Mohawk lawyer and educator, argues that colonial systems have consistently proven to us that integration into existing systems will not create true voice reclamation, resurgence, and decolonization, so it is essential to achieve it on our terms (54). For far too long, Indigenous peoples have worked diligently to alter and fit into settler systems, strive to achieve on their barometers of success, and hold positions within their hierarchies. No matter how strong our efforts are, we still face racism and marginalization at every level. Monture-Angus refers to this phenomenon when she explains

that "the ladder of success does not necessarily climb to a safer place" (88). Experiencing and calling out prejudice, discrimination, and racism often leads to silencing, thwarted progress, and even lost opportunities. Efforts to combat and end voice theft and racism are everywhere, but is it possible? Monture-Angus says no – we cannot fix racism, but we can point it out (56). We can shed a light on it, shame people, teach people, and attempt to keep our relatives and ourselves safe from it, though this is difficult in spaces where settler colonial systems and governments are reluctant to address racism, prejudices, and microaggressions. It cannot be ignored that 'racism' is a word that offends people, especially those ignorant to the impacts of their actions, words, and unconscious biases. When an Indigenous person shines a light on racism and derogatory representations, they are automatically labelled as angry, and in turn, the blame is deflected onto the victim. The trope of the angry Indigenous woman is constantly used to disparage and discredit our work in institutions; however, Indigenous women are not tacitly accepting of this treatment.

True narrative reclamation has been discussed for countless decades by Indigenous peoples without colonial interference, and in order to enact it, it needs to be taken with care and in alignment with the lifeways of our ancestors. Meaningful voice empowerment will prioritize cultural reclamation and regeneration of our languages, oral cultures, and governance. In *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, Leanne Simpson reminds us that it is important to be part of creating a relationship with Canada, where Indigenous people are humanized and respected, but we should not solely focus on reconciliation or on dismantling the master's house either (89). Instead, we need to rebuild our own home as Indigenous People, center our voices and focus on our futurisms (L. Simpson 89). L. Simpson writes that storytellers have a unique responsibility, as they deeply understand where Indigenous Peoples come from and are equipped with the

wisdom of our ancestors to imagine where we are going (78). Many mainstream media journalists do not prioritize this responsibility, as they are instead increasingly focused on clickbait titles and sensationalism. L. Simpson reminds us that we need to continue creating generations of Indigenous people "…who are contemporary expressions of our ancient stories and traditions" (93). By doing so, we are ensuring that their thought is based in our languages, which informs the entirety of our worldview and reflects the diversity of our nations. Indigenous values, languages, and circles are inclusive and fluid – we all have a place and need to care for each other (L. Simpson 54).

Media Analysis: The Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN)

The above sections on self-recognition, settler nationalist mythology, and narrative reclamation discuss the importance of collective rejection of oppressive representation and how empowering and humanizing language is a main tenet of this action. Chapter Two's analysis of the mainstream media representation of Tina Fontaine in *The Winnipeg Free Press* and *The Winnipeg Sun* produced largely disappointing but not unexpected results. I feel it is important to provide critical contrast between settler and Indigenous-based news sources because reportage by *APTN* is deeply based in Coulthard's proposal of employing self-recognition. Serving Indigenous people for over two decades, *APTN* has "steadfastly adhered to its mission: To share our Peoples' journey, celebrate our cultures, inspire our children and honour the wisdom of our Elders" (*APTN*, "About Us", para.1).

Cumulative APTN Word Cloud

The final mainstream media analysis of this thesis begins with a brief history of APTN, including how it originated and their mission. In 1999, a group of producers, journalists, and television crews decided to work together to share programming and news relevant to Indigenous peoples and the experiences we face that are either not usually shared in mainstream media or that tend to fall on deaf ears (APTN, "About Us", para.2). One of the main issues they sought to share were the phenomenon of Starlight Tours, wherein Indigenous people, primarily men, get dropped off outside of city limits by police officers, often without shoes or a jacket in severe winter conditions where hypothermia is almost guaranteed. Left to fend for themselves, many have died this way (Stewart, "Remembering Neil Stonechild and exposing systemic racism in policing"). The other important crisis to which they have dedicated coverage is the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives. Since their inception, APTN has grown to become a trusted and award-winning national news source that creates original Indigenous entertainment programming and excels at investigative journalism.

Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network: 2014, Article 1

Released on August 18, 2014, the first article to be covered by APTN on Tina Fontaine is entitled, "Body of First Nations girl, 15, pulled from Winnipeg's Red River, found in bag," and is written by Mark Blackburn. This article prominently features the words "police," "missing," and "downtown." The article identifies the body found as Tina Fontaine and properly refers to her as both "Indigenous" and a "girl," and as a member of Sagkeeng community. Blackburn notes that her family has been notified, a detail that is not shared in the other news outlets' articles (para.2). The inclusion of this point works to center not only Fontaine's family, but also her humanity and importance. Though it is a short and concise article, the author uses appropriate and humanizing language and details, thus informing the reader of his respect and concern for Fontaine.

Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network: 2014, Article 2

On August 20, 2014, APTN wrote an article entitled "More than 1,000 attend vigil in Winnipeg including Tina Fontaine's grieving mom," though the writer is not named beyond "APTN National News." The word cloud for this article features the words "murdered," "vigil," and "inquiry." Fontaine is referenced as a "girl" or a "child" throughout. The article employs a storytelling tone to bring the reader along for a recount of the day. The article and accompanying video cover the large and somber vigil held for Fontaine and Faron Hall, lovingly referred to as the "homeless hero" (para.4). Police were originally searching for Hall, who had fallen into the Red River and passed away, when they found Fontaine. The article and video both appropriately refer to Fontaine and Hall as Indigenous. Not only did the journalist cover the words and experiences of Fontaine's mother, but they also interviewed family members of other

MMIWG2S. The APTN journalist responsible for this piece purposefully writes an article that humanizes Fontaine and evokes emotion in the reader, begging the public to care about a child who experiences frequent inappropriate representation and reportage by mainstream media.

Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network: 2018, Article 3

On February 23, 2018, APTN National News releases an article entitled "Raymond Cormier acquittal sparks rallies in solidarity with Tina Fontaine." The word cloud for this article highlights the words "Canada," "failed," and "death." The article appropriately refers to Fontaine as "Indigenous" and a "girl," and the writer does not employ any personal judgements of Fontaine's character or behaviour. The writer shares important details from the case, including how relatively stable Fontaine's life was prior to visiting Winnipeg, that she had been in the care of social services at a hotel prior to being missing, and that she was sexually exploited by Cormier, among others (para.6). This coverage is in stark contrast to the representation Fontaine receives from the Winnipeg Sun, which repeatedly places culpability on a child for her own murder. The article shares quotes and social media posts from rallies held across Canada in Fontaine's honour and to protest Cormier's acquittal. Politicians and Indigenous leaders can be heard imploring for systemic change and demanding that the inequities Indigenous peoples face in all areas, particularly within CFS and policing, be addressed (para.7). The writer offers an article that is factual, and which evokes compassion by prioritizing the voices and images shared by community members and leaders.

Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network: 2018, Article 4

APTN releases an article by Brittany Hobson on February 24, 2018, entitled "'It could have been our daughter': Hundreds gather to honour Tina Fontaine." The word cloud for this article features the words "justice," "Indigenous," and "inquiry." Fontaine is consistently referred to as "Indigenous" and a "child," and never as a "runaway" or abuser of substances. The article summarizes Hobson's experience at the rally and includes the smell of sage and dozens of drums filling the air. She shares the words of Fontaine's family members, community members and leaders. Hobson highlights Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Grand Chief Sheila North, the Bear Clan Patrol's James Favel, and NDP MLA Nahanni Fontaine, who all express their remorse, not only for Fontaine's fate, but for all the ways she is failed by the Canadian Justice System, much like Colton Boushie (para.2). In addition, a quote is included from Marilyn Courchene, a band councillor in Sagkeeng First Nation, which calls the MMIWG2S National Inquiry Commission into question as they were not present for the verdict (para.6). The article shares details about the case against Cormier and seemingly contests the verdict, which is in his favour. Hobson discusses his charges and selects specific quotes from his undercover recordings which challenge his innocence. The article works to humanize Fontaine and Hobson importantly prioritizes the words of Fontaine's family and Indigenous community members.

Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network: 2019, Article 5

On March 12, 2019, APTN released an article entitled "'Children are going to die': Manitoba Child Advocate calls for change" by journalist Brittany Hobson. The word cloud for this article highlights the words, "report," "Penrose," and "death." The article appropriately introduced Fontaine as both "First Nations" and a "girl". Hobson detailed the recent release of

the report created by Daphne Penrose from Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth entitled, "A Place Where It Feels Like Home: The Story of Tina Fontaine." It is important to remember that Fontaine's experiences, while horrific, have thankfully resulted in incredible ripples of action in communities and nationally, represent countless cases the MACY office regularly encounters and, unfortunately, "mirrors the story of many, many kids" (Hobson, para.3). Hobson makes the connection between Fontaine's fate and Indigenous-based efforts, such as the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the formation of Drag the Red, and the resurgence of the Bear Clan Patrol. Penrose's report offers essential recommendations in several systemically impacted areas, which include extending mental health and addiction services access, as well as addressing missing youth and sexually exploited youth through the implementation of new protocols (para.6). Hobson reports on some of the various ways Fontaine is failed by provincial systems, reminding readers that Fontaine did not receive victim services support or counselling when her father was murdered, despite clear mental health issues and evident self-harm (para.7).

As previously mentioned in this chapter, Fontaine's great-aunt Thelma Favell sought support for Fontaine through Child and Family Services, which denied her care (Hobson, para.8). In addition, Fontaine is reported missing a total of seven times, yet police and CFS take little if any action to protect Fontaine other than placing her in an unsupervised hotel, from which she was able to walk out the front door (Hobson, para.8). Details such as these make one question, not only the CFS, the police services' commitment to serve members of the community and to keep children in care safe, but why Fontaine was such a low priority for them. Penrose places an urgent call within the report's recommendations, reminding folks that "what's at stake is the lives of children; children are going to die if we don't make changes" (12). The article closes

with pleas from Sagkeeng Chief Derrick Henderson and the Assembly of Manitoba Chief's acting Grand Chief Betsy Kennedy to continue the momentum from grassroots community efforts and recommendations made by the MACY report (Hobson, para.8). Hobson factually presents details about Fontaine's case and the MACY report. In addition, she makes sure to include the perspectives and calls to action from Indigenous community leaders.

Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network: 2019, Article 6

For the final mainstream media news analysis for APTN, on August 16, 2019, the APTN National News team releases an article entitled "'Nothing has changed': Tina Fontaine's body pulled from river five years ago." The word cloud for this article highlights the words, "government," "meth," and "child-welfare." Fontaine is properly referred to as "Indigenous" and a "girl" throughout. The article opened with Cora Morgan, a First Nations family advocate, recalls flowers growing near the memorial site where Fontaine is recovered and where Morgan performs a smudging ceremony (para.1). Morgan shares her fears of "another Fontaine" being found and how she believes the cracks that Fontaine fell through are only growing. The article quotes former provincial Families Minister (and now-Manitoba Premier) Heather Stefanson as stating that there has been progress, in terms of financial investment in protecting vulnerable youth and adults in the areas of addictions, mental-health, and sexual exploitation responses (para.2). However, she does not name specific initiatives or actions taken, and believes collaboration with CFS authorities is the solution. It is concerning that she relies solely on working with a government agency while not discussing preventative action, such as intervention with RCMP practices, the crucial role of community and relationship building, or reflect a need to understand decolonization in addressing systemic barriers. The article provides important

statistics on the number of children in the care of the Manitoba government (over 10,000) and the disproportionate Indigenous representation (~90%) (para.4). In addition, APTN shares the concerning data compiled by the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, which found that methamphetamine use has "increased by more than 100 per cent in adults and nearly 50 per cent in youth since 2014" (para.4). Daphne Penrose from Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, who released the report into Fontaine's case earlier in the same year, notes that youth drug use is a major contributing factor in cases such as Fontaine's and that more needs to be done to meet people where they are and provide help when they ask, which often falls on deaf ears (para, 27). The article includes perspectives from different areas, whilst presenting relevant facts and statistics on Fontaine's case.

Media Analysis Conclusion

I argue that APTN is an example of cultural self-recognition and narrative reclamation which works to reject settler statecraft (Coulthard 23; A. Simpson 2). APTN demonstrates a reliably humanizing coverage and representation of Fontaine since her disappearance, as their reportage includes images and words directly from her family and community, and thus providing the public with an accurate and dignified report of Fontaine's life and case. APTN consistently refers to Fontaine as "Indigenous child" or "girl" since first reporting on her disappearance in 2014. The word clouds show evidence that the language used to describe Fontaine is humanizing and retains her dignity, and that family and community members are prioritized. It is evident throughout that APTN works diligently to report on Fontaine's life and case through unbiased journalism. The writers employ meaningful storytelling. Overall, APTN strives to maintain its reputation as a caring and trusted mainstream news source. I argue that

APTN adheres to its mission to be a humanizing voice and advocate for Indigenous peoples and the issues we face, which is deeply aligned with Coulthard's alternative to politics of recognition in the form of collective, anticolonialism self-recognition. This media outlet works with due diligence and commitment to prioritize the dignity and interest of their main audience – Indigenous peoples. They hold an important place in mainstream Indigenous culture and Canadian culture generally as their programming and articles are based in reconciliation and education as well. APTN has found an important position in Canadian society that is based in narrative reclamation that is self-recognizing, humanizing, and meaningful to Indigenous peoples.

Kitchen-Table Politics and Women's Circles

One of the most powerful ways Indigenous women and girls can enact political and collective voice reclamation and collective resurgence for ourselves is to revitalize the essential practice of women's circles. Indigenous women carry immeasurable strength as the backbones of our communities and often as survivors. This is very much due to the relationships we have with other women. When we use our voices and share experiences, people can find solace and begin healing when they feel connection to those who have overcome similar experiences and traumas. Monture-Angus writes about hearing other women's pain and exclusion and how she felt that the common experiences among them were empowering for her (102). Sharing our stories and having our experiences validated is cathartic and can create connections of solidarity; telling our stories is medicine. We must keep this circle open to all Indigenous women and be welcoming to the generations coming after us because it is within these spaces that we hear our calls to action. In addition to sharing our experiences of survival, these spaces are also incredible for organizing.

Kiera Ladner refers to this unique space as one for "kitchen-table politics" (*This is an Honour Song* 12). In all stages of a woman's life, she sits at a table with the women in her life and learns the ways of the world – this is the power of reclaiming and exclaiming our voices. We learn how to be a good relative and where we can pitch in for our communities. Indigenous women's tables and circles will continue to not only be where we connect as relatives, but also where we will use our voices to plan the next phases of rematriation, Indigenous governance, and community building.

Indigenous women have always played critical leadership roles in Indigenous communities, but with the imposition of racist and sexist colonial policies, Indigenous women's roles and voices were systematically displaced (Thomas 10). We must not wait nor waver in our resurgence – actions and our calls to heal, help, and reclaim will look different to each of us. Simpson noted that "these processes are profoundly intimate and emergent and are ultimately collective responsibilities" (L. Simpson 246). As leaders in our communities and families, Indigenous women face many challenges, but we find strength in sharing our voices and solidarity in our connections with other Indigenous women (Child 40). In order to move forward in reclaiming our power as women, we need to listen to one another and hold each other up. In everything we do, our actions must create a society where we have agency over our lives and voices and participate in leading our collective humanization. It is essential to continue to work in ways that are aligned with the actions and wishes of our ancestors and not be steered or co-opted by colonial systems. In addition, we must recall the importance of decolonizing the stories of our lives and ensure we are creating our resurgent actions from a place that is inclusive of our entire community.

Community Response

In addition to how media represented Tina Fontaine, this thesis also focuses on sharing her community's response and how they wanted her remembered, as humanization is vital to narrative reclamation (Coulthard 44). The response of the Indigenous community in Winnipeg to Fontaine's tragic passing focuses on honouring her dignity and life narrative, and includes coordinated collective actions which aim to ensure justice and safety for our community members. This chapter's theme of self-recognition and critical transformation of community and narrative is present in the beautiful words they speak about her and in their hopes for our collective futures (Coulthard, 24). In part because Fontaine was a young Indigenous girl, and because many Indigenous peoples reported seeing her as essentially one of their daughters or nieces, Fontaine's case sparked an immense community response. In addition, what struck a chord with many community members is that she was failed by many systems and was represented in mainstream media as someone deserving of this treatment. Due to these components to her case, many folks in the Indigenous community in Winnipeg could no longer stay silent on the treatment Indigenous women and girls receive in Canada. In 2019, *CBC News: The National* released a story entitled "How Tina Fontaine's death forced a community to take action," The video, which features clips from interviews with Indigenous community members, demonstrates how Tina's death affected many people in Winnipeg and how long-lasting change has come from the collective outrage and action.

Michael Redhead Champagne, former *AYO! (Aboriginal Youth Opportunities!)* co-organizer and *Meet Me at the Bell Tower* leader, works within a community space that operates on and upholds the values of kitchen-table politics and circles (Child 40). Champagne believes that Tina, and many other children in Manitoba, are failed by the child welfare system, the police

force, the medical system, and mainstream media (CBC, “How Tina Fontaine’s death forced a community to take action"). He argues that people in positions of power and influence fail us all by constantly looking the other way and relieving themselves of responsibility (CBC, “How Tina Fontaine’s death forced a community to take action”). He reminds the viewer this issue concerns everyone and that we all have a responsibility on a human level to help members in our extended communities (CBC, “How Tina Fontaine’s death forced a community to take action). This point resonates because mainstream media is responsible for influencing public opinion and they can be a source of othering and division, but Indigenous communities are not standing by and allowing this to happen (Chacaby 127). Indigenous communities in this context are unwaveringly enacting collective and anti-colonial self-recognition in community and in real-time for the benefit of our people.

Many Indigenous community members felt an immediate call to action when Tina Fontaine went missing. Her disappearance has been described as “a tragedy that not only broke a community’s heart but set it on fire” (CBC). James Favel and volunteers from the *Bear Clan Patrol* began their search at a grassroots level on Winnipeg’s streets. This type of impactful grassroots action is an incredible example, not only of meeting the true and spoken needs of community, but also of self-recognition in practice (Coulthard 23; Anderson 14). The *Bear Clan Patrol* was originally formed in 1992 in Winnipeg’s North End but was “hibernating” for several years (“About Us”, para 2). They believe Indigenous people have a traditional responsibility to support our most vulnerable people who are often the most dehumanized and disregarded by settler statecraft (A. Simpson 2). The Bear Clan Patrol does this through providing security in a way that is neither threatening nor violent (The Bear Clan Patrol, “About Us”, para 2). With over fifteen hundred regular volunteers,

they also provide food and clothing to anyone in need. James Favel, one of the lead community organizers of the Bear Clan Patrol spoke on his call to action: "I started this because of what happened to Tina Fontaine. That is the switch that flipped…That's what came from her suffering" (CBC). Others in the community echo that Fontaine's death and the mainstream apathy surrounding her fate "woke up" the Bear Clan (CBC).

The community endeavours in this section are movements and initiatives that inspire and give opportunity to Indigenous and mainstream media to be able to restory and champion narrative reclamation alongside Indigenous peoples. There is another important movement involved in providing support and humanizing assistance to vulnerable folks in Winnipeg's Indigenous Community, and prioritizing culturally self-recognizing action named Mama Bear Clan, which is "led by our women, supported by our men" (North Point Douglas Women's Centre, "In the Community", para.1). Created by the North Point Douglas Women's Centre Women's Warrior Circle, this group is a community safety initiative that provides additional assistance, such as sustenance and a helping hand (North Point Douglas Women's Centre, "In the Community", para.2). Houseless people are consistently pushed to the wayside and treated as less than human, which I argue is worsened by the ways in which they are misrepresented in mainstream media. While the politics of recognition persuade citizens to perceive Indigenous peoples as having less worth in society, causing them to be at greater risk for further marginalization (Coulthard 25), these types of grassroots community actions treat people with dignity and help Indigenous folks to engage in cultural and collective self-recognition. Mama Bear Clan was created to counteract these issues in 2016 by a group of mothers, grandmothers, sisters and aunts that safety is fostered through relationship: within ourselves, our home, and in the community. One of their guiding principles is that, "sometimes all people need to feel safe is

knowing someone cares about them" (North Point Douglas Women's Centre, "In the Community", para.3). This group is playing an important role in helping Indigenous peoples to value themselves in this society and work toward empowering our communities. One of the volunteers for Mama Bear Clan, Alexia Legere, sees a lot of herself in Tina's story as she is also a youth living on the street – experiencing houselessness, men taking advantage of her, and not knowing where to turn (CBC). During their community support walks, while she is making food for houseless folks, and when she is checking in peoples' wellbeing, Tina is always in the back of Legere's mind pushing her to do more and affirm these peoples' dignity (CBC). This work is extremely important for many reasons, but it also works to humanize folks who have been disregarded, often worsened by their mainstream media representation that causes them to experience abuse by citizens and have a harder time finding employment and housing (Chacaby 126).

At the heart of this important and humanizing work are selfless volunteers who inspire Indigenous peoples to self-recognize their cultural responsibilities and values as members of a strong collective (L. Simpson 78). Samantha Chief, another volunteer, spoke about Fontaine's impact on the Mama Bear Clan and her legacy in Indigenous communities. She notes that being a part of Mama Bear Clan "...isn't just about stepping up, it's about honoring what Tina Fontaine's story did for other Indigenous women and girls." Chief's words lend to the idea that narrative reclamation often comes from our collective organizing around community tragedy. Fontaine's case and the manner with which she passed is extremely jarring for many people. It is common knowledge that these types of crimes happen, at alarmingly higher rates for Indigenous women and girls, but to see it unfold in the media and the impact it had on her family and community seemed to startle many people awake to the reality of what Indigenous people are

facing. Chief pleaded for Canadian citizens to understand that Indigenous women "are people too. We're not just pieces of trash you can throw away. We have value to others" (CBC). Due to the pervasive apathy Indigenous women experience when crimes are committed against them or when they go missing, we have been conditioned to understand that society does not see as much value in us as they see in non-Indigenous women ("Reclaiming Power and Place", 3). Chief went on to assert that Indigenous women are "not who they represent us to be. We're people we need to be honored and loved just like regular people" (CBC). One can surmise that Chief's pleas are also a commentary on the ongoing racist and sexist representation of Indigenous women and girls in Canadian mainstream media (Palmater 270). Chief's words resonate with me as it is clear that Indigenous women and girls feel the disparaging representation and perpetual devaluement in society that settler colonialism embedded into Canada's fabric. The work done by these volunteers is deeply important and is heavily lending to the movement of collective self-recognition and cultural narrative reclamation for Indigenous peoples. Mama Bear Clan provides invaluable support to Indigenous communities within Winnipeg and the impact of their community initiative has the power to be transformative for representation and self-recognition (Coulthard 26).

There is another support initiative for Indigenous peoples and families of MMIWG2S that is very necessary but also heartbreaking to discuss. It is the unfortunate truth that Indigenous women and girls have been dehumanized to such a great extent, through colonial historical writings and ongoing misrepresentation in mainstream media, that we are at great risk of experiencing violence or being murdered (*Reclaiming Power and Place* 2). When Fontaine went missing, Bernadette Smith, NDP MLA, and the late Kyle Kematch, whom are both family members of a MMIWG2S, decided to create a grassroots

initiative called “Drag the Red.” It is a community volunteer organization that searches in and around the Red River within Winnipeg for human remains. VICE reported that the Red River is considered the “unofficial graveyard for the city’s criminal underbelly” (VICE, “Drag the Red”). While “Drag the Red” is a crucial effort, it is shocking and disheartening that such an initiative must exist, with minimal assistance from law enforcement, though this is deeply aligned with the intentions of settler statecraft (A. Simpson 2). The volunteer organization has received quite a bit of public attention, including an award-winning short documentary film by Katherena Vermette and Erika MacPherson entitled, “This River.” In response to the heartbreaking loss of Fontaine, this group contributes a harrowing, but essential service to Winnipeg.

KC Adams Perception Series

Indigenous women and girls continue to be negatively represented in Canadian mainstream media and we often do not have agency in deciding our representations. However, we are not helplessly allowing our representation to be limited to victimhood and stereotypes. Local Winnipeg artist KC Adams considers herself a “social-practice artist” that engages audiences through highlighting social-political issues (10). A series of events and interactions wherein she was confronted with racist and stereotypical rhetoric forced Adams into a swirl of inspiration to use art to change public opinion on Indigenous peoples in Winnipeg (9). One major event was the wife of the then-mayor’s public comments on “drunk native guys harassing honest people who work hard for their money” (10). Additionally, Adams was inspired by the Idle No More movement and the recovery of both Tina Fontaine and Faron Hall’s remains from the Red River. Adams created the photo series entitled “Perception,” to “challenge the culture of

apathy and willful ignorance about Indigenous issues…to unite readers in the fight against prejudice of all kinds" (15). I argue that KC Adam's work exists in a space that addresses the politics of recognition and self-recognition as a way toward narrative reclamation for Indigenous peoples. Her series works with the politics of recognition as she understands changing public opinion about Indigenous peoples helps to create a country we can safely coexist in. Her work is also directly based on self-recognition and refusal as she is empowering participants to choose how they want to be perceived.

An artist in many mediums, Adams decided photography with subject-written captions would be the most impactful way to humanize Indigenous peoples to the public in Winnipeg. Her body of work allows her subjects to decide their own representation and proves that one cannot judge a book by its cover. In the first photo, there is a header featuring a stereotype often ascribed to Indigenous peoples, like "Squaw" or "Welfare Mom." The photo subject was told to recall a time that they experienced racism so that their pain is captured on their face. In the second photo, Adams challenges the viewer to "Look Again…," then told the subject to think about a happy moment or family member, which would evoke joy and humanity in their expression. The subject created their own caption to label themselves and have agency in their representation. In 2015, Adams' series was featured widely in Winnipeg on bus shelters and art installations and is an important opportunity to publicly combat stereotypes. One of the main impacts of her work is that people who never saw Indigenous narrative reclamation were confronted by it in public space. KC Adams is doing both self-recognition and engaging with the politics of recognition because she understands we must engage with both in order to survive and thrive.

Photo of KC Adams in her "Perception Series"

Photo of Tamara First Charger in KC Adam's "Perception Series"

Conclusion

This chapter explored the importance of self-recognition and narrative reclamation for Indigenous women and girls. Central components in the pursuit of these tenets are kitchen-table politics, women's circles, and understanding the impact of settler nationalist mythology. The aim of this chapter was to discuss the systemic challenges we face when working to reclaim our narratives and recommendations Indigenous women have made to combat colonial powers. Indigenous women and girls' representation by settler statecraft needs to be repudiated as its influence on mainstream media ubiquitously perpetuates racism. Indigenous women and girls should be deciding how we want to be represented and we have to be able to tell our own stories. Chapter Two's media analysis methodology was utilized to understand APTN's reportage of Fontaine's life and case, which deeply adhered to self-recognition and narrative reclamation values. The chapter moved into the incredible impact that Tina Fontaine's death had on Indigenous Communities in Winnipeg due to her mistreatment by colonial systems of power and her often outrageous mainstream media representation. The loss of Tina Fontaine has caused an incredible ripple across Indigenous communities. Many community initiatives in Winnipeg began because of Fontaine's fate, including the reignition of The Bear Clan Patrol, and the important action of the Mama Bear Clan Patrol and Drag the Red. Her death inspired thousands of organizers and volunteers to take meaningful actions and form grassroots initiatives to try to ensure that Fontaine's and other MMIWG2S's fate would not be shared by others. The chapter ended with the example of KC Adams, who is working to reclaim our narratives and raise awareness about damaging stereotypes that reinforce the subjugation and oppression of Indigenous peoples through mainstream media, film, and television. Though the heartbreaking loss and subsequent misrepresentation of Fontaine and many others like her will continue to be

mourned for generations, their suffering is not in vain, and their legacies will live on in heartful community action.

Thesis Conclusion

When Indigenous women and girls' images are limited to victimization and victim-blaming in the mainstream media, this leads society to deem them less worthy of dignity and respect, and therefore they become regarded as disposable. This thesis discussed the settler statecraft origins of the representation of Indigenous women and girls that has created the conditions for inappropriate and disparaging reportage in mainstream media. Through the creation of the 'squaw' representation, colonizers have been able to oppress Indigenous women and girls and remove much of our autonomy in Canada. In Chapter Two, this negative representation was exemplified through a case study and media analysis of Tina Fontaine's case. The reportage of the *Winnipeg Sun, Winnipeg Free Press,* and *Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network* were compared and contrasted to demonstrate the difference between settler statecraft-influenced mainstream media, and Indigenous media that is based in humanizing, cultural self-recognition. Chapter Three discussed the importance of building Indigenous women and girls' narrative reclamation through coalescing the politics of recognition and self-recognition. This is essential because settler statecraft created the conditions for us to be at great risk of systemic and personal harm and cannot continue resurgent work if we are not surviving, but we also need to be agents in our representation.

Though it exceeds the scope parameters of this thesis, I wish to emphasize the vital importance of moving toward an era of not only narrative reclamation but also narrative refusal. Audra Simpson proposes that we are working toward a refusal of our negative representation generated by settler statecraft, in which she refers to "the revenge of consent" (4). By engaging in refusal, we are reclaiming our power to have agency in how we are represented, yet still

acknowledging the current necessity to coexist with the oppressor. For far too long, settler statecraft and the politics of recognition have decided our narratives. I have proposed combining the politics of recognition with self-recognition because, unfortunately, we are currently working within structures desiring our extermination, meaning that a certain level of cooperation is required. I admire the bold and young who are already engaging in refusal, and I hope for this courage and reality for us all.

I close out this thesis with a discussion about not only the politics of recognition and self-recognition, but also on the politics of resurgence. There are truly important resurgent actions that must be happening alongside recognition and narrative reclamation efforts. We cannot simply accept the creation of small, ineffectual change and spaces that are supposedly welcoming and safe from racism and narrative misrepresentation – we need every single space to be a place where Indigenous peoples are safe from these harms. In her Book, *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Simpson speaks on prioritizing political resurgence over cultural resurgence (44). This means that we purposefully take up space that is not meant for us, ensure our voices are heard at every table, and build governance that is not mirrored by or aligned with settler governments and the systems that continually harm us (L. Simpson 44). Simpson speaks about her idea of the radical resurgence project for Indigenous peoples to come together for self-determination and to drastically unsettle our lands, which she calls "Indigenous freedom through radical resistance" (45). This idea is built upon "emphatically withdrawing from the violence and injustice of settler colonialism while productively engaging in practices that can bring us into alternative futures" (L. Simpson 45). Reclaiming our narratives is essential for our survival and by employing self-recognition, we are putting Indigenous futurisms into action.

Indigenous leaders often remind us that we need to slow down and take a step back on 'reconciliation,' specifically because the 'truth' component of 'Truth and Reconciliation' has not fully been understood or realized. The purpose of sharing the truth of colonialism, Residential Schools, and the horrific actions perpetrated against Indigenous peoples is to ultimately address racism, ignorance, and the well-documented colonial narratives that keep us oppressed. This ignorance feeds into the narrative that Indigenous peoples will never be satisfied with the Canadian Governments' reconciliatory benevolence. Most people do not understand that surface-level reconciliation in school curriculums and the colonially engineered misrepresentations spewed about Indigenous peoples have only been marginally rectified, so upcoming generations are not going to be the solution without intervention. In *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, Leanne Simpson tackles the problematic nature of reconciliation and how we can reclaim its original intention (105). She explores how the state co-opts Indigenous pain and suffering, criminalizes the intergenerational impacts of Residential Schools, and is now likely subjecting us to a larger neo-assimilation project for the upcoming generations (106). Indigenous peoples generally want to be involved in these initiatives because they should not be done without us, but if we do not force everything to slow down, we risk missing crucial steps that will only continue to perpetuate misunderstanding.

The words 'reconciliation' and 'resurgence' are often used interchangeably, but their definitions within the contemporary contextual relationship between Indigenous peoples and Canadians could not be more different. 'Reconciliation' is a catalyst for rebuilding nation-to-nation relationships. However, many Indigenous peoples took issue with the use of this word from the outset because there is not an existing relationship to reconcile. It also did not take long for this important move forward to be adopted as a buzzword by political leaders and

workplaces. Instead of ‘reconciliation’ and ‘resurgence’ being used to reclaim our narratives, unsettling colonial spaces, and respecting Indigenous nations as leaders and partners, they have been co-opted to uphold white supremacy and the status quo. Leanne Simpson reminds Indigenous peoples that they cannot rely on colonial institutions to support us in resurgence and nation-to-nation relationships as they require collective and concerted long-term efforts that Canada is unequivocally determined to prevent (42). Relying fully on settler statecraft and not being agents in our representation would relinquish our power and give them the keys to our resurgence efforts. Indigenous media is actively working toward self-recognition, transforming representation, shattering the status quo, and rejecting the settler statecraft that mainstream media is influenced by. By acknowledging the power that settler statecraft holds over the politics of recognition and deciding to transform their system from the within through cultural and anticolonial self-recognition, Indigenous women and girls will transform their representation to humanize and empower, and in turn, be able to survive and thrive.

Thank you for joining me on this journey of exploring and connecting the ways Indigenous women and girls have been continually oppressed through mainstream media in Canadian society. This exploration has not been easy to write or read, so I am appreciative of your time and emotional labour. The main thing I learned is that we are not accepting of this treatment, we are collectively working to reject these harms, to make important systemic changes, and that the future is bright.

Appendix A

Wise Practices in Writing about Indigenous Women and Girls

In reviewing degrading articles and reportage styles, various recommendations in final reports from Indigenous groups and commissions, and the Canadian Journalists' Association's ethical guidelines, I decided to create a resource to help with dispelling myths and combatting stereotypes. This is a *Protocols and Wise Practices in Writing about Indigenous Women and Girls* resource for media, institutional, and public use. These recommendations are based on the TRC final report, MMIWG2S final report, and Indigenous women writers to attempt to reclaim our narratives.

In Call to Justice 6.1, MMIWG2S Final Report, "Reclaiming Power and Place", called upon all within the media industry to "take decolonizing approaches to their work and publications in order to educate all Canadians about Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people" (8).

- **Character judgements**
    - Indigenous women and girls are consistently represented as damaged and unsavable. It is of the utmost importance that humanizing and strength-based language is utilized.
    - Do not use damage-centered language that makes character judgements or highlights personal issues such as substance abuse, running away from home, promiscuity, or sexual exploitation. This representation creates a victim-blaming narrative

- **Age-appropriate**
    - When speaking or writing about an Indigenous girl under 18 years of age, ensure that she is referred to as a 'child'. Use of the word 'woman' connotes adult agency in decision making and lends to place culpability on their actions.

- **Nation-affirming language**
    - 'Indigenous' is presently the most appropriate and commonly accepted identifier to use, and is inclusive of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit. Use of 'Indian' is racist

and is only appropriate when referring to *The Indian Act*. ‘Aboriginal’ is considered antiquated and only for use within legal capacities. ‘NDN’ is being reclaimed by some Indigenous peoples, but is not appropriate for use by non-Indigenous people.

  - When possible, include a person’s community e.g. Peguis First Nation, Norway House Cree Nation, or Westbank First Nation, and/or nation, e.g. Cree, Anishinaabe, or Dene.
  - Do not use possessive language, such as “Canada’s Indigenous people” as it is paternalistic and removes agency.

- **Representation**
  - Ensure that Indigenous women are represented authentically and appropriately through language used, voices featured, and historical and contemporary colonial context provided.
  - Include Indigenous women and girls from diverse cultural backgrounds, age groups, socio-economic status, and gender and sexuality expressions.

- **Voice**
  - Whenever possible, Indigenous women and girls should be able to tell their own stories. Include their quotes or compensate them to write articles.
  - If you are telling the story for them, ensure that it is free of prejudice, unbiased, and is culturally sensitive and trauma-informed, as is required by the Canadian Association of Journalists Ethics Guidelines.

- **Cultural Sensitivity**
  - Mandate cultural sensitivity training for your employees writing about Indigenous women and girls. There are countless opportunities available, such as the University of Alberta Indigenous MOOC. This is an important step in creating humanizing reportage.

Appendix B

Reader Supports

I am sensitive to the difficulty of these topics and to the importance of protecting the reader and myself. Due to this, I have chosen to be selective about the words I used, such as those relating to violence. Being truthful about experiences is important when we want to share the gravity of issues, especially with non-Indigenous people, but we as Indigenous people and researchers are constantly in contact with these very difficult and often traumatic stories, and I want to make sure I am not harming those reading my thesis or myself. Below is a list of resources in Winnipeg and at the University of Manitoba to contact if a reader experiences harm.

1. Aboriginal Health & Wellness Centre of Winnipeg
   - 204-925-3700, http://ahwc.ca/

2. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls (MMIWG) for family members who are affected by MMIWG, or to those who are survivors of violence.
   - Anderson-Pyrz, Tel: (204) 307-5919, anderson.pyrz@mkonorth.com

3. First Nation & Inuit Health Branch
   - 1-800-665-8507

4. Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre
   - 204-925-0300

5. Wa-Say Healing Centre
   - 204-774-6484

6. Indian Residential Schools - Resolution Health Support (RSH) Program
   - 1-866-818-3505 toll-free in Manitoba

7. First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line
   - 1-855-242-3310

8. Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Inquiry Support Line
   - 1-844-413-6649 and info@mmiwg-ffada.ca

9. National Indian Residential School Crisis Line
    - 1-866-925-4419

10. UM Student Counselling Centre
    - https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/student-health-and-wellness/student-counselling-centre-scc

11. UM Indigenous Student Counsellor
    - isc@umanitoba.ca

12. Horizon Manitoba – Indigenous supports
    - https://horizon.miap.ca/sources-of-support/

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