

(Re)Presenting Indigenous Women: A Critical Analysis of Two Reports on
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada

By
Christy Anderson

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Native Studies
University of Manitoba

August 2017

Copyright © 2017 by Christy Anderson

Abstract

Indigenous women and girls in Canada live in a society which poses a risk to their safety because they are women and Aboriginal. The issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) has been gaining notoriety as a topic of interest in Canadian society since Amnesty International published their report, *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* in 2004. Since then, several reports have been released that highlight the extreme social, economic and political marginalization of Indigenous women and girls in the country, yet many fall short of identifying the targeting of Aboriginal women by perpetrators of violence. Using a discourse analysis, this project examines two reports written from a national perspective on the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, and asks two primary questions: Do these reports provide readers with an accurate (re)presentation of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada? And does the report in question challenge racial stereotypes or reproduce violence against Indigenous women and girls? The research concludes that not only do both reports offer flawed (re)presentations of Indigenous women and girls, the two organizations—the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC)—both fail to look inward at their own role in addressing this pervasive social issue. This research creates opportunities for critical analysis of other documents on MMIWG such as the RCMP 2015 *Update*, the *Forsaken* (2012) report, and a variety of other official documents to determine what types of discourses are used to (re)present Indigenous women. Additionally, further critical analysis of official reports provides opportunities to identify the covert mechanisms that are often employed through official documenting of social issues, and which serve to uphold harmful stereotypes of Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to give thanks to God Almighty. Without your supernatural strength, the divine ordering of my steps, and the people you have placed in my path, I would not have persevered through this great test of character. This was a team effort.

I cannot express how sincerely grateful I am for being under the tutelage of one of the most renowned scholars in the field of Native/Indigenous Studies. Dr. Emma LaRocque has been instrumental in guiding me, supporting my journey, and challenging me to become a better scholar. I am ever grateful for her insight and her passion for Indigenous women's rights—the depth of her commitment to rigorous academic pursuits cannot be understated.

To Dr. Sherry Farrell-Racette and Dr. Jocelyn Thorpe, my valued committee members—thank-you for believing in my academic capabilities and the potential of this project. I cannot express the depth of my gratitude for your guidance, suggestions and your seemingly endless supply of patience. Your contributions to this project have been invaluable and I am grateful to have worked with you both.

To my maternal family—the Janz's—thank-you for your love and support during one of the toughest and most important phases of my adult life. I will be forever indebted to you for the time you spent with my children while I was working on this project. A special thank-you to Brenda, Wendy, Renee, Luc, Adrienne and Leah who spent countless hours with the boys so that mom could work on her paper. We love you.

For all of my friends who encouraged me to keep pressing through the difficult times, your love and support carried me through when I wanted to give up on myself. When I was ready to quit, you reminded me that I have something important to contribute to the world. When I wanted to

give up you told me “Don’t you dare.” A very special mention to Shauna, Delores, Jessica, Les, Damien, Allyson, Angela, Tim, Kim, George, Kim, Marie, Caleb, John and the team at the Access Program at University of Manitoba. Thank-you for reminding me that “I’ve got this”.

To my grandma and grandpa I wish you were here with me to celebrate this achievement. When everyone else had counted me for dead, you were there with hope. When no one else wanted me around, you called and invited me to Sunday dinner. When I was scared and alone, you came and reminded me that there was still love in the world. I miss you so terribly much but take comfort in knowing you watch over us from the spirit world.

Dedication

This project is dedicated firstly to my two young boys—Riley and Austin. My hope is that I am able to raise you both to be respectful, thoughtful and caring men. In some ways, you both sacrificed the most for this research—you lost precious time with your momma. My sincere desire is that you will both remember watching me work hard to achieve my goals, and that it will inspire you both to chase your dreams and reach for the stars. I love you to the moon and back, times momfinity.

To the families, community members, and children of our stolen sisters, I wish you peace, comfort and the ability to rebuild in a good way after your tragic loss. May Creator bless you and guide you in all of your endeavours.

To all Indigenous women and girls—you are worthy, you are beautiful, you deserve happiness and you matter. Chii-Miigwetch for allowing me to speak on behalf of those who may not otherwise have a voice.

To all the women who struggle to survive in a hostile world, I promise to keep fighting to leave this place better than it was when I got here.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Dedications.....	iii

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Self-Reflection	2
1.3 Violence Against Indigenous Women	6
1.4 Documents in Context	9
1.5 Roadmap	13

Chapter Two: Methodology

2.1 Methodology: Discourse Analysis	17
2.2 Language	18
2.3 Feminist Analysis	19
2.4 Shaping Public Opinion	20

Chapter Three: (Re)Presentations of Indigenous Women in Canada

3.1 Theory: Structural & Cultural Violence	22
3.2 Economic & Social Marginalization	22
3.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Violence Against Indigenous Women & Girls	24
3.4 The Princess & The Squaw	24
3.5 Government & Settler Propaganda	26
3.6 Lateral Violence & Colonialism	27
3.7 Indigenous Women Are Targeted for Violence	28
3.8 Concluding Thoughts	29

Chapter Four: Creating a Timeline to Understand Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls in Canada

4.1 Surveying the Hostile Climate	31
4.2 Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	32
4.3 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Report (1996)	32
4.4 Racism, Sexism & Getting Away With Murder (1999)	33
4.5 Patriarchy & Settler Entitlement (2002)	34
4.6 Stolen Sisters: MMIWG in Global Perspective (2004)	35
4.7 Extreme Economic & Political Marginalization/Increased Vulnerability to Violence (2008)	36
4.8 Families First: NWAC's Voice for the Stolen Sisters (2009)	37
4.9 No More Stolen Sisters (2009)	38
4.10 NWAC's Report to the Nation: What Their Stories Tell Us (2010)	38
4.11 The "Nobodies" of Vancouver's DTES: Forsaken (2012)	39

4.12	An Awkward Silence (2013)	40
4.13	Abusive Policing, Permission for Perpetrators (2013)	42
4.14	Police Response: The RCMP Join the Conversation (2014)	44
4.15	The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015)	45
4.16	RCMP Provide an Update: Family Violence is the Focus (2015)	46
4.17	Politics, Funding, Policies & Indigenous Women's Lives (2016)	47
4.18	Concluding Thoughts	49

Chapter Four: Critical Analysis of Two Reports on MMIWG

4.1	Comparative Analysis	50
4.2	Politics of Funding	51
4.3	NWAC & RCMP Reports	54
4.4	Roadmap: Critical Analysis	56
4.5	Indigeneity	57
4.6	A Picture Says A Thousand Words	58
4.7	Causes of Violence as Perceived by NWAC & RCMP	61
4.8	The Purpose of the Reports	65
4.9	Stories or Statistics?: Imagining Indigenous Women's Lives	69
4.10	Mother, Daughter, Sister, Aunt, Friend	69
4.11	Statistical Analysis: How Numbers Convey a Message	72
4.12	Data Collection	73
4.13	The General Social Survey	76
4.14	Methodology: Deciding Who "Counts"	78
4.15	Just the Facts: Who Got it Right?	81
4.16	Clearance Rate of Aboriginal Female Homicides	83
4.17	Who is Killing Indigenous Women?	85
i.	Residential Dwellings: Where Most Women Are Found	86
ii.	How Offenders Are Defined	88
iii.	Acquaintances & Strangers	89
iv.	Spouses & Family Members	90
v.	Family Violence & Stranger Danger	94
vi.	Ethnicity of Offenders	95
4.18	(Re)Presentations of Indigenous Women: Why Language Matters	97
4.19	Young Girls Under the Age of Majority	98
4.20	Aboriginal & Female	99
4.21	Female Versus Woman	100
4.22	Homicide or Murder?	104
4.23	Risk Factors & High-Risk Lifestyles	106
4.24	RCMP 'Risk Factors'	108
4.25	Prostitution, Sex Work & Limited Options	111
4.26	Sexual Exploitation	113
4.27	Historical Trauma	117
4.28	Vulnerability & Targeted Racialized Sexual Violence	119
4.29	What Actions Do These Reports Ask Us to Take?	122

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Blind Spots in Their Research	130
5.2 Strengths & Weaknesses	131
5.3 Language is a Choice	132
5.4 Limited Solutions	133
5.5 Impact of Reports	135
5.6 Future Research	136
5.7 The National Inquiry	137
5.8 Regardless, Violence is Deplorable	137
References	139
Appendix A: Front Cover of Native Women’s Association of Canada <i>What Their Stories Tell Us</i> Report	
Appendix B: Back Cover of Native Women’s Association of Canada <i>What Their Stories Tell Us</i> Report	
Appendix C: Front Cover of Royal Canadian Mounted Police <i>National Operational Overview</i> Report	
Appendix D: Back Cover of Royal Canadian Mounted Police <i>National Operational Overview</i> Report	
Appendix E: Timeline of Reports and Events Related to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada	

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Core Causes of Violence as Perceived by NWAC & RCMP

Figure 2: Study Goals and Objectives

Figure 3: Information Sources

Figure 4: Statistical Analyses Based on Numbers of Women in Databases and Corresponding Percentages

Figure 5: Statistical Analyses of Database Numbers and Relationship of Victim and Perpetrator

Figure 6: Reference to Subjects

A nation is not conquered until the hearts of its women are on the ground.

Then it is finished no matter how brave its warriors or how strong their weapons.

~Tsistsistas, Cheyenne Teaching~

Introduction

Amid a controversial beginning (Montgomery, 2017) to Canada's National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), this research project aims to build upon and contribute to the dialogue on the (re)presentation of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls through official reports. In sum, at least 58 reports containing some 700 recommendations intended to address racialized and sexual violence against Aboriginal women have been published, yet the recommendations continue to be largely ignored (Lavell-Harvard & Brandt, 2016). The purpose of this project is to examine two of these reports: the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) 2010 report, *What Their Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from the Sisters in Spirit Initiative* and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) report *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview* which was released in 2014. In preparing a report on a controversial topic such as this, it is critical that one present information in such a manner that Indigenous women and girls who have been lost to violence retain their human dignity, and that the fact-finding process does not sway from an honest analysis of the key issues that Indigenous women and girls encounter that in turn, makes them vulnerable to experiencing racialized and sexual violence in Canada. As one author argues, the truth-telling and truth-producing process that an Inquiry must adopt should

create the right leverage so that meaningful changes can occur, irrespective of whether its recommendations are immediately adopted or not. It can accomplish such a goal by having a process that becomes the message, by ensuring that it does not get derailed, and by proposing recommendations that set the stage for change, such as addressing the accountability vacuum and aiming to design a process that models the values and behaviour that it wants other institutions

to adopt. (Des Rosiers, 2016, p. 375)

An Indigenous epistemology tends to favour story-telling as it honours the oral traditions and histories of many Indigenous peoples (Atleo, 2004). In contrast, historically, Western positivist traditions tend to favour statistical analyses that they claim offer unbiased, accurate and reproducible results (Tuli, 2010). In this project, comparing the two reports on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls produced by the RCMP and NWAC, each organization favours one form of methodology over the other. Thus, both reports produce different analyses of the issues that they claim are directly related to the murder and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. It is my intention to examine both the RCMP and the NWAC reports and determine if they in fact contribute to the reproduction of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and to determine if each organization achieves a balance of expressing both a critical and compassionate perspective of the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Further, it is my intention to demonstrate how both organizations are in fact lacking in their (re)presentations of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in their respective reports. Additionally, I aim to reveal how both the RCMP and the NWAC consistently avoid looking inward at their own failures to address the pervasive issue of racialized sexual violence against Indigenous women in Canada.

Self-Reflection

Of utmost importance in any qualitative research project—particularly one which is critical in nature—is self-reflexivity or self-positioning of the researcher. Assuming that I have experiences which have shaped my own ideological perspectives, it is imperative to remain transparent; transparency requires that one necessarily reflect on one's experiences with said ideologies which have shaped my perspectives as a researcher investigating this topic.

Therefore, to offer context to the reader I have chosen to identify myself in a few important dimensions.

The first position that I occupy is that of an Indigenous woman. Social scientists and feminists alike would declare that I possess “insider status” (Acker, 2001), however, my story is not quite that simple. It’s true that I am a heterosexual woman, occupying a cisgender position in a heteronormative society, but my ethnicity and insider/outsider status is complex, like most issues of identity. I was born to parents from different ethnic groups; my father was Anishinabek or Ojibwa and he passed his Treaty Status on to me, while my mother is of Mennonite heritage. They divorced when I was five years old. My father had lost any connection to history, culture and Anishinabek worldviews from his Indian Residential School (IRS) experience. Essentially, it was my mother’s family that raised me and I grew up understanding the world through a very Eurocentric lens: I knew nothing of my own “Indian” heritage.

When I reached 30 years old I began to discover what it meant for me to be an Indigenous person. I had spent most of my life hidden under the veil of white privilege and my only knowledge of my heritage was that it afforded me certain rights to medical, vision and dental benefits beyond that of other Canadian citizens. It was only upon accessing post-secondary education that I began to unravel my own colonization and begin the process of knowing what it meant to become a part of my Indigenous heritage, history and culture. In essence, I began the process of decolonization in one of the most contested sites of modern colonization—university. While I would now consider myself to possess a certain amount of “insider” status, it is only due to my longing to learn about and commit to joining the struggles of my Indigenous brothers and sisters. Therefore, my ethnicity does not automatically afford me this “insider” status rather, I chose to seek out my identity as an Anishinabek woman as it

became apparent to me that I was missing a key component in understanding who I am. This has, of course, influenced my decision to study the extreme marginalization of Indigenous women in Canada and the pervasive issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women.

The second and perhaps most revealing position that I occupy is that of a woman who has been sexualized by men for my ethnicity. I have experienced the extreme sexualization of self, brought about often by men who fancied my “exotic” features, that many of the authors of violence against Aboriginal women explore (Acoose, 1995; Anderson, 2001; Green, 1975; Smith, 2005). This, of course, negatively affected my sense of worth, self-esteem, and my personal relationships with men. My experiences of being racialized and sexualized as the Other have been both demoralizing and confusing; many of the men I have encountered that fancied my exotic looks also denigrated me based on my “Indianness”. This was difficult to process in my younger years but has contributed to my personal and spiritual growth throughout my adulthood.

Being racialized and sexualized as the Other led me to experience several toxic and abusive relationships, some that came with the unfortunate consequences of navigating the Canadian justice system. Over the years I had several encounters with police regarding domestic matters, and they informed me that I would lose credibility with them if I called for assistance because of unsafe interactions with the same person again. Essentially, the local police impressed upon me that if I required their assistance for domestic violence with the same man, they would not be so willing to protect me if I returned to my abuser. Upon entering the law court system, I found that domestic matters are given very little attention and the consequences for perpetrators of violence were practically non-existent. I couldn’t help but wonder if the slight consequences handed out through the justice system were due to the fact that my perpetrator was white and I was an Indigenous woman who was struggling at that time in my life. Eventually,

one of my abusers threatened my life and I felt instant fear for my safety and that of my two young children. As I thought about the missing and murdered Indigenous women in this land, I often related to their disposability as recounted by both wider social discourses and the apathy of the justice system. It occurred to me that in both systems, the laws that governed Indigenous women were created to protect not only their perpetrators, but also to protect the wider social order and its favoured position for the White-Eurocanadian-Christian-Patriarchies (Acoose, 2005) and their proponents. I pondered at how society would respond if my ex-partner were to fulfill those threats he had made to take my life: would I become just another statistic or would society decide that my life was valuable enough to prosecute my perpetrator of violence? What did it mean that I had been raised in a white family? How did my education and therefore social class play into this assessment of the value of my life? In other words, how did the intersecting sites of oppression that I occupy, and others in which I find myself relatively privileged, affect my vulnerability to violence with respect to the larger sociological picture?

The third position that I occupy is that of a recovering addict. Dr. Maryanne Pearce alluded to some similar struggles in her opening dialogue of *An Awkward Silence*, however I am choosing to be blatantly honest about this part of my life. Having survived complex childhood trauma, partly from my Intergenerational Residential School Survivor status, I turned to drugs and alcohol at the impressionable age of 12—they became my solution to everything. At the time I did not understand how deeply colonialism and my father's IRS experience affected me. I had not yet begun exploring how profoundly my father's alcoholism, drug addiction and abusive behavior had created an unsafe environment for me in my most formative developmental years. Abandoned by my alcoholic father at five years old, I turned to alcohol and drugs at the tender age of twelve to cope with the pain I had not yet named or faced; at thirteen years old you could

find me at home playing with Barbie or out and about with people twice my age drinking and using. Thus, I lived what some have deemed to be a ‘high-risk lifestyle’ and indeed, that life involved many risks that threatened my safety and well-being. However, when I decided to seek help for my addictions at 27 years old, I was forced to look deeply at my motivations and discover the real reasons why I had turned to drugs and alcohol—I was desperately trying to numb the pain of my existence. There were many times when I did not want to live, simply because I could hardly handle the pain that lived inside my mind and body.

One might say that upon revelation of my position as a researcher, cisgender Indigenous woman, and a survivor of historical trauma, I bring my own ideological perspectives that have been shaped by both my experiences and my education with me as I explore missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. It is a topic of personal, professional, and political interest for reasons which are as complex and varied as my own positionality/identity.

Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada

Violence against Indigenous women in Canada is a complex issue. While some choose to relegate violence against women to an individual problem—one in which a predicament arises between a victim and a perpetrator—it has been found to be a social or systemic issue by many scholars and activists (Anderson, 2001; Johnson & Dawson, 2011; LaRocque, 2002; Smith, 2005; Weaver, 2009). The systemic or structurally violent social and institutional conditions that devalue Indigenous women by repeatedly dehumanizing them and placing them in the lowest ranks of sub-humanity, is where the ground work is laid to facilitate—one might even argue promote—a society which is complacent and apathetic towards overt physical and sexual violence against Aboriginal women. Furthermore, extreme forms of racism, sexism, classicism

and colonialism further provide an environment in which the perpetrators of violence against Aboriginal women are able to violently attack and even murder Indigenous women with relative impunity (Razack, 2002, p. 26). This climate of discrimination is exacerbated by the fact that Indigenous women are not only vulnerable to extreme sexual violence, they are also targeted (Razack, 2016a).

Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls has been an on-going issue in the backdrop of the Canadian social fabric for over four centuries. The disappearance and murder of Indigenous women has been recorded in both provincial and national reports on justice, with the most recent being the report from the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC]) in 2015. In Manitoba, the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* (Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba [AJI], 1999) used a case study to examine the covert systems that resulted in the murder and delayed justice of one young Aboriginal woman. The vicious, brutal sexual assault and murder of Helen Betty Osborne in The Pas, Manitoba, marked an undeniably harsh reality for Indigenous women in Canada—the document confirmed that intersecting systems of oppression coupled with a legacy of colonialism have made life for Aboriginal women perilous in this country. The *Aboriginal Justice Inquiry* evaluated the events that ultimately led to the loss of Osborne's life in November, 1971:

It is clear that Betty Osborne would not have been killed if she had not been Aboriginal. The four men who took her to her death from the streets of The Pas that night had gone looking for an Aboriginal girl with whom to "party." They found Betty Osborne. When she refused to party she was driven out of town and

murdered. Those who abducted her showed a total lack of regard for her person or her rights as an individual. (AJI, 1999, para. 4)

Helen Betty Osborne's assault and murder has become a benchmark moment in Canadian history. This vicious attack on the young Indigenous woman was perpetrated by four white males. It took over 16 years for Osborne's murderers to be put to trial in the justice system; shockingly, it is well known that the townsfolk living in the rural Manitoba town were fully aware of who had murdered the girl (Olsen-Harper, 2016, p. 88). Little more speaks to the inherent racism, sexism and the legacy of colonization than this particular instance of a missing and murdered young Indigenous woman. The horrific circumstances surrounding Osborne's murder and the inaction of the police and justice systems highlight the struggles between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian justice system; the young Indigenous woman's death served as a catalyst for the *Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report* (Pyne, 2005, p. 246). The *AJI* report of 1999 served to highlight the inherent racism within the structures of all the parts which make up the justice system. In reality, this issue of sexual, racialized violence has been pertinent in the lives of Indigenous women since the early days of colonial encroachment (Anderson, 2001; Razack, 2002; Smith, 2005) and certainly there are indications that sexual violence against Indigenous women existed prior to contact with European men as well (LaRocque, 1989; LaRocque, 2007). However, MMIWG has increasingly gained public attention in the twenty-first century; Indigenous women have been highlighting their own humanity in the face of a discriminatory system, one which has ensured the erosion of many of their rights and freedoms. Even prior to the erosion of their social status, one must consider whether Indigenous women truly enjoyed a privileged position within their respective nations and communities. However, it is through the pervasive colonial project that Indigenous women have now become not only the

most marginalized group in Canada (Kubik, Bourassa & Hampton, 2009), but their eroded social status has also caused them to become targets for sexual violence that is racially and misogynistically motivated (Razack, 2002).

Documents in Context

The global human rights activist group, Amnesty International, released the generative report *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* in 2004 (Amnesty International [Amnesty], 2004). The report highlighted the extreme social and economic marginalization of Indigenous women, the severe acts of violence perpetrated on their lives, and the police and societal apathy towards their welfare and safety living in Canada. This pivotal document was prefaced by the following acknowledgment:

These are not new concerns. Indigenous women's organizations, government commissions such as the inquiry into the murder of Helen Betty Osborne and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and United Nations human rights bodies have all called on Canadian officials to address the marginalisation of Indigenous women in Canadian society and to ensure that the rights and safety of Indigenous people are respected and upheld by police and courts. Sadly, fundamental measures that could help reduce the risk of violence to Indigenous women remain unimplemented. This is only one example of the way Canadian authorities have failed in their responsibility to protect the rights of Indigenous women in Canada. (Amnesty, 2004, p. 2)

Canada, which had enjoyed a reputation as a progressive country in the human rights category within the global community (Standing Committee, 2010), suddenly found itself in the global spotlight for complacently violating the human rights of Indigenous women. Canada's world-wide reputation as a multicultural, welcoming place for many peoples was in jeopardy; human rights advocates shone the proverbial light upon the systemic devaluation of Indigenous women's lives on the global stage and Canadians began to talk. At this time the Canadian government could have responded with a call for an inquiry into mysterious disappearance and deaths of Indigenous women and girls, yet, it did not.

However, long before the release of this revealing report, Indigenous women formed organizations like the Native Women's Association of Canada (est. 1974), and began protesting the injustices that they faced on a daily basis, in a system that historically excluded them from participating in it. In the wake of the Amnesty International report, NWAC began their research project called *Sisters in Spirit* and Aboriginal women began exploring the reoccurrence of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canadian society. The NWAC began collecting data on missing and/or murdered Aboriginal women, which led to the creation of their original *Sisters in Spirit* database during the five year research period from 2005-2010. What NWAC found was not only were there close to 600 cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada (NWAC, 2010), they went even further and examined the underlying root causes of what they posit is a social phenomenon.

The Native Women's Association of Canada took this opportunity to condemn Canada's broken system and the legacy of colonization that has, for numerous reasons, made Indigenous women vulnerable to sexual and physical, often lethal, violence. In their research, the organization staked their claim that Aboriginal women die from such violence at a rate that is

approximately seven times higher than that of non-Aboriginal women (NWAC, 2010, p. 5).

With the backing of the internationally renowned human rights watchdog—Amnesty International—NWAC’s research provides a foundation upon which structural issues of violence have been deemed the root cause of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls issue in Canada. Amnesty International’s follow-up report entitled *No More Stolen Sisters* (2009), affirms that

Indigenous women in Canada face much higher rates of violence than any other women. In a 2004 Canadian government survey, Indigenous women reported rates of violence, including domestic violence and sexual assault, 3.5 times higher than non-Indigenous women. Studies suggest that assaults against Indigenous women are not only more frequent, they are also particularly brutal. (Amnesty, 2009, p. 1)

Essentially, Amnesty International was a catalyst that brought the issue of MMIWG to the forefront of the international scene, and it contributed to the growing interest in missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in mainstream Canada. In the years that followed, the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls continued to gain notoriety and public attention, while the Canadian federal government continued to downplay the seriousness of the matter (“Harper rebuffs”, 2014). Meanwhile, researchers at NWAC visited with community and family members to collect data and form the first ever database with information about women who had disappeared under suspicious circumstances or who had been found murdered. This would lead to the publishing of several reports including *What Their Stories Tell Us* (2010) and *Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities* (2009).

Amidst a wave of fresh reports discussing the issue of MMIWG, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) also released a national report in 2014. Prior to the release of their report, the RCMP had just undergone intense scrutiny in several publications addressing this matter. One might even suggest that the RCMP justice report was a response to criticism directed at the Force—as it is colloquially named—for their inequitable application of justice when interacting with Canada’s Indigenous women. For example, in 2012 Wally Oppal’s report *Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry* (Oppal, 2012) was published, drawing attention to police inaction and discrimination against women working in the survival sex trade in Vancouver, British Columbia’s Downtown Eastside. Subsequently, in 2013 the Human Rights Watch group published *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada* (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2013), which condemned RCMP for using excessive force against Indigenous women and in specific cases detailed how some members of the rural RCMP had physically and sexually abused First Nations women while on duty. Finally, Maryanne Pearce’s *An Awkward Silence: Missing and Murdered Vulnerable Women and the Canadian Justice System* (Pearce, 2013) denounced the injustice of Canada’s justice system and its discrimination against Indigenous women, particularly those who are vulnerable to becoming prey for perpetrators of racialized sexual violence.

The RCMP’s *National Operational Overview* document emerged shortly after Dr. Maryanne Pearce’s doctoral research made headlines and her findings were shared widely on social media, news, and in academic circles (Welch, 2014). It is interesting to note that despite numerous critiques in other reports (Amnesty, 2004; Amnesty, 2009; HRW, 2013; Oppal, 2012),

it was Pearce's report that was the catalyst that moved the RCMP to perform an analysis of their own data.

Roadmap

In this project, I examine two specific reports on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) in Canada. Using a discourse analysis, I explore the language employed, the context, and the tone of two reports produced by two distinct organizations—The Native Women's Association of Canada and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The topic of these reports is the same but, it is essential to examine the tone of the reports and how the information is communicated to truly understand how Indigenous women are (re)presented, and to determine how each organizational body discusses the pervasive violence that continues to be perpetrated against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. With an inquiry underway, it is imperative that the choice of language and the context of these reports be given careful consideration. Furthermore, since these two reports are national reports on the topic of MMIWG, it can be assumed that the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls will be referring to both the NWAC and RCMP reports as part of their research process. Thus, such an undertaking must be done with a searching critical analysis; it is my hope as a researcher that I can contribute in some small way to the research process of the inquiry through my own undertaking in this project.

Chapter two involves a discussion of Discourse Analysis, which is intended to offer a summary of the methodologies employed in the research process. When applying a methodology that involves analysis, the intention is to give *context* to the *content*. While language is intended to appear neutral (Fairclough, 2009), certain words and popular discourses

emerge and are used to influence the reader to align their perspectives with the writer (Rapley, 2007). Moreover, what is unique about the ideological power of communication is the ability to not only shape reader perceptions, but also to reproduce popular social discourse, therefore influencing socio-political processes. This chapter also provides the rationale for utilizing discourse and critical discourse analysis as the primary methodologies for the research project.

Some key questions that the process of analysis invites readers to ask are as follows: Who was this report written for? Why was it written—what's the ultimate purpose/use of the information that has been gathered? Under what premise was the information gathered and disseminated? Does this report uphold the status quo or does it challenge it? How are Indigenous women and girls (re)presented in this report? Does this report paint Indigenous women in a negative or positive light? How do both organizations understand the issue of violence associated with missing and murdered indigenous women and girls? Using critical analysis allows the researcher to determine whether each report reproduces violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada. In assessing whether each report reproduces violence against Indigenous women, it is imperative that one be knowledgeable in popular (re)presentations of Aboriginal women in Canada.

Chapter three summarizes the popular discourses around (re)presentations of Indigenous women in Canada. Indigenous women have been socially, economically and politically marginalized in Canadian society through the colonial project. Aboriginal women and girls have been facing harmful stereotypes that influence how others perceive them for hundreds of years. Most of the discourse has centered on their double or triple marginalization, however, some scholars have criticized this assessment for being short-sighted. Thus the targeting of Indigenous

women and girls is discussed in the broader context of systemic discrimination and the social apathy of Canadians and the justice system.

Chapter four provides an overview and timeline of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. While large reports, commissions, academic studies and inquiries have touched on the idea of racialized sexual violence against Indigenous women over the last few decades, MMIWG did not receive an official place in the social issues category in Canada until the release of the first Amnesty International report in 2004. *The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP, 1996) contains a chapter dedicated to exploring the marginalization of Aboriginal women, and the *Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report of Manitoba* (AJI, 1999) was launched to examine the relationship between the justice system and Indigenous women after Helen Betty Osborne was brutally murdered in 1971. This chapter specifically examines some of the key reports in their respective place in the timeline, and how each one fits into the bigger picture of studying and understanding missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Chapter five is where a critical analysis is applied to the RCMP report and the NWAC report on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. I begin with a visual analysis of report covers, and move to compare methods of data collection, followed by an examination of the use of language and popular discourses. Additionally, an assessment is made regarding the report conclusions and the core issues related to violence against Indigenous women and girls, as revealed through their organizational reporting. By comparing these facets in both reports, it becomes apparent whether an institution either upholds or rejects stereotypical (re)presentations of Indigenous women; additionally, it demonstrates to the reader what each institution refuses to acknowledge in their own analyses regarding racialized sexual violence against Indigenous women in Canada.

Finally, in chapter six I offer some conclusions and provide suggestions for further research. While this research project is intended to contribute to a growing conversation both academically and socially, it is by no means intended to offer a comprehensive solution to the pervasive issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. What this project aims to accomplish is a critical evaluation and comparison of the RCMP and NWAC reports, and through this evaluation offer a perspective that would have future researchers imagine how they might improve upon the methods of both organizations. In order to dismantle these complex and multilayered social issues, one must be prepared to have open, transparent conversations about the harsh realities of Indigenous women and girls' lives, yet, we must also continue to honour the memories of the women whose lives have been taken.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Methodology: Discourse Analysis

Social constructionist approaches to understanding phenomena like MMIWG stand in stark contrast to the traditional Western positivist approaches to conducting research. The quantitative methodologies of positivist epistemologies have historically been the accepted method of deriving truth in a scientific manner. Tuli notes

Research methodology used in social science for much of the 20th century was largely quantitative methodology, which originated in the natural sciences such as Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology etc, and it was concerned with investigating things which we could observe and measure in some way. Such observations and measurements can be made objectively and repeated by other researchers. (2010, p.98)

However, social scientists found this practice to be unsatisfactory when applied to human sciences. As a result, qualitative methodologies emerged as a practice that attempts to make sense of why things are the way they are in the social world and why people act the way that they do (*ibid*). While the positivist tradition assumes that a particular reality exists and can be subsequently captured and measured, a constructivist epistemology asserts that people are constantly constructing their realities; in other words, constructivists reject the essentialism of a single observable truth, and instead believe that knowledge of the world is a human and social construction (Sayer, 1997).

Qualitative analysis materialized as a method of observing underlying social processes, and challenging the status quo of knowledge claims produced and validated through the quantitative research of positivist paradigm proponents of science (Wooffitt, 2005). Upon the

development of this new method of analysis, critical discourse analysts “sought to develop methods and theory that could better capture interrelationships and especially draw out and describe the practices and conventions in and behind texts that reveal political and ideological investment” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4). Researchers were determined to reveal underlying issues that reproducible data did not capture; they also acknowledged the power of maintaining status quo in the deterministic positivist tradition. The common objective of those researchers who utilize this qualitative practice is that they possess a universal commitment to political intervention and social change (Bloor & Bloor, 2007; Machin & Mayer, 2012; Rapley, 2007; Wooffitt, 2005).

Language

The analysis of documents necessarily implies that language or discourse is a focal part of this investigation. What often appears neutral and natural in any document is actually a deliberate perspective, constructed for consumption by the reader’s audience. In fact, “language is part of the way that people seek to promote particular views of the world and naturalize them, that is, make them natural and commonsensical. Through language, certain kinds of practices, ideas, values and identities are promoted and naturalized” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 2).

Fairclough, an original proponent of Discourse Analysis, suggests that communicative power, or the power to control others through communication, exercises power over people in the sense that it can be used to control their behavior or actions (2009, p. 514). Thus, language, although it may appear to be, is never neutral and is a mechanism of power that can be used to espouse ideologies through subtle processes.

Analyzing documents is one manner in which a critical analyst can expose ideologies that are hidden within the text. The language that the authors use to describe or communicate their message when producing a document for consumption, is rich with assumptions, assumed positionalities, and works to create identities in both overt and covert mechanisms of categorizing people, places and things. Bloor & Bloor note that

The messages in the text may be those of an individual writer or the writer may be representing the views and the attitudes of an institution or group...
[Furthermore], the stance may be explicit (also known as overt) or hidden (covert), and may be either conscious (also known as inscribed) or unconscious.
(2007, p. 33).

Thus, the ultimate task of the researcher is to determine through close examination of documents or texts, what the underlying ideological positioning of the author is, and how the message has been crafted to persuade the reader to align themselves with the author. For the role of the author is to structure and organize the text to persuade the reader that they are the chief authority on how to understand the issue they are writing about (Rapley, 2007, p. 113). Interestingly, one of the most critical functions of the discourse analyst is identifying what the author has excluded from the document (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Mills, 1997); this can assist the researcher in identifying the ideological milieu which serves to advance the writer's agenda.

Feminist Analysis

As the topic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is most certainly a feminist matter, it necessitates a brief mention of feminist analysis. The foremost aspect of dissecting discourse from a feminist perspective is the patriarchal nature of language and its

common application that has the tendency to (re)present women in such a way as to perpetuate traditional sexist stereotypes (Hellinger, 1989, p. 273). The feminist concerns of violence against Indigenous women suggest that what is of the utmost importance in dissecting common discursive practices, is to incite a political critique for action. Feminist analysis offers “a political perspective on gender, concerned with demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power, and ideology in discourse” (Lazar, 2005, p. 4), which demonstrates its emancipatory power.

Shaping Public Opinion

Since reports produced at a national level are often reviewed by numerous citizens, governments, community organizations and news producers, their contents can reach a wide audience. A report published by large and reputable organizations can have far-reaching implications in affecting readers’ perceptions and shaping public opinion. These reports can be utilized as fact-finding documents for conducting further research, which necessitates a close reading and evaluation of the organizations’ ideological positioning. A concise description of discourse analysis is described as the undertaking

To systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes; to investigate how such practices, events, and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power. (Fairclough cited in Locke, 2004, p. 1)

Each of these reports is in their own significance, a site of either uncontested or contested power. Colonial relationships between the colonizer and the colonized have for over 520 years been

contested relationships characterized by power struggles. Therefore the decision to employ this social constructionist methodology is a deliberate one; discourse analysis demonstrates how “social and political inequalities are manifest in and reproduced by discourse” (Wooffitt, 2005, p. 137). A primary goal of this project is to examine these texts in relation to the relative power held by each of these social groups (NWAC and RCMP), and to assess how they (re)present socially marginalized Indigenous women.

Chapter 3: (Re)Presentations of Indigenous Women in Canada

Theory: Structural & Cultural Violence

By examining the historical and contemporary issues of racism, sexism, classicism, patriarchy and colonialism, this project offers a critical perspective of the structural (Galtung, 1969) and cultural violence (Galtung, 1990) that precede the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Structural violence is considered to be the avoidable disparity between the ability to fulfill a person's basic needs and their actual fulfillment (Ho, 2007, p. 1). These theories of structural and cultural violence expose the ideological milieu for its tendency to blame the victim or attribute their victimization to individual level issues or to some sort of cultural deficiency. Severe social and economic marginalization leads to the increased vulnerability of Indigenous women and girls to experiencing more acute and extreme forms of violence in their lives (Amnesty, 2004; Amnesty 2009; Inter-American Commission on Human Rights [IACHR], 2014; Kubik & Bourassa, 2016; Kuokkanen, 2008; Peach & Ladner, 2010; Weaver, 2009). Furthermore, Indigenous women and girls experience racialized sexual violence primarily at the hands of men, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perpetrators. This section briefly examines the theoretical substance of violence against Aboriginal women and girls, and explores the connection between violence, socio-economic marginalization, the targeting of Indigenous women and girls, and the link to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Economic & Social Marginalization

While the effects of colonization are felt by all peoples Indigenous to this land, it has been noted that Aboriginal women are disproportionately affected by its negative impact (Fiske, 1995; Goatcher-Bergmann, 2011; Green, 2007; Kubik, Bourassa & Hampton, 2009; Kuokkanen, 2008; LaRocque, 1989; Lawrence, 2008; Olsen-Harper, 2006; St. Denis, 2007). As a result of

the numerous restraints systematically placed upon Aboriginal women, restraints such as inadequate housing and income, low levels of employment and education and factoring in the high incidence of female headed households, Indigenous women face socio-economic challenges unlike those faced by any other women in this country (NWAC, 2004). In our capitalist economy which devalues the unpaid work of women in the private sphere, coupled with the systemic racism and sexism inherent in patriarchal ideologies, legislation, and the deeply ingrained legacy of colonization, it is not difficult to see how Aboriginal women have been subjugated by the state, and are now the most vulnerable group in Canada. As Kuokkanen notes, “All these systems and structures—colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy—are predicated on violence, whether direct and interpersonal or structural, economic or epistemic” (2008, p. 221). Repeatedly designated “less than human” in an often inhospitable Canadian climate, Indigenous women find themselves economically and socially marginalized, leaving them in desperate situations which make them more vulnerable to sexual and physical violence than any other ethnic group. Further, as feminist and critical theorists have illustrated, it is nearly impossible to dissect intersecting systems of oppression like racism, sexism, and colonialism (Carter, 1997; Carty, 1999; Ng, 1991; Stevenson, 1999) in the lived experiences of Indigenous women. LaRocque explains,

While all Aboriginal people are subjected to racism, women further suffer from sexism. Racism breeds hatred of Aboriginal peoples; sexism breeds hatred of women. For Aboriginal women, racism and sexism constitute a package experience. We cannot speak of sexual violence without at once addressing the effects of racism/sexism. Sexual violence is related to racism in that racism sets up or strengthens a situation where Aboriginal women are viewed and treated as

sex objects. The objectification of women perpetuates sexual violence.

Aboriginal women have been objectified not only as women but also as Indian women. The term used to indicate this double objectification was and is “squaw.” (LaRocque, 2002, p. 148)

Theoretical Perspectives on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

The following section examines various theoretical perspectives on (re)presentations of Indigenous women in popular culture, news and government documents, patriarchy, misogyny, sexual violence and colonization. Furthermore, the colonial project is examined in relation to the violent sexualization of Indigenous women and girls. Intricately intertwined, these perspectives highlight the increased vulnerability to violence as well as the targeting of Indigenous women for violent attacks, as some of the everlasting effects of a dark legacy of colonialism in Canada.

The Princess & The Squaw

Prevailing European attitudes regarding the propriety of women were rooted in patriarchy and Victorian ideals of womanhood (Carter, 2012) in the 1800’s. Integral to Victorian propriety were the ideals of domesticity, submission to men and the belief that women were property. At the time, European women were merely contracts to be bought and many suffered targeted abuse from their husbands; this abuse included sexual violence, verbal abuse and economic deprivation (Bailey, 2007). Prior to and certainly influential upon the Victorian ideals of the nineteenth century, was the dichotomous characterization of women as either ‘pure’ virgin or ‘debased’ whore. Not unlike the precursor conceptual dichotomy of the ‘civilized’ European and the ‘savage’ Indian, these dueling images sought to categorize people, leaving them little room to

define themselves. What arose from these characterizations of European classification were the Indian Princess and her shadowy Other self the Squaw Drudge (Green, 1975).

Dubbed “The Pocahontas Perplex” (Green, 1975), the Indian Princess and her Squaw sister are both defined in relation to men, particularly white settler colonialists. Green notes that

Both her nobility as a Princess and her savagery as a Squaw are defined in terms of her relationships with male figures. If she wishes to be called Princess, she must save or give aid to white men. The only good Indian...rescues and helps white men (Green, 1975, p. 703).

Above all else, the burden of Indigenous women from contact to present is the fact that they are almost always the object of lust for white men (*ibid*). While the princess is the object of lust, her sexuality is never realized and she therefore remains ‘pure’; the squaw on the other hand, is immediately objectified and exists only to do what white men want for money or to fulfill their lustful desires (Green, 1975, p. 711). The squaw is assigned the negative attributes of “drunkenness, stupidity, thievery, venality of every kind” (*ibid*), and they are shamed for their relationships with white men. Whereas Pocahontas the princess was noble and powerful, “as the squaw, a depersonalized object of scornful convenience, she is powerless...[and] may be easily destroyed without reference to her humanity” (Green, 1975, p. 713). The squaw, therefore, is imagined to be not only undesirable but also disposable. Regardless, whether the “Indian” woman is labelled a squaw or a princess, she is sexualized and deemed accessible to the white European male for consumption (Acoose, 1995, Anderson, 2001, LaRocque, 1989).

Popular culture’s imagery of the Indian Princess and the Squaw contribute to (re)presentations which “create very powerful images that perpetuate stereotypes, and perhaps

more importantly, dangerous cultural attitudes that affect human relations and inform institutional ideology” (Acoose, 1995, p. 39). Furthermore, the structural impact of these harmful stereotypes contributes to a culture where Indigenous women and girls are more vulnerable to experiencing violence. Borrowing heavily from Rayna Green, Janice Acoose writes:

In much of Anglophone Canadian fiction, Indigenous women are misrepresented in images that perpetuate racist and sexist stereotypes. Stereotypic images of Indian princesses, squaw drudges, suffering helpless victims, tawny temptresses, or loose squaws falsify our realities and suggest in a subliminal way that those stereotypic images are us. As a consequence, those images foster cultural attitudes that encourage sexual, physical, verbal, or psychological violence against Indigenous women. (Acoose, 1995, p.55)

Government & Settler Propaganda

In an era when Indigenous peoples far outnumbered colonists, governments used propaganda about Indigenous women to justify segregationist policies in the West. Central to these imposed policies was the creation of the image that Aboriginal women were dissolute, dangerous and sinister (Carter, 2012, p. 308). Indigenous women were blamed for a host of problems from deplorable living conditions to high mortality rates in their communities. Creating an image of Aboriginal women as scandalous and rebellious served to further reinforce racist, sexist policies to keep them removed from colonists and confined to their reserve lands, thus freeing the developing governments from responsibility for many of the issues that they had a hand in creating. These negative images “became deeply embedded in the consciousness of the

most powerful socio-economic groups on the prairies and have resisted revision” (Carter, 2012, p. 308).

The abuse and sexualization of Aboriginal women by the North West Mounted Police (NWMP)—the precursor to the RCMP—in the 1880’s was a common occurrence. In order to deflect attention from the misconduct of the police, local and national newspapers wrote stories that denigrated Aboriginal women and blamed them for the sexual affairs of the officers. Papers like the *Toronto Globe* blamed the women, stating that it was customary for them to be bought and sold like commodities in their own societies and claiming they were known across the globe for their “loose morals” (Carter, 2012, p. 314). The *Fort Macleod Gazette* alleged that Indigenous women were prostitutes taking advantage of white men and *The Mail* pronounced that Aboriginal men had been selling their wives and children for alcohol since the early days of the French fur trade (*ibid*). Furthermore, reputable papers like the *Gazette* propagated falsehoods that there was no marriage in Plains societies and women could be purchased for the price of a horse or two (*ibid*). These false images of Indigenous women swept across the nation, striking fear and contempt into the hearts and minds of the invading colonists, serving to further demonize and marginalize their social position, as well as limit their opportunities to thrive in the new societies.

Lateral Violence & Colonialism

Examining violence against Aboriginal women in their own communities, the perspective remains one of addressing the inherently structural and systemic violence that exacerbates overt physical and sexual violence against Indigenous women. LaRocque notes,

Colonization has taken its toll on all Aboriginal peoples, but it has taken perhaps the greatest toll on women. Prior to colonization, Aboriginal women enjoyed comparative honour, equality, and even political power in a way European women did not at the same time of history. We can trace the diminishing status of Aboriginal women with the progression of colonialism. (2002, p.148)

Not only did Indigenous women's positions erode through the colonization process, entire communities of Aboriginal peoples have been negatively affected by this legacy. Consequently, lateral violence is now endemic within Indigenous communities; internal colonialism and internal racism is crippling many Indigenous communities (Victor, 2007).

Lateral violence is the name given to “the harmful and undermining practices that members of oppressed groups can engage in against each other as a result of marginalization” (Wingard, 2010, p. 13). As a result of oppressive patriarchal and misogynistic, colonial practices and laws, Indigenous peoples have inadvertently turned against one another in their own communities. This violence can be expressed in dysfunctional, unhealthy methods of relating to one another, and it can manifest in overt physical and even sexual violence. The impact of patriarchy and misogyny cannot be understated; Indigenous women and girls are vulnerable to racialized sexual violence from perpetrators within their own communities and in the larger social context of Canada. Combined together, these powerful forces facilitate the creation of a social climate where Indigenous women and girls are targeted for violence.

Indigenous Women Are Targeted for Violence

In their discussion paper, Jacobs and Williams consider the NWAC *Sisters in Spirit* research and determine that some

Young women were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time in a society that poses a risk to their safety. They were targeted because they were Aboriginal, and it was assumed that either they would not fight back or they would not be missed. (2009, p. 133)

While popular discourse often centres around the double or triple marginalization of Aboriginal women, Razack contends that this explanation is insufficient; marginalization does not account for the targeting of Indigenous women.

While it is certainly critical to understand Indigenous women's vulnerability to violence, such an emphasis obscures the fact that Indigenous women are targets. They are valuable members of their communities, and their annihilation spells the annihilation of Indigenous communities. Utilizing an optic of vulnerability it is difficult to consider the perpetrators of the violence and to consider what sexualized violence has to do with colonialism. (Razack, 2016a, p. 292)

Furthermore, several authors identify a defunct police and justice system as exacerbating the issue, citing that police apathy (Oppal, 2012), sexual and physical abuse of Indigenous women by RCMP (HRW, 2013), and the sexist, racist culture of the justice system (IACHR, 2013; Pearce, 2013; Razack, 2002) as major contributors to the ongoing racialized sexual violence perpetrated against Indigenous women.

Concluding Remarks

Racist stereotypes are a form of social exclusion, which supports the social conditions that create an atmosphere in which the perpetration of violence against Indigenous women is the social norm. As these scholars suggest, stereotypic (re)presentations of Indigenous women,

coupled with the use of sexual violence as a tool of colonial conquest, have left Aboriginal women in a precarious position of extreme social and economic marginalization in Canada. The constraint of the image of the “Squaw drudge” has left Indigenous women vulnerable to the most extreme violent and sexual attacks of any group of women in Canada. While some collectives are actively working to deconstruct these falsehoods about Indigenous women, many other institutions in Canadian society are unknowingly upholding these racist ideologies by circulating their own modern day propaganda. In modern times, it is the subtle, covert racist and sexist rhetoric that continues to perpetually devalue, denigrate and dehumanize Aboriginal women. Structural and cultural violence are intricately woven into the systems that continue to dictate the value of Indigenous women’s lives in Canada.

This covert violence has been made visible in Canadian society through the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. As the literature has demonstrated, the structural violence inherent in the Canadian justice system—policing, courts and prisons—has impacted Indigenous women in such a manner that they are beaten, raped, murdered and disappear without a trace, and with relative apathy from justice officials. As one author suggests “the extent to which Native peoples are not seen as “real” people in the larger colonial discourse indicates the success of sexual violence, among other racist and colonialist forces, in destroying the perceived humanity of Native peoples” (Smith, 2005, p. 12). This brief overview of literature on violence demonstrates that not only are Aboriginal women the most vulnerable ethnic group in Canada, but they are also targets for abuse, given their disposability and subhuman status with Canadian citizens and the justice system.

**Chapter 4: Creating a Timeline to Understand
Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada**

Surveying the Hostile Climate

As the literature review demonstrates, violence against Indigenous women and girls has been an issue historically (Carter, 2012; Carty, 1999; Kuokkanen, 2008; LaRocque, 1989; Lawrence, 2008; Ng, 1991; Olsen-Harper, 2006; St. Denis, 2007; Stevenson, 1999); some might even argue that in the more recent Canadian climate, the instances of MMIWG appears to be much larger than previously reported (Tasker, 2016). While violence against Indigenous women and girls is not an entirely colonial construct, settler colonialism has exacerbated both the ferocity and frequency of sexual racialized violence (LaRocque, 2002). Racism, sexism, patriarchy, misogyny, and colonialism are integral ideologies that contribute to the pervasiveness of this social issue (Anderson, 2001; Carter, 2012; LaRocque, 2002; Razack, 2016a; Smith, 2015); however, there are various complex interdependent variables that work together to foster an environment that is inherently violent towards Aboriginal women. A few key issues that are often neglected in analyses are poverty, racism within the police and justice system, and lateral violence within Indigenous communities.

Historically, Indigenous women and girls were targeted because of the relative power and influence they held within their communities. Although it is difficult to determine exactly when violence against Indigenous women escalated into what is now referred to as missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls or MMIWG, it is possible to create a timeline of key events that illustrate the rise of awareness of this social issue. For example, the murder of Helen Betty Osborne is commonly cited as one of the first cases to garner contemporary public attention in Canada (Amnesty, 2004; AJI, 1999); this event remains a key moment in Canadian history that establishes a point of reference for many researchers, scholars and activists with the rise of MMIWG.

What follows is a timeline that includes several official reports that have been published on the issue violence against Indigenous women and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This review of literature combined with several noteworthy cases demonstrates that Aboriginal women are not only the most vulnerable population in Canada they are also targeted for extreme sexual violence because of their race, class and gender (Razack, 2016a).

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

While academics, grassroots activists and citizens have been outspoken about the matter of violence against Aboriginal women for much longer, academia has only begun to scratch the surface of MMIWG. Scholarship has increased dramatically over the last six years, with increased media attention and growing social awareness of the issue. These sources are presented in chronological order to offer the reader an overview of the common perspectives from a variety sources, be they human rights activists, official inquiries/inquests or academic scholarship.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal People Report (1996)

A Commission was struck in 1992 to examine the relationship between the Canadian state and Aboriginal peoples, in light of several key events that illustrated a clash between the two groups. With the emergence of the White Paper in 1969, the subsequent response of the Red Paper of 1970 and the Oka Resistance of 1990 occurring in recent history, the Commission gathered information in the form of public hearings, submissions, research studies and national round tables (RCAP, 1996). This led to the documenting of and subsequent publishing of 4000 pages acknowledging the root causes of systemic violence towards indigenous people, as well as hundreds of recommendations for repairing the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the

State. The RCAP report represents a fundamental document which details the pervasive social issues that work together to marginalize Indigenous women and girls both within their own communities and in the wider social context of their relationship as citizens of the Canadian state.

Racism, Sexism & Getting Away With Murder (1999)

The Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba was released in 1999. This inquiry was carried out in order to discover how justice had been systematically denied to the First Peoples in the region. The impetus for this provincial commission was born out of two events that occurred in the late 1980's; the murders of Helen Betty Osborne and of John Joseph Harper—killed by a police officer in Winnipeg, MB—were the primary catalysts for this examination of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the justice system. The Commissioners set out on a fact finding mission, in hopes that reform would take place within the justice system—policing, courts and prisons—as well as between Indigenous peoples and the society that they inhabited.

Volume II is dedicated to the examination of the severe violence perpetrated against young Betty Osborne, the apparent apathy of the justice officials in their investigation of this crime, as well as the townsfolk who were subsequently accused of masquerading the murder for sixteen years, made this case a poignant one. *The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry* determined that this was a case of racialized sexual violence, and remarked that

Her attackers seemed to be operating on the assumption that Aboriginal women were promiscuous and open to enticement through alcohol or violence. It is evident that the men who abducted Osborne believed that young Aboriginal

women were objects with no human value beyond sexual gratification. (AJI, 1999, Ch. 5, Para. 39)

In their final analysis of the case, the commissioners declare that “there is one fundamental fact: her murder was a racist and sexist act. Betty Osborne would be alive today had she not been an Aboriginal woman” (*ibid*).

Patriarchy & Settler Entitlement (2002)

Sherene Razack’s unique approach to “unmapping” settler-colonial violence against Indigenous women includes an analysis of geographic separation, racism, patriarchy and the law. The author utilizes an interdisciplinary method of understanding violence by using a case-study approach. In 1995, Pamela George—an Anishinabek woman—was found murdered in the outskirts of Regina, Saskatchewan, and the trial of her murderers—two white males who attended a local university— underscore the racism and sexism entrenched in the social fabric of the community and justice system.

Scrutinizing the court transcripts from the trial, Razack observes that what is noticeably absent from the case is historical context; the courts and lawyers evade the historical implications of the colonial project entirely, and offer no context to the circumstances surrounding the murder. In disregarding the historical legacy of colonization, the justice system veiled white privilege by concealing white people’s “historic participation in and benefit from dispossession and violence” and “the law’s complicity in settler violence” (p. 127). Moreover, the author equates the relative impunity of Pamela George’s killers, to the prevailing “nineteenth-century perception of the Aboriginal woman as a licentious and dehumanized squaw” (p. 135), which she concludes ensured that the men only had a very small chance of seeing George as a human being

(p. 127). In her final analysis, Razack determines that “in racialized space, violence may occur with impunity. Bodies from respectable spaces may also violate with impunity, particularly if the violence takes place in the racialized spaces of prostitution” (p. 143).

Stolen Sisters: MMIWG in Global Perspective (2004)

Amnesty International's, *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada* (2004) provides a global human rights perspective on MMIWG in Canada. This report summarizes some of the primary issues of relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous women, namely, that the government and justice system have failed to protect their fundamental human rights. The report presents nine case studies of Indigenous women who lost their lives to extreme racialized sexual violence:

These stories of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls take place in three of the Western provinces of Canada over a period of three decades. In some cases, the crimes remain unsolved. In others, the perpetrators have been identified as intimate acquaintances, strangers or men encountered in the course of desperate efforts to earn a living. In every instance, it is Amnesty International's view that Canadian authorities should have done more to ensure the safety of these women and girls. (Amnesty, 2004, p. 2)

In what would be the first of many critical reports, this international human rights watchdog stood from the outside and pointed to Canada's systemic discrimination as it expresses itself through the justice system. Noting firstly the extreme socio-economic marginalization of Indigenous women which results in them being pushed into dangerous circumstances such as poverty, homelessness and prostitution, the organization boldly declares that police have also

often failed to provide adequate protection to Aboriginal women in Canada (*ibid*). Furthermore, Amnesty concluded that because of their extreme vulnerability, Indigenous women and girls were targeted for violence by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men. They surmised, “these acts of violence may be motivated by racism, or may be carried out in the expectation that societal indifference to the welfare and safety of Indigenous women will allow the perpetrators to escape justice” (Amnesty, 2004, p. 2).

Extreme Economic & Political Marginalization/Increased Vulnerability to Violence (2008)

Ian Peach and Kiera Ladner presented a keynote address at a conference in 2008, which organizers included in a compilation book. The policy expert and academics honed in on the direct connection of economic and political marginalization in relation to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. They suggest that colonialism is a “gendered process” that devalued women while privileging men; further, the two assert that colonialism was “advanced by racialized sexual violence perpetrated and perpetuated by the church and state as a means of securing control over Indigenous nations and their lands” (2008, p. 88). The authors contend that it is because of the legacy of colonialism that the “internalization of sexism and heteronormativity and the normalization of gendered violence, oppression, dispossession, and devaluation” (p. 89) are now imbedded within Indigenous communities. Having become embedded in Indigenous communities, these colonial legacies have resulted in the exacerbation of violence being perpetrated within Indigenous communities.

Peach and Ladner determine that marginalization and victimization are correlated. The authors’ analysis of the 2006 Census data leads them to conclude that both the Canadian state and Indigenous communities perpetuate marginalization, which in turn cultivates the conditions

of vulnerability. They assert that “such conditions of vulnerability are direct corollaries to the urban migration of women, which in turn, creates the conditions for women to go missing and be murdered” (2008, p. 91).

They determine that when Indigenous women flee their reserve communities and settle in urban communities, often they are faced with the same circumstances that caused them to leave home; they lack resources, support, employment opportunities and familial support while confronting new challenges like high crime rates, gangs, prostitution, homelessness, racism and increased rates of substance abuse. These additional socio-economic issues increase vulnerability to violence and sexual exploitation, as well as perceived limited options that often lead to prostitution as a means of survival.

Families First: NWAC’s Voice for the Stolen Sisters (2009)

In 2005, the *Sisters in Spirit* project included the creation of a database containing information about Indigenous women and girls who had mysteriously disappeared or been found murdered. Four years later they released their first report *Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities* (2008), as well as a second edition in 2009. The report approached the task of sharing information with families by employing a life cycle approach of sharing the women’s stories (NWAC, 2009). This report is unique in that it shares the most intimate details of the women’s lives—their hopes, dreams, childhood adventures and details of their eventual demise.

No More Stolen Sisters (2009)

As a follow up to their generative 2004 report, Amnesty International released a second report, *No More Stolen Sisters: The Need for a Comprehensive Response to Discrimination and*

Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada (Amnesty, 2009). Once again from their position outside of the Canadian climate, the human rights watchdog criticized the government for failing to protect the rights of Indigenous women in Canada:

The scale and severity of the human rights violations faced by Indigenous women require a co-ordinated and comprehensive national response that addresses the social and economic factors that place Indigenous women at heightened risk of violence. Such a response needs to address the police response to violence against Indigenous women; the dramatic gap in standard of living and quality of life which increases the risks to Indigenous women; the continued disruption of Indigenous societies by the high proportion of children put into state care; and the disproportionate rate of imprisonment of Indigenous women. (Amnesty, 2009, p.4)

NWAC's Report to the Nation: What Their Stories Tell Us (2010)

In 2010 as their five-year funding agreement was about to expire, the Native Women's Association of Canada released one of the reports that I have chosen to be central to the analysis of this project, *What their Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from the Sisters in Spirit Initiative* (2010). This is the first report on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls published from a Canadian national perspective, by the Aboriginal women's advocacy group.

The "Nobodies" of Vancouver's DTES: Forsaken (2012)

The aftermath of one of the most notorious serial killers in Canada—Robert William Pickton—was the catalyst for yet another inquiry into the failure of the justice system to serve and protect Indigenous women in Canada. Published in 2012, *Forsaken: The Report of the*

Missing Women Commission of Inquiry examined the circumstances surrounding the disappearances and murders of 67 women in Vancouver, British Columbia's Downtown Eastside (DTES) between 1997 and 2002. While the focus of this report is not restricted to Indigenous women, the commissioner Wally Oppal found that although Indigenous women only account for three percent of BC's total population, they comprise approximately 33 percent of the missing and murdered women in the province (2012).

Many of the women who disappeared and were later found to have been murdered, specifically by the serial predator William Pickton, were considered social outcasts—forsaken by society—and were living in extremely dangerous conditions that made them vulnerable to serial predation. Regarding the one third of victims who were Indigenous women, Oppal summarized the extreme structural violence that created a social climate for serial murderers to prey on their vulnerability.

Aboriginal women as a group have a heightened vulnerability to violence simply because they live in 'a society that poses a risk to their safety.' In British Columbia and around the world, vulnerable and marginalized women are exposed to a higher risk of violence including sexual assault, murder and serial predation. The phenomenon of missing and murdered women is one stark example of this exposure and is seen as part of a broader pattern of marginalization and inequality. The increased vulnerability of certain groups of women, such as women involved in the sex trade, play an important role in providing victims for serial killers. (Oppal, 2012, p. iv)

The Commissioner also assessed the police response to women living in a twelve block radius in what has been deemed Canada's epicentre of the drug and sex trade, which makes it one of the most dangerous places for vulnerable women to live. One poignant question that the Commissioner set out to answer was whether the women's "status as nobodies also had an impact on the police investigations" (Oppal, 2012) into their disappearances from the streets of Vancouver's DTES. A synopsis in the Executive Summary lists seven failures or patterns of error in the investigations of missing women including: poor report taking and follow up, failure to pursue all investigative strategies, and ineffective coordination between police forces and agencies (Oppal, 2012). Additionally, the Commissioner considered seven potential overarching reasons for these failings of the justice system including: discrimination, system institutional bias, and political and public indifference, as well as allegations of conspiracy and cover-up (Oppal, 2012). In conclusion, Wally Oppal found that the shortcuts taken in police investigations came at a high cost—the lives of many women who were preyed upon by men who knew that their lives did not count in a racist and sexist society.

An Awkward Silence (2013)

Dr. Maryanne Pearce created a database of articles and police files of women who have gone missing or been murdered for her PhD dissertation. This scholar recognized a need for some form of data collection for statistical analysis, and set out to collect primary data through newspaper articles, websites, public police data, reports, posters and other publicly available data on women in Canada. Although her focus was initially on women of Aboriginal descent, Pearce found that a theme emerged relating to vulnerable women, particularly those working in the sex trade. Thus, the researcher identified several vulnerabilities that increase the risk of a person going missing or being murdered; one such 'risk factor' is being of Indigenous descent (Pearce,

2013). Through her research, Pearce was able to identify 824 cases of MMIWG where the ethnicity of the woman was known, exceeding the NWAC figure by almost 50 percent (p. 28).

Pearce assesses the *Criminal Code of Canada* and differentiates between sexual exploitation (purchasing sex from a minor under the age of 18) and prostitution. Additionally, the author summarizes the various theoretical positions on sex work, namely prostitution as a form of deviant behaviour, patriarchal oppression or a type of work (p. 33). Recognizing that women enter sex work for a variety of reasons it stands that no one theory fully explains women's experiences of prostitution. Two occurrences that she does note are that Aboriginal women are over-represented in sex work compared to the general population (p. 49) and they tend to work in street prostitution, which is the most dangerous environment for women who work in the sex trade.

Noting that prostitution has been a common occurrence in Canada since the fur trade, Pearce relates sex work of the country's historical past to contemporary issues with Indigenous women in the sex trade.

The historical equation of Aboriginal women as prostitutes or concubines easily abandoned or transferred to other men has continued to present time. Aboriginal women are over-represented in the street sex trade where violence and risk are endemic. Where men seek out women to abuse, Aboriginal women are seen to be an easy target and low risk. Additionally, societal racism and stereotypes held by police officers can create an atmosphere of mutual distrust and ineffectual investigations when Aboriginal women are abused, go missing or are murdered. (2013, p. 70)

When a series of ‘risk factors’ or socio-economic indicators are evident in the lives of women, they are extremely vulnerable to violence. Furthermore, Pearce notes that “Aboriginal women, women in the street sex trade, and other women vulnerable due to poverty, addiction and homelessness face a higher risk of predation by strangers” (2013, p.672). When discussing serial killers and those intent on violence she suggests that sex workers are often seen as less than human and therefore disposable. The author concludes that abuse of sex workers is the continuation of violence against women and girls in Canadian society. These vulnerable women find themselves ignored by society, and after they go missing or are murdered police often place their cases low on their list of priorities (p. 672). Aboriginal women are over-represented in the most dangerous form of sex work in the country; due to their “over-representation in street prostitution, they are over-represented as victims of violence, victims of murder, and as victims of unsolved homicides” (Pearce, 2013, p. 677). Dr. Pearce publically released her dissertation *An Awkward Silence: Missing and Murdered Vulnerable Women and the Canadian Justice System* in 2013.

Abusive Policing, Permission for Perpetrators (2013)

In 2013 the international Human Rights Watch (HRW) group released a qualitative report which documents abusive policing against Indigenous women and girls in rural northern British Columbia. *Those Who Take Us Away* is a literal translation of the Tachie people of northern BC’s language for the police and RCMP (HRW, 2013, p. 2). Motivated to investigate the infamous 724 km Highway of Tears, which has claimed dozens of Indigenous women’s lives, The Human Rights Watch interviewed victims of police violence and their family members/witnesses, service providers, and RCMP officers to compile their data. What they discovered was a relationship of mistrust and fear of the policing authorities in these small rural

communities, particularly for Indigenous women; this fear of police arises from the abuse that many women experience from officers, even when they are calling police for assistance. Human Rights Watch notes:

Some of the accounts of harm done to women and girls by police appear to be the result of poor policing tactics, over aggressive policing, and insensitivity to the welfare and vulnerability of the victims. Others, however, such as the alleged sexual assaults of women by members of the police, are deliberate criminal acts and could only be perpetrated by the particular officers in the expectation that they will never have to answer for their crimes. (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2013, p. 46)

The report documents allegations of excessive force, racist and sexist verbal abuse, and physical and sexual abuse of Indigenous women by RCMP officers.

Although the intent of the researchers was to document missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls who disappeared along the highway that stretches from Prince Rupert to Prince George, they discovered a dysfunctional relationship between Canada's most vulnerable people and its highest policing authorities. The researchers surmised:

The failure of law enforcement authorities to deal effectively with the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada is just one element of the dysfunctional relationship between Canadian police and Indigenous communities. This report addresses the relationship between the RCMP and Indigenous women and girls in northern BC and documents not only how Indigenous women and girls are under-protected by the police but also how some

have been the objects of outright police abuse. The report further documents the shortcomings of available oversight mechanisms designed to provide accountability for police misconduct and failure to protect. (HRW, 2013, p. 7)

Those Who Take Us Away further connects police abuse of power and apathy with violence against women and MMIWG in a poignant observation:

Police apathy in cases involving violence against women and girls—or violence against certain groups of women and girls—sends a message that such behaviour is accepted and will carry no consequences for perpetrators. It may, in effect, encourage the targeting of certain groups for violence. For this reason, in evaluation after evaluation of Canada’s human rights record, expert bodies have called on Canada to fully investigate the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls, and to examine the reasons that full, transparent, and accountable investigations did not proceed from the outset. (HRW, 2013, p. 80)

Police Response: The RCMP Join the Conversation (2014)

In what would be the first national police response to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police published their report, *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview* in 2014. After facing criticisms from Indigenous women’s advocacy groups (LSC, 2015; NWAC 2009; NWAC, 2010), several international human rights organizations (Amnesty 2004; Amnesty 2009; HRW, 2013; IACHR, 2014), and Dr. Maryanne Pearce’s dissertation (2013), the national federal police compiled their own data to release for public consumption. This is the second report that I have

chosen for critical evaluation in this project. The report includes analysis of police data and police plans for addressing missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the future.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015)

The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was released in 2015. The purpose of this national commission was to examine the impact of the Indian Residential School (IRS) system on the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada. *Volume 5: The Legacy* includes a synopsis of some of the notorious violent sexual attacks and murders of Indigenous women, as well as a brief summary of some key documents and reports on the topic of MMIWG in Canada. Understanding the overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples as victims of crime is intricately linked to the continuing legacy of the Indian Residential School system.

The justice system has historically and consistently failed Aboriginal victims of crime. Aboriginal children were victims of crime in residential schools. Close to 38,000 living Survivors have applied for compensation for sexual or serious physical abuse... This is the single largest recognition of criminal victimization in Canadian history. Today, the justice system continues to fail Aboriginal people who are disproportionately the victims of crime. (TRC, 2015, p. 257)

In this comprehensive report of the IRS, the Commission notes that “Aboriginal women are more likely than other women to experience risk factors for violence. They are disproportionately young, poor, unemployed, likely to have been involved with the child welfare system and to live in a community marked by social disorder” (TRC, 2015, p. 258).

While the concise section on missing and murdered Indigenous women does survey some of the literature on the topic, there remains a constant observation from the authors; the

systematic failure of the justice system to serve and protect Indigenous women is referenced throughout the literature review. One synopsis notes that “when police protection was sought in response to domestic violence... Aboriginal women reported that police sometimes blamed the women for the abuse and shamed them for alcohol and substance use” (p. 268). Included in the TRC’s recommendations are a national inquiry into the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, including the role of governments, RCMP and police services, as well as the examination of the role of police investigations in the known cases of MMIWG in Canada (TRC, 2015, p.269).

RCMP Provide an Update: Family Violence is the Focus (2015)

In what would create a critical social conversation, the RCMP released their follow-up report *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: 2015 Update to the National Operational Overview* (2015). Instead of working across jurisdictions as they had previously done, this report analyzed RCMP data only (RCMP, 2015, p. 3). Armed with this new data, the national police force determined:

Parallel to the findings of the 2014 *Overview* in which most homicide victims had a previous relationship with the offender, the 2013 and 2014 RCMP data reveals that the offender was known to the victim in 100% of the solved homicides of Aboriginal women in the RCMP jurisdiction, and in 93% of cases of solved homicides of non-Aboriginal women. Violence in family relationships is a key factor in homicides of women, and has prompted the RCMP to focus intervention and prevention efforts on familial and spousal violence. (RCMP, 2015, p. 3)

While this data and report garnered a response from Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, it critically evades any notion of systemic violence and the effect that this has on the vulnerability of Indigenous women to racialized sexual violence.

Politics, Funding, Policies & Indigenous Women's Lives (2016)

In 2016 a compilation of articles was released in a book, “Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada.” The first chapter of this book is written by scholars Kubik and Bourassa, who offer a brief overview of the history behind the politics and reporting on the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. *Stolen Sisters: The Politics, Policies, and Travesty of Missing and Murdered Women in Canada* also provides details on the 2005-2010 funding for the NWAC *Sisters in Spirit* research project, its termination and the subsequent reallocation of funds that were shifted to the RCMP in order to create a National Police Support Centre for Missing Persons. The authors recount the perilous circumstances for the Native Women's Association of Canada in 2010 where they were forced to end the research project *Sisters in Spirit* and replace it with “Evidence to Action”:

The new three-year project would receive 1.89 million dollars in funding from the Status of Women fund for violence prevention beginning in February 2011.

However, in a clear effort to silence growing criticism on this issue [MMIWG], one of the conditions of this new money was that the NWAC could no longer conduct any research into missing and murdered Aboriginal women. (Kubik & Bourassa, 2016, p. 20)

The authors identify the main advocates of the issue of MMIWG for both domestic and international bodies, and highlight the resistance of the Canadian government to act on the mounting evidence and public awareness of the gravity of ever-increasing numbers of Indigenous women who were disappearing under suspicious circumstances, many who were found to be murdered. With a plethora of women's rights and human rights groups demanding redress for Aboriginal women since the Amnesty International's 2004 *Stolen Sisters* report, Kubik and Bourassa contend that two systemic factors remain constant:

Two facets of the problem have been identified by Aboriginal families and non-government organizations, including NWAC, Amnesty International and the Canadian Alliance for International Action: the failure of police to protect Aboriginal women and girls and to investigate promptly and thoroughly when they are missing or murdered; and the disadvantaged social and economic conditions in which Aboriginal women and girls live, which makes them vulnerable to violence and unable to escape from it. (2016, p. 27)

The authors' concluding remarks point to the deep inequality that Indigenous women face living in Canada today, and the lack of political will to transform an inherently systemically violent society.

Over the past few years, the political will to implement change and address the structural problems and violence that Aboriginal women face in Canada has been lacking. The roots of this violence are very much linked to Canada's colonial past, the racism perpetrated against First Nations, Metis and Inuit people, the

resulting poverty, food insecurity, and the sexism and misogyny that women, particularly Aboriginal women, experience. (Kubik & Bourassa, 2016, p. 30)

Concluding Thoughts

This literature review is presented in chronological order and features key published reports and selected academic scholarship on the topic. What transpires from this review are a few critical themes that are to be carefully considered in all future research on MMIWG in Canada. All of the literature indicates that Indigenous women are extremely socially, politically and economically marginalized, which in turn causes them to be vulnerable to extreme racialized sexual violence. Several reports note that as a result of their marginalization, Indigenous women are often pushed into the most dangerous form of sex work—the survival street sex trade. Furthermore, there are several reports that indicate that the Canadian justice system—including federal and municipal police forces—is responsible for inequitable distribution of police services; Indigenous women are over-policed yet remain under-protected by the Canadian justice system. Taken to yet another level, the literature demonstrates that because of their marginal position and the failure of police to protect them, Indigenous women are thus targeted for violence because perpetrators are aware that their absence or death is not a priority for police investigation.

**Chapter 5: Critical Analysis of Two Reports on Missing
And Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada**

Comparative Analysis

Now that a timeline of significant events and reports has been established (see Appendix E), a critical, comparative analysis of the two reports that are the focus of this project can be undertaken. Given that MMIWG has been articulated as a prominent social issue since 2004, it is significant that the majority of the reports and scholarship on this topic have been written and released to the public over the last eight years. Although it has been established that racialized sexual violence has been a pervasive issue for much longer, the fact that MMIWG has garnered growing social attention and an inquiry is being undertaken is encouraging for many activists, families and Indigenous peoples across Canada (“consultation encouraging”, 2016). However, the question then becomes—what are people saying about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls? How do these reports (re)present Aboriginal women? Do these reports attempt to solve this issue and put an end to violence against Indigenous women and girls? Or do they in fact reproduce violence through their messaging?

These specific reports were chosen because of the nature of who and what each organization (re)presents, and their intimate involvement with missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. As the literature review remarks, stereotypic (re)presentations of Indigenous women tend to reinforce the notion that Aboriginal women are ‘less than human’ and are therefore ‘disposable’. The review also demonstrates that colonization and colonial systems are oppressive and participate in the socio-economic marginalization of Indigenous women. As the frontline services of the Canadian justice system, the RCMP represents settler colonial policing of Indigenous peoples (Nettleback & Smandych, 2010). Furthermore, this ‘long arm of the law’ has been implicated in several reports as being at the very least complacent in their duty to protect Aboriginal women, and at worst, participating in the ongoing abuse of Indigenous

women and girls. As the primary national Native women's advocacy organization, NWAC certainly has the ability to shape and influence public perception on the issue of MMIWG. On the other hand, as the federal police representing the Canadian government on frontline issues of justice, the RCMP report also has the potential to mould public perceptions of Indigenous women and the violence committed against them. Thus, we have two organizations that are diametrically opposed to one another, both vying to influence the same audience of people.

These two organizations are often at odds against one another—they are engaged in discourses that contest power. The RCMP uses statistics and facts to convince the reader that Indigenous women are making bad decisions that make them vulnerable to violence, and therefore, the message is that they are almost deserving of violence enacted upon them. Additionally, the aggregation of RCMP data was at the very least in part a response to NWAC and Dr. Maryanne Pearce's criticism of the Canadian justice system, or more specifically, the police force in Canada.

The Politics of Funding

As a government funded organization, NWAC is always going to be somewhat at the mercy of the federal government—they receive the majority of their funding for projects through the Status of Women department. The Canadian advocacy group, Voices, published an article criticizing the Canadian federal government for drastically cutting the funding allotted to the NWAC *Sisters in Spirit* database research project, which was then re-allocated to federal research initiatives in their stead:

in October 2010, Canada's Minister for Status of Women, Rona

Ambrose, announced several changes that would affect how the government

would address the crisis of missing and murdered Aboriginal women. The funding for the Sisters in Spirit database was terminated and funds were substantially redirected to government departments. (“What Happened?,” para. 6)

Not only did the government cut the allocated funding for the research initiative, they also demanded that the name of the research project be changed to “Evidence to Action,” forcing NWAC to drop the *Sisters in Spirit* name entirely (“Need for ‘action’,” 2010) in order to continue receiving a mere sliver of the former funding for their project. Furthermore, the conditions for receiving funding for the new violence prevention project included a clause that ensured the organization would end their research into MMIWG in Canada (Kubik & Bourassa, 2016). Later that year, the government announced their ten million dollar budget for addressing violence against Indigenous women. Kubik and Bourassa contend:

The money was purportedly to address the disturbingly high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and to take action so that law enforcement and the justice system would meet the needs of Aboriginal women and their families. This sounded hopeful; however, the federal government subsequently clarified that the ten million dollars would be spent over two years, and instead of directing funds to Aboriginal women’s organizations it would be distributed as follows: 4 million for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) to establish a National Police Support Centre for Missing Persons... This allocation of funds was decided without consulting the NWAC, and it was not specifically designed to address violence against Aboriginal women, nor would it address the more serious forms of violence, such as murder. (Kubik & Bourassa, 2016, p. 19)

As a majority of social advocates would likely agree, this calculated move is yet another demonstration of the power of the federal government to strip Indigenous women's advocacy groups of their resources, and re-allocate those sources to an institution which is under government control. This aggressive act demonstrates the power and depth of structural violence towards Aboriginal women and their advocates in Canada.

The reality is that both of these organizations are in some ways under federal government control. The RCMP is the police force belonging to the federal government and they're responsible for law enforcement in its jurisdictions. NWAC depends on funding from the federal government to run their organization. This may impact the tone of their reports to some degree. Certainly the NWAC would be mindful of minimizing their criticisms directly at government. The RCMP is connected to the Canadian federal government only they are considered an essential service, and their funding would not be impacted by what they say in a report. In spite of this, the police force would most definitely avoid harsh criticisms of their government; there is an unspoken allegiance that connects the federal government and the federal police that ensures that both would take a position to protect one another. The RCMP is part of the structures of the Canadian government; this means that the RCMP and federal government possess an almost symbiotic relationship. However, both of these organizations would have been cognizant of their precarious positions and their duty to answer to federal government officials. These relationships must be considered when assessing both reports; the agencies would both be prone to shape their reporting knowing that government officials would be reading them, along with the general public. Furthermore, both organizations likely have their own preconceived biases, particularly regarding one another. NWAC is openly critical of the police and justice systems in

Canada. Racism and sexism have long been issues that the RCMP has ignored and even worse at times, they have been accused of attempting to conceal accusations of this sort (Sallot, 2007).

NWAC & RCMP Reports

The Native Women's Association of Canada report titled *What Their Stories Tell Us: Research findings from the Sisters in Spirit initiative* (2010) embodies one method of (re)presenting Indigenous women and violence in Canada. A mix of qualitative and quantitative data, the report details the findings of a research project that began in 2005, and culminated in releasing a series of reports, including this final report five years later. The *Sisters in Spirit* database was the first of its kind in Canada, and was created to begin the process of data collection on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Initiated through a proposal from NWAC for federal funding through the Status of Women, this project was born out of a perceived need to draw attention to a matter that had remained largely ignored by governments and the general public. The researchers utilize statistics from the *General Social Survey (GSS)* and other Statistics Canada data, as well as information gathered in interviews with family and community members regarding their loved ones who have mysteriously disappeared or been found murdered.

Juxtaposed are the findings of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in their report, *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview* released in 2014. This report does not include qualitative data, but rather, it relies upon analyzing insider data gathered by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics at Statistics Canada (RCMP, 2014, p.3). The information is presented in a manner which upholds Western empirical values, and provides the reader with a plethora of statistics; the findings are presented in primarily numerical values—

neither community nor person is identified within its pages. This report was commissioned by the RCMP and is a solely police-led research initiative (*ibid*), with no community involvement. This report represents the first time that law enforcement in Canada officially responded to the crisis of MMIWG. Given the time gap of four years, one might ponder why police were silent on this issue for so many years.

The catalyst for the RCMP report cannot be verified through research, but there is a noteworthy point of contention that came about when NWAC released their 2010 report, to which the RCMP responded. Three days after The Human Rights Watch published their report *Those Who Take Us Away* (2013), the RCMP openly criticised NWAC's research, stating that they were unable to verify the identity of 54 of the 118 women that NWAC had named in their *SIS* project (Pierce, 2015). Timely as this was, it suggests that the RCMP were not particularly interested in taking the NWAC research project very seriously; it was not until Dr. Pearce published her dissertation database in 2013 that the RCMP responded with a their dataset shortly after in 2014. When Dr. Pearce utilized publicly available data and sources and she was able to independently identify 824 missing and/or murdered Indigenous women in Canada, it is probable that the RCMP began feeling the pressure to respond to this crisis of MMIWG. If one lone academic could create a comprehensive database for comparison purposes, then surely the RCMP had a responsibility to analyze their own classified data for public consumption. Whether a combination of refuting criticisms, staving off embarrassment, or a genuine interest in capturing data for analysis, the RCMP report was created to respond to the mounting tension between outraged Canadian citizens, Indigenous activists, global critics and the federal government's Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Through a close examination of current and historical literature, one can observe that both the NWAC and the RCMP reports on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are created under different premises and serve different functions. While on the surface, both reports seem to address the same issue—violence against Aboriginal women—it is most certain that they carry their message with divergent means of expression, heralding competing agendas. Utilizing a discourse analysis approach to reading the documents, the research process allows for the reader to investigate how each organization (re)presents Indigenous women and girls, and determine the effects of their reporting.

Roadmap: Critical Analysis

The following provides a synopsis of the critical analysis performed by comparing the two reports. First I examine the visuals used in the reports and determine what they ‘say’ about Indigenous women and violence. Next, I compare the purpose of both reports as outlined by the two organizations. After determining the purpose of the two reports, I offer some perspective based on using numbers or statistics to tell a ‘story’, and conveying a message through the universal experience of story-telling, as it pertains to the two methods employed by the RCMP and the NWAC. Then, there are discussions around data collection and methodologies employed in the research process for both organizations. Finally, I examine several issues revolving around the use of language in both reports. Since language can shape and influence public perception of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, exploring common discourses employed by both of these organizations is essential; determining their impact on public perception is one of the key components of discovering how their (re)presentations of Aboriginal women and girls can be helpful or harmful.

Indigeneity

Before analyzing the content of the reports, it is important to present a few ideas about Indigeneity and what it means to be an Indigenous person in Canada. To put it another way, it is critical that we establish who the organizations are referencing when they discuss MMIWG, as well as determining who belongs to this group of Indigenous women. Primarily, both reports tend to homogenize the many different cultural groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada under the umbrella term Aboriginal or Indigenous. In Canada, Aboriginal peoples or Indigenous peoples belong to three different groups. The federal government explains,

The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (more commonly referred to as First Nations), Inuit and Métis. These are three distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs. (INAC, 2016, para. 2)

These three groups can be broken down even further into nations, communities, clans and families (Canada's First Peoples, 2007). There are some benefits to using the collective terminology, particularly the term Indigenous; it is observed that some academics strategically use this umbrella term because of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the implications of that global document for Indigenous rights (Simeone, 2015). However, there are issues that arise when referring to the collective as opposed to identifying the specific identities of Indigenous women, particularly when it comes to identifying which of the three officially recognized groups that the women belong to. There is a tendency to group all MMIWG together under the umbrella term Aboriginal or Indigenous, which can lead to the essentialization of a single common experience of MMIWG. Sayer argues that cultural

essentialism can negatively affect the entire social group's identity, especially if there are negative connotations associated with their collective identity. He explains that 'cultural essentialism'

Refers to discourses and practices which label and relate to particular groups of people in ways which suppress difference and homogenise and fix them, not merely stereotyping but either pathologising or wrongly idealising them. (Sayer, 1997, p. 474)

Unfortunately, the homogenization of Indigenous women often means that in a research setting when women are identified as Indigenous, there is a strong (re)presentation of women as First Nations. This is a critically important point to consider—throughout the RCMP report there is no differentiation between the three recognized groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada, and in the NWAC report, they identify the woman by her nation or clan if that information is available. One of the significant outcomes of cultural essentialism is that Metis, non-status and Inuit women are further marginalized within the texts, even when they are supposed to be the focal point of the research. This occurs throughout both the RCMP and NWAC documents; the research and reporting are heavily skewed towards understanding the issue of MMIWG in light of First Nations women, to the detriment of trying to understand the unique experiences of Inuit and Metis women.

A Picture Says a Thousand Words

As the old saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. Considering the fact that visuals, graphics and photographs capture additional information that at times, words simply cannot, it is essential that one observe what visual cues are produced in both the RCMP and

NWAC reports. While both reports contain information on the same topic, their choice of visual (re)presentations of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are dissimilar, yet both agencies opted to present traditionally cultural visual (re)presentations of Aboriginal women. These visual (re)presentations are largely associated with some First Nation cultures and traditions.

The front cover (see Appendix A) of the Native Women's Association of Canada's report appears quite neutral—a completely white background, the report cover includes the NWAC organizational symbol, their name, the report title, and five wavy coloured lines across the page. It is as if there is intention to maintain a minimalist approach to this report, so as not to take away from the content held within its pages. The back of the report (see Appendix B) is quite different from the front; covering the entire surface of the back cover is a large close-up picture of a beaded, tasseled bag and a fringed shawl. Both items are adorned with bright, primary coloured floral and line patterns, characteristic of traditional Indigenous attire often worn in ceremonies or at powwows (Native Languages of the Americas, para 2). The images are certainly connected to traditional, cultural and spiritual practices of some First Nations peoples, yet they hang on the back of a chair as though someone has left them behind. The woman who owns these items has left them behind; this visual cue invites us to remember the woman who has been lost to violence and no longer occupies a space that would allow her to participate in cultural ceremonies and traditions of Indigenous peoples. In the middle of this picture is a large blue box with the words “Aboriginal women and girls are strong and beautiful. They are our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, aunties and grandmothers” (NWAC, 2010). Printed on a bright blue background, the photograph is of secondary importance; the message is intended to be the primary focus of the reader. A synthesis of these two visual images invites the reader to

contemplate MMIWG's position within the Indigenous community; the women are claimed as 'our' relatives, within a community of persons with their own cultural, spiritual, and traditional values.

The RCMP report is visually striking in comparison to the NWAC's rather unassuming, plain cover. In opposite fashion, the back cover of the RCMP report (see Appendix D) is a muddy, gradient brown colour; there is no photograph or graphic on the page. However, the front of the report (see Appendix C) features a picture of an Indigenous woman adorned in a traditional jingle dress, attire that is reserved for dancing at powwow gatherings (Native Dance, 2007). The dress she is wearing is red, however, it is fading out from red into brown, like she is vanishing into the background, consumed by her surroundings. Furthermore, her face, hands and feet are blurred; it is also as if her body is being swallowed up by the earth. This woman is anonymous. She literally has no face. Her body is intended to represent the many women and girls who have gone missing or been found murdered. Her anonymity coupled with the fact that she is dancing alone somewhere in a field creates an atmosphere of unsettling loneliness and abandonment.

What is most striking about this visual (re)presentation of an Indigenous woman is that she is engaged in an act of ceremony as she disappears into the earth behind her. Why would the RCMP opt for such a visual? My speculation is that, fundamentally, non-Indigenous peoples often associate ceremony and traditional regalia with the culture of Indigenous peoples in Canada. What was perhaps not considered in choosing this photograph is the fact that powwow gatherings are not only a cultural event, they are a spiritual practice for many, though not all, Indigenous peoples (Indians, 2017, para 1). In essence, this photograph spiritualizes the deaths and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada. Additionally, she is dancing alone—the

likelihood of any one woman dancing alone in a jingle dress is not culturally accurate; a community event such as the powwow, is where some Indigenous women would dance in their jingle dress among other community members while praying for healing (Indian Country Today, 2011).

While both images are (re)presentations of specific cultural traditions of certain Indigenous women, they in fact do not (re)present Indigenous women accurately. The images are both reminiscent of regalia worn by powwow dancers; not all Indigenous women are dancers, nor are all Indigenous women traditional in their cultural practices. In fact, there are many Indigenous women who intentionally do not participate in traditional cultural practices, and many opt out of the spiritual practices of Indigenous peoples for the sake of other spiritual beliefs, like Christianity (Bradford & Horton, 2016). However, of the two images presented, the RCMP image is disturbing given the spiritual relevance of regalia and the woman's isolation. Additionally, the fact that both organizations use traditional, cultural clothing from First Nations to (re)present Indigenous women is problematic—what of the Metis, Inuit and non-status women who disappear and are found murdered? Are they considered important to these two organizations? Or are Status Indian First Nation women the primary focus of both the NWAC and the RCMP? These First Nation cultural (re)presentations homogenize Indigenous women and prioritize First Nation women to the detriment of Metis and Inuit women.

Causes of Violence as Perceived by NWAC & RCMP

Each organization set out their objectives in the beginning, which most certainly informs how they perceive the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Although veiled at times, it is apparent that both organizations attribute some of the core issues to one

another. The NWAC has pointed out that the police do not collect information on Aboriginal heritage, that they racialize Aboriginal women and determine indigeneity by physical assessment, and they have not been cooperating with Statistics Canada on collecting better information for statistics (NWAC, 2010, p. 15). The organization has painted a picture of the police as incompetent and difficult to work with. The RCMP on the other hand, have subtly mis(re)presented Indigenous women and girls by painting a stereotypical picture of Aboriginal women who have been murdered—their statistics on victims identify lack of employment, drug and alcohol use and sex work as the primary ‘risk factors,’ which leaves the reader with the impressions that the majority of murdered Indigenous women were somehow participating in their own deaths. The following chart provides an overview of each organization’s perspective on the heart of the issues of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. The issues are presented in hierarchical order, according to the perception of influence:

Figure 1: The Core Causes of Violence as Perceived by NWAC & RCMP

<u>NWAC</u>	<u>RCMP</u>
Inherently violent colonial institutions and systems	Drug and alcohol abuse
Unjust justice system, including police	Involvement in sex work and/or lack of employment
Social racism and sexism	Family violence in Indigenous communities
Historic policies ie. 60’s Scoop, Residential Schools, Child Welfare	Offender involvement in illegal activities
Socio-economic marginalization of Indigenous women	Crime and criminal activity

It should not come as a surprise that fundamentally, the RCMP perspective encapsulates the ideology that violence occurs because there is criminal conflict between a victim and a

perpetrator. Alternatively, the NWAC perspective is one that blames society and the justice system for the disappearances and murders of Indigenous women. Interestingly enough, both organizations appear to denounce the other as part of the problem; the NWAC blames the RCMP and justice system for the issue and the RCMP are promoting the idea that Indigenous people are blameworthy because of their addictions and criminal behaviour. Neither the NWAC nor the RCMP accepts responsibility for the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Given their social position of authority and the historical significance of the RCMP's relationship with Canada's Indigenous peoples, it stands to reason that fundamentally, the RCMP perspective of MMIWG is one that historically echoes Duncan Campbell Scott himself—an “Indian problem” (Rheault, 2011, p.3). The construction of the RCMP report, the manner in which the information is presented, and the key observations that are highlighted throughout the report signify that the national police force views missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls as a personal issue that occurs between a victim and a perpetrator, and both are most likely labelled as criminals.

Upon reviewing the presentation of their ‘risk factors’, it is evident that RCMP and police have created a ‘type’ of woman who they believe to most often become the victim of violence; an Aboriginal woman who struggles with addictions and engages in sex work. What is interesting to note is that several of the reports referenced throughout this project have concluded a similar finding (IACHR, 2014; Oppal, 2012; Pearce, 2013). The difference is in the presentation and the contextualization of the underlying issues that impact Aboriginal women, and lead to their vulnerable socio-economic position. Furthermore, within their analysis, the RCMP includes numbers that examine both victim and perpetrator's prior incidences of criminal activity (RCMP, 2014, p. 12-13). Located within the analysis of perpetrator characteristics is a

figure that illustrates this point: “offenders accused of killing Aboriginal females were more likely to have a criminal record (71% compared to 45%)” (RCMP, 2014, p. 13), and they were more likely to have prior violent offences on their records (*ibid*). The picture becomes clearer when one examines the number two priority for the police in alleviating violence against Indigenous women, namely their targeted prevention efforts that focus on ‘high-risk communities’ and aim to implement interventions, diversions and family violence initiatives focused towards at-risk individuals (RCMP, 2014, p. 18). While they do not explicitly say Indigenous communities, diversions are a specialized route through the justice system designed for First Nations peoples, and it represents an initiative that is known as restorative justice in Canada (Vennen, 2008). While it may seem logical to implement these initiatives and create a ‘profile’ of women at risk of being murdered, it reinforces harmful stereotypes of Indigenous women and reinforces notions of disposability, based on a presumption that the women being murdered are not contributing members of Canadian society.

On the other hand, the Native Women’s Association of Canada’s position is in opposition to the message of the RCMP. The NWAC report reinforces time and again that the root cause of violence against Indigenous women is systemic; they attribute blame for the deaths and disappearances to the inherent violence of colonial structures, policies and the justice system. Moreover, they attest that racism and sexism combined with the reverberating effects of Canada’s dark colonial legacy create a perfect storm in which Indigenous women are swept to the margins of society, thus rendering them vulnerable to extreme racialized sexual violence. As the report prefaced the findings:

To address the issue of violence, one must understand the history and impact of colonization on Aboriginal peoples in Canada. It is an ongoing narration of

violence, systemic racism and discrimination, purposeful denial of culture, language and traditions, and legislation designed to destroy identity that has led to the realities facing Aboriginal peoples. This research will begin with an explanation of how colonization is not simply a strategy of the past, but a reality that reinforces the silence surrounding the violence experienced by First Nations, Inuit and Metis women today. (NWAC, 2010, p. 1)

What the organization fails to recognize is the personal responsibility perpetrators often evade, as well as the personal agency of Indigenous women. The oversight of an honest discussion regarding substance abuse, spousal/family violence, and their tendency to romanticize a return to traditional ways have left the reader wanting for more. Again, it is not that their analysis is necessarily wrong, rather, it negates some important issues that play a role in the complexities of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. It is my belief that the NWAC has a strong ideological position and they strategically aligned their research to prove their ideological perspective; this strategy caused a blind spot in their analysis as they set out to prove what they fundamentally already believed. This report is essentially a document that begs readers to consider their position, abhor the unjust social reality of Indigenous women, and rally with them to force governments to take action on behalf of persons who hold no power within the social strata that is Canadian society.

The Purpose of the Reports

When a person sets out to accomplish a task, they begin with an objective. That objective will influence what information they choose to share and how they choose to share it. The following section outlines the study goals and objectives of both the NWAC and the RCMP.

Figure 2: Study Goals and Objectives

<u>Native Women's Association of Canada</u>	<u>Royal Canadian Mounted Police</u>
Determine the number of MMIWG in Canada	Determine the police reported number of MMIWG in Canada
Discover root causes of violence against Aboriginal women	Targeted crime prevention
Inform policy decisions, victim services and action	Guide operational decision-making
Determine circumstances and trends leading to MMIWG	Enhance community engagement
Determine why the police/justice systems have not made a connection to violence and MMIWG	Enhance accountability for criminal investigations

On the surface, both reports seem to have the same objective—find out how many Indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered in Canada within the timeframe of 1980- 2012 (NWAC, 2010, p. 21; RCMP, 2014, p. 7). However NWAC sets out to find the *total number* of MMIWG across Canada and the RCMP uses the number of *police reported* incidents of MMIWG (RCMP, 2014, P. 3). Given that several other reports expressed the dissatisfaction of MMIWG's families in the reporting process to police (NWAC, 2009), some of the women who are still missing have likely never been officially reported to police because of the discrimination that Indigenous peoples face when attempting to report their loved one missing. Furthermore, any transient women with little to no family connection (Oppal, 2012; Pearce, 2013), and the jurisdictional issues that make police reporting difficult (Amnesty, 2009; Oppal, 2012,), there are some difficulties in capturing only police reported data and determining that this offers a clear, accurate representation of MMIWG. The NWAC is also limited in their ability to accurately paint a picture of the total number of MMIWG in Canada; with a small team of researchers, committed to spending quality time with the families and communities of MMIWG

(NWAC, 2009), perhaps the organization either did not have enough funding, or their team may have had poor research skills.

It is interesting to note that the NWAC is quite vocal about their intention to criticize the police and justice system in Canada. One of the organization's primary objectives is to determine why the police and justice systems have not made a connection between violence and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. This is problematic on a few different levels. First, the NWAC is operating from a position that the police and justice system has not made the connection between violence and the "disturbingly high numbers" (NWAC, 2010, p.i) of MMIWG in Canada. There is a rather large assumption being made from the NWAC—the organization simply cannot assume or answer that question themselves. To answer this question would involve a lot of theorizing, additional research focused on the police and justice system, as well as an unbiased positing of the justice system's complacency. The NWAC is operating from an emotional position that is making subtle accusations as opposed to positing a legitimate question that they intend to research. This report aims to discover the answer to three critical questions:

What are the circumstances, root causes and trends leading to violence against Aboriginal women in Canada? How many Aboriginal women and girls have gone missing or been found murdered in Canada? And, why this violence has led to such disturbingly high numbers of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada without connection by police or justice authorities? (NWAC, 2010, p. i)

As the federal policing agency, the RCMP's objective in data collection is to inform operational decision-making:

In late 2013, the Commissioner of the RCMP initiated an RCMP-led study of reported incidents of missing and murdered Aboriginal women across all police jurisdictions in Canada. This report summarizes this effort and will guide Canadian Police operational decision-making on a solid foundation. It will mean more targeted crime prevention, better community engagement and enhanced accountability for criminal investigations. It will also assist in operational planning from the detachment to national level. (RCMP, 2014, p. 3)

What is of particular interest is that the RCMP have determined that targeted crime prevention is their primary objective; the question that remains yet to be answered is who or what exactly is to be targeted based upon their findings. The NWAC report is intent on using their information to inform policy-making, victim services agencies and move people into action (NWAC, 2010, p. i), while the RCMP report determines that their information will gather operational decision-making within their force (RCMP, 2014, p. 3). The ultimate objective, then, of the NWAC is to create awareness and move Canadians to move from research and reading, to mobilizing into action. Thus, while the NWAC has large, social goals, the RCMP is intent on focusing primarily on their own operational agenda. To clarify, there is nothing inherently wrong with using their data to inform the operations of RCMP, however, targeted crime prevention is a very different priority than addressing issues that help promote the safety of a targeted group of women in the country. These two objectives certainly align with their organizational mandates, however, acknowledging the differences in their primary objectives is critical to understanding how each organization approaches their research on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

Stories or Statistics? Imagining Indigenous Women's Lives

Both of these reports choose to (re)present missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in their own way. The NWAC report relies heavily on narrative or story to offer readers a personal glimpse of the women who have become victims of racialized sexual violence. The RCMP report does not engage in the act of story-telling but rather, they present statistics about MMIWG and allow the story to play out in that manner. The Native Women's Association of Canada uses the narrative to connect to the universal human experience of the reader and the woman's story they are reading, while the RCMP allows the numbers to speak for them.

Mother, Daughter, Sister, Aunt, Friend

What sets the NWAC report apart from the RCMP report is the deliberate use of a variety of nouns that describe the women in relationship to their families and communities. Throughout the text Indigenous women are referred to as mother (p.2), daughter (p.6), sister (p.6), friend (p.10), and grandmother (p.11). These nouns are present in the vignettes where the women's personal stories are told; some of them include several in the same story, indicative of the family that the woman has left behind in the wake of her murder or disappearance. The report further emphasizes the quotation on the back cover by placing it on the front page: "Aboriginal women and girls are strong and beautiful. They are our mothers, our daughters, our sisters, aunties, and grandmothers" (2010, Acknowledgements). It is the first and last text the reader encounters. Not only does NWAC identify the women within their extended family units, they also describe them using the adjectives 'strong' and 'beautiful'.

The vignettes are a point of interest in this analysis of the two reports. It is clear that NWAC has intentionally created a space to tell women's stories, hence the title *What Their*

Stories Tell Us. Here the reader is given a glimpse into the hopes, dreams and realities of those Indigenous women who have mysteriously disappeared or been found murdered. There are thirteen women's lives that are highlighted in the vignettes, located in a box that occupies approximately one fifth to a quarter of the page. The stories celebrate the women as 'greatest gift' (p. 2), 'strong Cree woman' (p. 4), and 'beautiful, compassionate and outgoing' (p. 6), to name just a few of the intrinsic qualities of their personalities. Their goals and dreams are highlighted, like Daleen who wanted to be a teacher (p. 6), and Nina who was passionate about the arts (p. 13). However, the beauty of the women is mixed with sadness and hopelessness; NWAC did not shy away from the reality of the brokenness of several of the women's lives when recounting their stories through the vignettes, although they did not elaborate on those circumstances either. Their choice of nouns and stories is a deliberate one. According to their *2009 Report to the Families*

The life stories are placed within the broader framework of other work conducted through the Sisters in Spirit initiative and serve to confirm conclusions based on other research, illustrate common themes, inform policy recommendations and identify future directions for further investigation. Addressed to family and community members, this report represents NWAC's commitment to sharing our work with those most intimately concerned with this important issue. (NWAC, 2009, p. 3)

While NWAC is intent on humanizing Indigenous women, they are also honouring the women and their families by sharing some of the most intimate details of the women's lives.

The vignettes highlight both the beauty of the women and their challenges in life that ultimately made them vulnerable to experiencing targeted violence. While their stories do not explicitly name vulnerability, the apparent ‘risk factors’ of the women are revealed in these small sections of the report. For example, of the thirteen stories highlighted two reference a history of family residential schooling, two mention the sex trade or prostitution in the women’s lives, and five of the stories note a struggle with addiction. Moreover, three of the vignettes further indicate the difficulties the families had when dealing with the police and/or RCMP once they reported their loved one missing. Debbie’s story demonstrates both the beauty of her personality and the ugliness of the reality that she faced—even in death—living in a society that devalued her humanity:

Debbie was just Debbie. She was stubborn and wouldn’t walk in the line that they tell you to walk in. At the same time, Debbie loved helping with the community events such as potluck dinners, bingos, dances at the community hall, and bonfires at the beach. Noting that the police report describes Debbie as a ‘Native Indian’ and ‘known alcoholic and drug addict’, the family believes that police officers made judgements about Debbie based on preconceived notions and stereotypes and that these assumptions hindered the investigation into her death. Her daughter, Laura, believes they just passed her off as another dead Indian. But Debbie was a woman, a mother, a sister who was loved. (NWAC, 2010, p. 8)

Observe that the report does not deny that Debbie had addiction issues, rather, the reader is led to the conclude that what is more troubling are the stereotypes associated with these afflictions that somehow make Debbie’s disappearance unimportant to the police.

It is important to note that NWAC does not solely rely upon qualitative story-telling, but rather, they do conduct their own statistical analyses utilizing data from the some of the same sources as the RCMP—such as the *General Social Survey*—however, there is a substantial effort on the part of NWAC to attribute statistical data to some sort of historical legacy that acknowledges the impact of colonization on Indigenous peoples. This approach differs greatly from the statistical analysis that the RCMP presents in their findings.

In contrast to the NWAC report, the RCMP report does not include any stories of the women they are writing about. The *National Operational Overview* strictly assigns numerical values or statistics to the lives of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. While the RCMP declare that they are presenting “the most comprehensive data that has ever been assembled by the Canadian policing community” (RCMP, 2014, p. 4) on MMIWG, there are several issues that emerge with both data collection and the use of statistics in the report.

Statistical Analysis: How Numbers Convey A Message

Statistics are quantitative measures designed to identify whether or not data is statistically significant. Quantitative data literally quantifies issues for governments, non-government organizations and researchers. Although statistics provide information to meet a specific need, they cannot be relied upon solely to produce an accurate or comprehensive picture of said issues.

Much of the support for continued quantitative research comes from those who contend that accurate statistics are essential to motivate government agencies to devote more resources to the development of prevention and control strategies. Of course, statistics are never sufficient to accomplish this end. (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998, p.1)

In fact, there has been a call for ending statistical surveys regarding Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as researchers question whether quantitative data collection methods can ever truly capture the complex experiences of those who are victims of violence (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998). Aside from this mainstream critique of quantitative data, there are some other noteworthy observations to be made regarding the use of statistics in both the RCMP and NWAC reports. What is particularly significant is how the information is being collected and where it is being gathered from.

Figure 3: Information Sources

<u>The Native Women's Association of Canada</u>	<u>The Royal Canadian Mounted Police</u>
3 corrections-level surveys	Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) Homicide Survey 1980-2012
2 police-level surveys	Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC)
General Social Survey (GSS)	Review of ALL police force homicide data across Canada
Sisters in Spirit Database	General Social Survey (GSS)
Family/community members information	
Media articles	
Police websites	
Reported court decisions	

Data Collection

The Native Women's Association of Canada utilized publically available resources for their research into violence against Indigenous women. Where and how the organization gathered their information to formulate their database is critical to understanding their statistical

analysis in comparison to the RCMP report. Admitting they knowingly have not recorded every instance of MMIWG in Canada (p. 17), the researchers utilized a community based participatory action framework to build their ‘census’. The main sources of data were media articles, police websites and reported court decisions; this was supplemented by family and community informants, including unnamed police officers (2010, p. 18). A review of primary resources and a set of determinants allowed the NWAC researchers to create the first ever database of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. However, their numbers were more than fifty percent lower than those produced by the RCMP. Interestingly, when Maryanne Pearce used the same types of publically available data, she discovered 824 Indigenous women who were missing or murdered (2013). One has to wonder how an organization with dedicated resources and researchers could use the same public data, and yet there is a difference of 242 women between Pearce’s database and NWAC’s database. However, there is also a difference of three years between the publishing of their research databases, which could impact their numbers significantly.

The RCMP report includes only police reported data on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. The data they used is collected by Statistics Canada, which makes this raw data private. Hence, they had to obtain written permission from all the non-RCMP policing units from across Canada in order to utilize their data reported to Statistics Canada’s *Homicide Surveys* (RCMP, 2014, p. 20). Furthermore, the RCMP states that they derived their number of murdered Aboriginal women using information “compiled based on the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics (CCJS) *Homicide Survey* data from 1980-2012 and follow-up review with police forces across Canada” (*ibid*). The question that remains unanswered by this revelation is what exactly entails the RCMP follow up and review with police forces outside

of their jurisdiction? What information was reviewed and how was it reviewed? It is not entirely clear exactly how information was shared and managed with other police forces outside of RCMP jurisdiction, which is problematic when assessing the validity of the information presented. The RCMP report does not adequately explain their process for data collection or their sources, which leaves the reader with more questions and nowhere to look for answers. For example, the RCMP state “the project dataset includes both system-derived data (i.e. offline queries of CPIC) and project-specific research (i.e. file reviews)” (RCMP, 2014, p. 21). System-derived data is not sufficiently explained, nor is there any further discussion regarding what, who or how the files were systematically reviewed during the data collection process.

As for missing Aboriginal women, the RCMP is able to use Canadian Police Information Centre or CPIC data. It is interesting to note that the report qualifies their missing persons data by acknowledging that reporting missing persons to CPIC is standard practice, yet, the policies and procedures for reporting vary between police services regarding who gets reported and when they are reported (RCMP, 2014, p. 19). Additionally, Appendix A at the back of the RCMP report includes a general comment section regarding capturing the ethnicity—specifically Aboriginal identity—in their numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women. The difficulty in determining actual numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women is due to differences in police practices across jurisdictions and officers relying primarily on perceptions-based assessments of Indigeneity by police officers (RCMP, 2014, p. 19). This means that in their reporting, officers have subjectively determined whether a victim is Aboriginal based upon their outward appearances. The individual practices of police in different jurisdictions, combined with individual officer assessment of Indigeneity of victims, means that there is potential for quite a lot of human error in the RCMP’s dataset.

The General Social Survey (GSS)

One source of information that the RCMP have in common with the NWAC is both organizations utilize the *General Social Survey (GSS)* data captured by Statistics Canada to understand the incidence and severity of violence against Indigenous women in Canada. The GSS includes a survey on victimization that assists the Canadian government in monitoring social trends and serves the purpose of informing policy decisions in the federal government. The survey is completed over the telephone using a random dialing method, and the data is comprised of 25,000 surveys. However, there are certain drawbacks to using this method of collecting information.

non-coverage of households is concentrated in certain population groups (those who only have cell phones, mostly young, single, urban Canadians, are excluded from [Random Digit Dialing] RDD samples, as are those without a telephone—often concentrated in groups with lower income and education levels). (Statistics Canada, para. 6)

The reliability of this data is therefore questionable. Although the survey can be taken by anyone in the household who is at least 15 years of age, this survey excludes a potentially large portion of Indigenous peoples. Specifically, since Indigenous peoples are among the poorest in the country, and the population often migrates between rural and urban populations, this survey is not capturing an entire portion of the Aboriginal population that are likely to be victimized. Furthermore, the survey is ‘self-reported victimization’ (*ibid*) which poses some challenges when one considers the intimate nature of abuse and victimization. Language barriers may also exclude some willing participants as there are specific circumstances where remote, secluded

Indigenous community's first language may be an Indigenous language. In these circumstances, if women do not speak either French or English, they would not be able to participate in the survey. Thus, the survey results, although being used to drive Canadian policy-making, are potentially vastly underestimating the severity and incidences of the victimization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

It is interesting to note that these two organizations utilized resources available to them and they both produced different results when researching the same topic. This can be partially attributed to the difference in available data, but also on the set of determinants that each organization used to establish who they would include in their database. For example, missing women are difficult to track according to the RCMP. Their data set on missing Indigenous women is based on the CPIC reports which deemed there were 164 Aboriginal women missing for over 30 days on the date that data was collected. In comparison, NWAC through their analyses noted that 115 Indigenous women were determined to be missing in their research. When one acknowledges that research has demonstrated that Aboriginal families have a difficult time reporting their loved ones missing through 'official' police bureaucracies (Oppal, 2012, Pearce, 2013), it stands that both RCMP and NWAC numbers fall short of the actual numbers of missing Indigenous women. What is interesting is that the NWAC acknowledges that their data is incomplete in the main body of their text while the RCMP report presents their data set as reliable. Hidden in the footnotes and Appendix, the RCMP confesses their shortcomings but they are not upfront about them in the main portion of the report. Since statistics are a primary tool for people to assess circumstances and drive policy-making, examining the use of statistics is critical to unravelling the messaging in these reports.

Methodology: Deciding Who “Counts”

Another aspect that determines the overall numbers of MMIWG according to each agency is their methodology. Both organizations set out to define which women would be included in their reports as missing and murdered. These parameters are observed in the following section. There are several observations to be made regarding each organization’s methodology. Concerning the RCMP, as noted in the data collection section, their numbers include only police reported incidents. This is particularly concerning when one examines the number of missing Indigenous women; policies, procedures and practices vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, and presumably from individual to individual. Therefore there are some definite concerns regarding the number of women who the RCMP has designated as missing. For example, families are recorded in the NWAC report as having difficulty reporting their loved ones missing to police.

After two weeks went by with no sign of her daughter, Dianne, fed up with police inaction, marched down to the station and demanded that something be done to locate Danita. Dianne had to convince police officers that Danita was really missing, that she wasn’t ‘out partying’ as they insisted. The police responded, “Give us some time or give us a place to look.” Diane replied, “I think I’m doing your job.” (NWAC, 2010, p. 7)

This is a common experience for many Indigenous families of MMIWG. Police often respond to the stereotypic image they have of Indigenous women, which assumes that they are not missing but out partying. These stereotypes are harmful (re)presentations of Indigenous women that

affect their ability to be counted as missing with the RCMP, since they only count women categorized as missing in the CPIC database for over thirty days (RCMP, 2014, p. 20).

The Aboriginal origin category is a “recent addition to the ethnicity field in CPIC” (RCMP, 2014, p. 19), which means that the police unit relies upon case file reviews conducted for the research project. Of the 710 women reviewed for the project, the RCMP determined that 556 of the women were not included in their results (RCMP, 2014, p. 20). The question that remains is what parameters were used in determining Aboriginal ethnicity in their file review? How did the RCMP determine that 419 women were not Aboriginal? And that 127 women did not meet the guidelines of the project? Or further, that ten more women’s ethnicity was inconclusive? The RCMP does not provide details as to how they determined Aboriginal origin or who they consulted to discover if the women were Indigenous. Is this another instance of “perception-based assessment” (RCMP, 2014, p. 21) by the federal police? Furthermore, the RCMP does not present their information about defining Indigeneity other than to clarify that officers may record ethnicity using “individual looks in terms of complexion and/or ancestry” (RCMP, 2010, p. 210). Essentially, the report includes Aboriginal women defined through a process of racialization or a “perception-based assessment” as it were. This is problematic given that many Indigenous peoples—First Nation, Metis, Inuit—are fair skinned and may not ‘look’ Aboriginal to officers.

With regards to the homicide numbers, the RCMP have resolved to include only homicides where culpability has been assigned; this means that any Indigenous women who are victims of homicides that were either suspicious or deaths where culpability was not verified (*ibid*), are not included in their data set. This is a troubling policy as many Indigenous women disappear or are found dead under circumstances that their families and communities have

determined are suspicious or out of character (NWAC, 2009, Pedersen, Lee & Moore, 2016). Furthermore, with reports of racism within the ranks of policing (Paling, 2015) and the differential treatment of cases of missing or deceased loved ones in the Indigenous community (Razack, 2016 b, p. iii), one has to critically evaluate these numbers and presume that the actual instances of missing and/or murdered Indigenous women are underrepresented in the RCMP data set.

As for the NWAC and their parameters for inclusion in the *Sisters in Spirit* database, they differed from the RCMP in a variety of ways. Two ways in which the police and NWAC diverge is the inclusion of transgender or transsexual Indigenous women and the inclusion of deaths by homicide, negligence and/or suspicious circumstances (NWAC, 2010, p. 17). The inclusion of transgendered women in the NWAC database is a twofold acknowledgement: one that some Indigenous nations have long acknowledged gender diversity within their communities (Rifkin, 2011) and two, that a woman is more than her biological sex organs (Muehlenhard & Peterson, 2011). The inclusion of transgender/sexual women in their data set privileges community input into the research process. Furthermore, their inclusion of death by negligence or suspicious circumstances—as deemed such by family and community members—privileges the perspectives of the Indigenous community. This is in considerable contrast to how the justice system, including the police, normally approach Indigenous peoples and issues.

Possessing the ‘insider status’ NWAC is in a good position to collect valuable information that was likely not available to police. As ‘insiders’, the NWAC researchers are also in a position to more accurately discern Aboriginal origin of the women included in their project data set (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). However, the report acknowledges that not only do they know they have not documented every case of MMIWG, but that they believe the scope of violence to

be “far greater than what has been documented” (NWAC, 2010, p. 17). In fact, anecdotal data collected by activists have Ministers of the federal government estimating that the numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is closer to 4000 (Tasker, 2016). The one potential downfall of valuing community accounts is the variable of human perspective; if there are no set definitions or boundaries that categorize circumstances as either negligence, homicide, or suspicious, then the outcomes can become skewed based upon the interpretation of the family or community member that is sharing their perspectives. For example, how can a family member know that their missing daughter has been violently murdered? Additionally, family members do not have the investigative background to necessarily make determinations like intent or defining who is responsible for a homicide. In this sense, the police system of defining homicides and negligence are more structured and provide systematic means of evaluating and categorizing. Nevertheless, both the RCMP and NWAC data collection and methodologies are prone to human error that can seriously impact the results of their data sets.

Just the Facts: Who Got it Right?

Both the RCMP and NWAC reports provide statistical analyses with their data sets. It is essential to examine these data sets and compare their respective results to one another, now that there is an understanding of how their data was collected and their methodologies employed in determining their results. The following table shows the numbers each report obtained from their calculations with their respective data sets:

Figure 4: Statistical Analyses Based on Numbers of Women Recorded in Databases and Corresponding Percentages

	<u>NWAC</u>		<u>RCMP</u>	
Number/ % of missing women in database	115	20%	164	11%
Number/ % of murdered women in database	393	67%	1017	16%
Number/ % of unknown/suspicious deaths recorded in database	74	13%	N/A	
Aboriginal women percentage of total female homicides in Canada (2000-2008)	10%		23%	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Female homicide clearance rate by police	53%	84%	88%	89%

Of primary concern is acknowledging how each organization calculated their percentages presented in the report. Both the RCMP and the NWAC report on percentages of specific aspects of MMIWG, yet what are they measuring those percentages against? In order to obtain a clear and accurate perspective of these percentages, it is critical to note that the RCMP compares their percentages in relation to non-Aboriginal women in Canada, while the NWAC presents their data as a reflection of their total numbers contained *within* their *Sisters in Spirit* database. Since NWAC only recorded Indigenous women in their database, their percentages reflect the percentage of Indigenous women in their database whereas the RCMP have records for all police reported incidents; this means that the RCMP data is far more useful than the NWAC dataset. For example, in NWAC's calculations of murdered women, the 393 women are calculated as 67% of the *total number of women (582) included in their SIS database*. When the RCMP presents their statistics, 1,017 of murdered Aboriginal women represent 16% of the *total number of women murdered in Canada* between 1980 and 2012. To clarify this further, the NWAC data

on missing women (20%) is in relation to the total number of women in their *Sisters in Spirit* database, while the RCMP data on missing women (11%) is recorded as in relation to the total number of missing women in the CPIC database.

These numbers can skew a reader's perspective when the data is presented as fact. For example, the data sets, although they inherently present as neutral and unbiased, are different data sets entirely. The NWAC database is strictly filled with MMIWG and the RCMP database is a collection of *all police-reported missing women in Canada* and a comparison of murdered Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal women. Therefore, each agency uses their own database to calculate their numbers, but as the statistics clearly show, the size and contents of a person's database can impact how the numbers present themselves, particularly when the stats are pulled from a report and used arbitrarily to make policy decisions. This is particularly concerning when observing the statistics presented in the NWAC report; knowing the percentage of missing and/or murdered women in relation to the number of women recorded in their database is not useful information to the reader.

Clearance Rate of Aboriginal Female Homicides

One manner in which these two data sets disagree is regarding clearance rates of homicide victims. The clearance rate

refers to whether or not a homicide incident was cleared: (1) either by laying, or recommending of a charge to the Crown; or (2) where at least one suspect has been identified and against whom there is sufficient evidence to lay a charge, but where the incident is cleared otherwise (e.g. the suicide or death of the chargeable

suspect is the most common reason for clearing otherwise in incidents of homicide). (RCMP, 2014, p. 14)

This is how the RCMP defines their clearance rate for homicides; a homicide is cleared as long as charges have been laid or if the suspect dies prior to the charges being dealt with in a court of law. Interestingly, NWAC uses the same definitions as the RCMP for defining clearance rates (NWAC, 2010, p. 27). In a subheading titled *Nearly Half of Murder Cases Remain Unsolved*, the organization calculates their numbers by only including 393 of their 582 cases, because this is based on the “cases in SIS database for which this information is known” (*ibid*). As a result, the NWAC determines that of their database cases for which this information is known, 209 or 53% of the murder cases remain unsolved. Conversely, the RCMP data suggests that 88% of Aboriginal women and 89% of non-Aboriginal women who have lost their lives have been cleared. How can these numbers be so divergent? Both datasets are problematic when assessing the clearance rate of Indigenous women and homicides.

First, the NWAC data is obscure because it only includes a portion of their 582 women in the database. The smaller a database is, the less reliable the calculations become. Additionally, it is questionable who is determining the inclusion of women in the clearance rate section, and why the women were either included or excluded. Further, the NWAC researchers would not necessarily be privy to the information needed to make the determination of whether charges have been laid in a case—the vast majority of these cases of homicide with Indigenous women are not followed by media, and many would not have updates publically available. In other words, NWAC’s data on clearance rates is exceptionally unreliable data. The organization simply does not have enough information available for them to make claims that nearly half of murder cases involving Indigenous women remain unsolved in Canada.

The RCMP qualify their data set on clearance rates in Appendix A of the report, stating that their report only includes “incidents that have been substantiated by investigators as an offence of culpable homicide and are part of the official record” (RCMP, 2014, p. 21). It is notable then, that the police agency has calculated a clearance or solve rate of 88% for Indigenous women, which they determine is equal to the solve rate of non-Indigenous women (89%). Having disqualified suspected homicides and deaths deemed suspicious, these two organizations are not counting the same people in their databases. Given that the NWAC database includes negligence, suspicious deaths and potentially non-police reported homicides, their finding of a 54% clearance rate for the murders of Indigenous women is reflective of the differences in database size, content, and inclusion of suspicious deaths. Further, when the RCMP include only homicides where culpability has been determined and not the cold or unsolved cases, this distorts their equitable clearance rate in their favour. Regardless, the NWAC database is insufficient because they do not have enough information available to them to determine whether a homicide has been cleared, and the RCMP database only includes women where charges have been laid for their deaths. Therefore, NWAC has made claims that are not backed by reliable data and the RCMP has only included women whose deaths have been assigned culpability. What of the women whose killers have not been charged? Not including those women in their data is advantageous to the RCMP; their equitable and impressive clearance rate of 88% is very misleading when one considers who is left out of their calculations.

Who Is Killing Indigenous Women?

To begin to critically evaluate who each organization deems to be responsible for the deaths of Indigenous women, it is essential that one again compare the data sets from each

report. Included in this conversation is the top place where women are found dead, namely, in residential dwellings.

Figure 5: Statistical Analyses of Database Numbers and Relationship of Victim and Perpetrator

	<u>NWAC</u>	<u>RCMP</u>
Indigenous women murdered in a home/dwelling	60%	68%
Murdered by spouse or partner	23%	29%
Murdered by family member	6%	23%
Murdered by an acquaintance	19%	30%
Murdered by unknown	36%	1%
Murdered by stranger	16%	8%
Murdered by someone known to the victim	84%	90%
Murdered by Indigenous	36%	N/A
Murdered by non-Indigenous	23%	N/A

Residential Dwellings: Where Most Women Are Found

In this particular data set, the NWAC whittles their already small dataset from 393 cases of murder or suspicious death to 234 where they were able to obtain information about where the women were found deceased. Again, it is difficult to reliably count on NWAC's statistical analyses because of their changing numbers from which they draw their data. However, their assessment of nearly 60% of deceased Indigenous women from their database closely matches that of the RCMP, who claim that 68% of Aboriginal women are found in residential dwellings. It is interesting to note that NWAC suggests that "the large number of cases occurring in

residential dwellings may reflect the rates of family violence experienced by Aboriginal women” (NWAC, 2010, p. 29), but they refrain from offering the reader any analysis. Their silence is quite telling—this is a conversation that Indigenous peoples often avoid for fear of further demonizing family and community members to others from outside of their communities.

The RCMP’s dataset always includes a frame of reference from which to begin: they always compare Aboriginal women with non-Aboriginal women. While this may at times seem like a tactic of racialization, it is actually useful information from which to draw some conclusions regarding differences between the rest of Canadian women and the experiences of Indigenous women. For example, the RCMP data on residential dwellings claim that 68% of Aboriginal female homicides and 77% of non-Aboriginal female homicide victims are found in a home (RCMP, 2014, p. 11). What this suggests is that Indigenous women are slightly more likely than non-Indigenous women to be found deceased in other more public spaces like the RCMP’s open area. While the police do not clarify what an open area is, they do show that Aboriginal women are two times more likely to be found dead in an open area than non-Aboriginal women (*ibid*). This does suggest that Indigenous women are more ‘at risk’ of losing their lives in public areas than non-Indigenous women in Canada. However, there is no conversation regarding drawing of conclusions with the data—they allow the numbers to speak for themselves throughout the report.

Assuming that the vast majority of women are murdered in a residential dwelling (60-68%), it would be easy to assume and correlate those deaths with domestic violence. However, this only represents a portion of the perpetrators according to both reports. The sections which analyze the relationship between the deceased and the accused offer comparable perspectives on this sensitive topic. Much of this perspective on victim/offender relationship is dependent upon

who is defining the nature of the relationship, and how they then categorize said relationships for inclusion in statistical analyses.

How Offenders Are Defined

It must be noted that the RCMP identify ‘offenders’ as persons for whom charges have been laid against in a crime. Their primary observation is:

Female homicide victims generally know the person who kills them—more than 90% had a previous relationship with them. This is true for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal female victims. (RCMP, 2014, p. 12)

The RCMP’s remark generalizes in that it assumes what knowing a person means, and what a previous relationship means is assumed as well. Do I have a relationship with my dry cleaner because I see him every six months and we are pleasant in our exchanges? Perhaps I know my dry cleaner but does this mean I have a previous relationship with him, according to their analysis? As an observer, I look at this statistic and I wonder at the varied natures of these relationships and whether they can reasonably be lumped together to make a generalization about 90% of the perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

In examining the NWAC’s numbers, they are working with a sample from their database of 261 cases where charges were laid (NWAC, 2010, p.29). In spite of the sample pool that keeps changing, NWAC is using this data to make some rather large claims. In a section titled *Aboriginal Women and Girls More Likely to be Killed by a Stranger than Non-Aboriginal Women*, the organization claims that

16.5% of suspects were strangers with no prior connection to the woman or girl.

While anti-violence advocates in Canada have worked towards debunking the myth of stranger violence—only 6% of non-Aboriginal women are killed by strangers—NWAC’s research indicates that Aboriginal women are almost three times more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women. (NWAC, 2010, p.29)

It is difficult to assess this claim as valid when the statistic is calculated out of 261 people and without knowing how NWAC has determined the nature of the relationship between the accused and the victim. In fact, more recent data suggests that “Indigenous peoples are more likely to experience family violence than non-Indigenous people. This is especially true for Indigenous women” (Taylor, 2016, para. 17). Why then is the NWAC not addressing the rates of family violence in their report? This is an instance in this report that is very revealing of the organization’s ideology and messaging; NWAC is emphasizing what they already believe to be true, namely that the majority of Indigenous women are being murdered by strangers when the research demonstrates that they are actually being murdered by persons who they know in some capacity. They are also, unfortunately, being murdered by their own spouses, partners, family members, and the people they encounter in their everyday lives.

Acquaintances & Strangers

It is important to understand who Indigenous women are at risk of being murdered by. Therefore, the category of ‘acquaintance’ is worthy of investigation. Located in the footnote on page twelve of the RCMP report is the following definition of acquaintance:

The acquaintance category can be broken down further to include close friends, neighbours, authority figures, business relationships, criminal relationships and casual acquaintances (i.e. a person known to the victim that does not fit in the other acquaintance categories). (RCMP, 2014, p. 12)

Thirty percent of Indigenous women included in the RCMP database were murdered by a person who met the criteria of acquaintance as designated by police. Taken into context, approximately one third of Aboriginal women's lives were taken by someone who they had prior interactions with, varying from those in authority over them to their neighbours and friends. The nature of these relationships tells a story of their own; many Indigenous women live out their lives surrounded in part by dangerous persons. The remaining eight percent and one percent were killed by strangers and persons whose relationships were deemed unknown, respectively. What is interesting to note is that the RCMP report does not contextualize their statistics. There is no analysis included in their report of the potential hazards facing Indigenous women in the communities where they sometimes find themselves fighting for survival—quite literally—on a daily basis. The RCMP do not acknowledge that Aboriginal women are surrounded by persons who present eminent danger to their lives, rather, they present the statistics as they are—just the facts.

Spouses and Family Members

The RCMP report calculates that Indigenous women are murdered by their spouse 29% of the time and by another family member 23% of the time (RCMP, 2014, p. 12). This is in contrast to the NWAC report which calculates that partners and ex-partners are responsible for the women's deaths 23% of the time and by other family members only responsible for 6% of

their deaths (NWAC, 2010, p.30). This translates to approximately 52% or half the deaths calculated for the RCMP, and only 29% or one third of deaths by family according to NWAC. It has already been established that the RCMP data is more reliable than the NWAC data which keeps changing however both of these are statistically significant numbers when looking at the big picture. Why then, do both organizations avoid any discussion regarding the prevalence of family violence and its frequency and resulting impact on the safety of Indigenous women?

As was mentioned briefly in the introduction, this incidence of family violence can be partially attributed to an occurrence commonly known as lateral violence. Lateral violence is violence directed towards people of the same ethnic group who have been oppressed; in this case the oppression has occurred through the process of colonization.

Aboriginal people are now abusing their own people in similar ways that they have been abused. It is a cycle of abuse and its roots lie in factors such as: colonisation, oppression, intergenerational trauma and the ongoing experiences of racism and discrimination. (NWAC, 2015, p. 1)

Lateral violence is one reason that abuse is present in Indigenous communities today. It can also be linked to a cycle of historical trauma and the resulting complex childhood trauma that has been reoccurring in Indigenous communities.

Complex childhood trauma is a relatively new diagnosis that approaches trauma and abuse from a position of historical trauma and individual experiences of trauma in one's life. It is theorized that because many Aboriginal peoples have experienced trauma at both the individual and community levels, this promotes serious dysfunction within Aboriginal communities in particular. Researchers often trace this manifestation of violence to the Indian

Residential School experiences of Indigenous peoples and its ongoing legacy, passed down from one generation to the next.

The traumatic effects of abuse are especially acute when the violence is ongoing, when it begins in childhood, and when it is perpetrated by someone the person should have been able to trust. All of these factors speak to the all too common experience of Aboriginal peoples of either physical or sexual assault perpetrated in the family of origin by an adult relative, and/or physical or sexual abuse perpetrated in a residential school context. (Haskell & Randall, 2009, p. 53)

In other words, it is a pattern of abuse that has impacted Indigenous communities tremendously, and it continues to be a serious issue. However, the ongoing cycles of violence that originated from IRS abuse is not the only factor that affects the incidence and severity of family and community violence; deeply rooted ideologies like misogyny, racism and patriarchy impact Indigenous communities and contribute to an environment where Aboriginal women are targeted for violence by other Aboriginal peoples.

While they are certainly not the only ones affected, again authors note that women are particularly vulnerable to experiencing violence in their own communities. It is well documented that “Aboriginal women suffer disproportionately high levels of sexual and physical abuse and violence in their lives, such as intimate violence in their relationships, including those with Aboriginal men” (Haskell & Randall, 2009, p. 91). Nestled inside the five-volume RCAP report is a section that examines Aboriginal women’s experiences in Canada; these experiences are often rooted in systemic violence, which includes loss of social status, and the creation of racist, sexist policies and legislation that govern the lives of Indigenous peoples (RCAP, 1996).

Although there is no reference specifically to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in this particular report, the women who contributed to the truth gathering of the commission spoke of “their concerns related to the Indian Act, health and social services, family violence, fairness and accountability in governance, and the well-being of the family” (RCAP, 1996, p. 88). In a revealing portion of the report, Aboriginal women recounted the violence that they face every day within their own communities. As one Inuit woman attested,

Our real goal, however, is to end all forms of violence and abuse in our communities. This will only happen when the conditions which exacerbate violence are dealt with — alcohol and drug abuse, the devaluation of women and girls, poverty and dependence, overcrowded housing and economic instability. We also need our communities to be places which provide opportunities for personal healing and growth, and our lands, economies and institutions to be Inuit controlled. (RCAP, 1996, p. 54)

The question of great significance then is, why is NWAC avoiding this difficult conversation in their 2010 report? Even in their resources on lateral violence in communities, the organization focuses their education on lateral violence in the workplace and avoids making the direct link to violence experienced in Indigenous homes and within their communities (NWAC, 2015). Instead, NWAC emphasizes the danger that Indigenous women face in Canadian society, but they avoid tackling the pervasive issue of violence that Aboriginal women experience at the hands of their partners and family members. This is a serious blind spot in their research and reporting in *What Their Stories Tell Us*.

Family Violence & Stranger Danger

What then are readers to make of this clear point of contention between the claims of these two organizations? The RCMP report claims that the majority of killings are committed by spouses and family members (p. 12), while the NWAC pointedly suggests that Indigenous women are more likely than non-Indigenous women to be killed by strangers, acquaintances and persons with an undetermined relationship to the women (p. 30). Perhaps, both of the organizations are right—Indigenous women and girls’ lives are ended by both family members and by virtual strangers who they may encounter in their daily routine. The fact of the matter is that cases like the Pickton serial murders in BC, Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg, and more recently the body of Christine Wood found buried in a ditch close to Winnipeg, MB, (“Winnipeg police locate,” 2017), demonstrate that Indigenous women and girls are sought out for victimization by members of a society that know their lives are considered less valuable. It is also true that Indigenous women and girls experience high rates of violence in their own homes, within their own communities (Taylor, 2016). As Human Rights Watch reminds readers, perhaps the depth of this violence can be attributed to an inherently violent system that remains apathetic about violence committed against women and girls:

police apathy in cases involving violence against women and girls—or violence against certain groups of women and girls—sends the message that such behaviour is accepted and will carry no consequences for perpetrators. It may, in effect, encourage the targeting of certain groups for violence. (HRW, 2013, p. 80)

Whether at home, in the city, on a reserve, or in the streets of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside, Indigenous women and girls remain easy targets for persons wanting to abuse them physically

and sexually. Systems of oppression that marginalize Aboriginal women are the primary factor that contributes to a set of social circumstances where women and girls can be targeted and killed without any outcry by anyone.

Ethnicity of Offenders

Regarding the ethnicity of the offenders, the RCMP report is oddly silent. Other than relationship to the victim, the policing unit identifies the following characteristics of perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women: previous history of family violence, gender and age, employment status, involvement in illegal activities, use of intoxicants, suspected mental or developmental disorder, and offender's motive (RCMP, 2014, p. 13). It is difficult to imagine that the RCMP has not observed trends in the ethnicity of offenders; rather, it is suspect that perhaps they chose not to include these numbers for fear of appearing racist in their analyses. Surely, the RCMP would have faced criticism for including offender ethnicity; however it would have been useful information for researchers. It is difficult then to determine how many of these killings are attributed to structural and lateral violence within Indigenous communities, and the racialized and sexual murders of Indigenous women by white men. In either case, the root of the violence perpetrated towards Aboriginal women remains planted in racism, sexism, misogyny and the cyclical effects of colonization.

The NWAC report attempts to analyze the ethnicity of offenders, largely because the organization has taken a stance which primarily points to the racialized murdering of Aboriginal women by white men who are strangers to their victims. To be fair, privileged white men do commit acts of violence against women and are able to hide it or they escape accountability from the justice system (Razack, 2002); this is certainly a serious issue that the organization should

take upon itself. However, the organization's double standards on perpetrator culpability are concerning and definitely distort the message regarding who poses immediate danger to Aboriginal women and girls.

The *Sisters in Spirit* database does not provide an accurate assessment regarding ethnicity as they have determined that the background of offenders is 'unknown' at a rate of 41% (NWAC, 2010, p. 30). Utilizing data from the remaining known ethnicities of perpetrators in their database, the organization states that 36% of perpetrators are Aboriginal and 23% of the accused are non-Aboriginal (*ibid*). The revelation of these statistics ignites another topic entirely; as though NWAC is attempting to soften the blow against Indigenous perpetrators of violence against women, the report veers into a diatribe that circumvents culpability of the offenders:

Upon examination of the offenders or perpetrators of these crimes, it is perhaps important to explore the connection between offending and prior personal experiences of violence, neglect or abuse—particularly for offenders who may disproportionately experience intergenerational violence and abuse. (NWAC, 2010, p. 30)

While there is certainly some truth to this observation, it is negligent to remove culpability from the offender; whether the perpetrator is Indigenous or not, there is an element of personal responsibility for attacking or taking a woman's life; this atrocity transcends all ethnicities and experiences. NWAC has not specified that they are discussing Indigenous offenders specifically, yet, it is the unspoken assumption that Indigenous men require a different approach to claim culpability, one that acknowledges the social contexts from which they emerge. The difficulty

with this assumption—true or not—is the seemingly double standard manner in which it is applied. For example, serial murderer Robert Pickton was raised in horrific circumstances—he was abused, belittled, and his siblings were favoured by his parents (Cameron, 2010). Yet, there is little to no sympathy for the serial murderer and the social context in which he was raised. The final observation regarding accounting for social circumstances is that many people suffer from abuse, neglect and violence in their lives—this does not turn the vast majority of survivors of trauma into murderers (Widom, 1989).

(Re)Presentations of Indigenous Women: Why Language Matters

As scholars have remarked, (re)presentations of Indigenous women in Canada are fraught with negative stereotypes that contribute to the continuing devaluing and dehumanizing of the personhood of Aboriginal women (Acoose, 1995; Anderson, 2013; Carter, 2012; Green, 1975; LaRocque, 1989; Razack, 2002; Smith, 2005; Weaver, 2009). Often, these harmful mis(re)presentations are communicated through language, which is never neutral (Fairclough, 2009). The purpose of this section is to unpack the meaning behind the language that is used in the two reports, and reveal the underlying ideology that it propagates to the reader. The following sections examine specifically what words are chosen to discuss and subsequently (re)present missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. It is interesting to note that both of the reports in question use the terminology Aboriginal to describe the women in their report. More recent publications have seen increased use of the word Indigenous (Inter-American Commission, 2014; Lavell-Harvard & Brandt, 2016; NWAC, 2015; Walter, 2015), and some academics strategically use the term because of its global implications. Both terms are umbrella terms for the three recognized distinct groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada: First

Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples. Aboriginal and Indigenous are often used interchangeably both within and outside of academia to describe the three distinct groups as a collective.

Young Girls Under the Age of Majority

What is important to acknowledge is NWAC's use of the word girls. The report refers to *missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls* 32 times throughout the 40 page report. One can only assume that adding girls into the already long name assigned to MMIW was intentional; this use of language reminds us that many of the victims of violence were in fact children under the age of majority. NWAC's data indicates that at the time of their research, knowing the age of 85% of the women in their database, 17% or 99 cases of MMIWG involved young girls under the age of 18 (NWAC, 2010, p. 23). Unfortunately, there are no other statistics to validate or refute this claim, however it remains an important one for the organization to emphasize.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police do not differentiate between children (girls) and women in their report. While their report is titled *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women*, they use this phrase to describe the women only three times throughout the text. There are a variety of other terms used to identify the target population that will be discussed further, however it is worthy of analysis to consider why the RCMP has chosen not to identify their subjects as missing and murdered Aboriginal *women*. Primarily, the use of the word "women" is a noun: it is used to reference a person. It is also the word used to reference a person's gender, which may be different from their biological sex (Muehlenhard and Peterson, 2011). Furthermore, gender is associated with psychological characteristics or behaviour as well as a person's social role or identity (*ibid*). McDermott and Hatemi assert that

The concept of gender is assumed to correlate with various role definitions, personality traits, and components of identity. These constructions become infused with cultural values that differ across time and place and were historically assumed to be the result from processes of socialization. (2011, p. 89)

While not all social-psychologists agree on the definition of gender, it is widely accepted that the term women evokes femininity or feminine behaviours as opposed to anatomy or biological differences between the sexes (Rider, 2005). Therefore, the use of the word women, at its foundation, connotes personhood to the subjects of the texts. While the RCMP does not use this terminology in their text, they have chosen to refer to their subjects repeatedly as “Aboriginal females”.

Aboriginal and Female

The word female is generally used to describe the biological sex of a species. The English Oxford Living Dictionary defines female as “of or denoting the sex that can bear offspring or produce eggs, distinguished biologically by the production of gametes (ova) which can be fertilized by male gametes” (2017). Defining women according to their biology, then, relegates Indigenous women to mere bearers of eggs, a set of chromosomes, or worse, a clitoris, cervix and vagina. The use of this terminology stands in stark contrast to the use of ‘women’ in the *What Their Stories Tell Us* report. While this vernacular of female and male identifiers is certainly the ‘norm’ in police language, the effect that it may have on the reader cannot be ignored. By stripping the women of their personhood, the report effectively reinforces the colonial process of dehumanization, and in doing so permits the reader to distance themselves from the subject’s humanity.

Female versus Woman

Historically and contemporarily, Indigenous women have been referred to as “beasts of burden” (Weist, 1983), “squaw drudges” (Acoose, 1995; Green, 1975; LaRocque, 2002), “tawny temptresses” (Acoose, 1995), and “prostitutes” (Razack, 2002); these are a few of the mis(re)presentations that are commonly attributed to Indigenous women in Canada. The intent of this section is to examine how contemporary language either reinforces historic stereotypic images of Indigenous women, or conversely, how it is utilized to re-humanize Indigenous women. Therefore, an examination of how many times each of the reports use the terminology female, women, woman and girls to describe their subjects is a critical exercise. It must be noted that the *National Operational Overview* written by the RCMP is only 22 pages while *What Their Stories Tell Us* is almost twice as long. However, it is interesting to observe the difference between the uses of terminology in each report.

Figure 6: Reference to Subjects

	<u>NWAC</u>	<u>RCMP</u>
Women	327	45
Woman	31	0
Girls	140	0
Female	16	141
Reference to Subject	514	186

The Native Women’s Association of Canada’s mission is to help empower women through advocating for changes in injurious legislation and promoting equal opportunity for

Indigenous women. One can rightly assume that as an organization intent on advocating for the rights of Aboriginal women, NWAC would be cognizant of the prevailing stereotypes that dehumanize Indigenous women in Canadian society. It is my belief that NWAC has carefully considered the language and modifiers used to describe Indigenous women throughout the text. The report uses the plural noun “women” 327 times and the term “girls” is employed 140 times throughout the text. Furthermore, the report makes use of the singular noun “woman” 31 times. This is interesting to note as this topic is often discussed in terms of the collective, missing and murdered Aboriginal/Indigenous women and girls, as opposed to the singular ‘woman’ who are in fact the individuals that make up the collective. The NWAC also uses individual stories of women who have disappeared or been murdered, which essentially humanizes them to the reader. Psychologists have established that even people who are caring individuals are more likely to respond to an individual’s story as opposed to taking action towards alleviating collective suffering (Miller, 2010, p. 50). By sharing the personal stories of individual victims of violence, NWAC is attempting to connect with the reader on the basis of a shared humanity between the victim and the citizen. What strengthens this observation is the fact that the report only refers to MMIWG as “female” sixteen times. The author has presumably made a conscious decision to not refer to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls based on their biology; rather, they have intentionally utilized terminology which reinforces the humanity of Aboriginal women. As one feminist notes,

The strength of the word ‘woman’ is that it can be used to affirm our humanity, dignity and worth, without denying our embodied femaleness or treating it as a source of shame. It neither reduces us to walking wombs, nor de-sexes and disembodies us. (Debuk, 2015, para. 14)

The report *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview* uses the plural noun “women” only 45 times and makes zero mention of “girls” in their text. Further, there is no singular use of the noun “woman” to be found, which may be due to the fact that unlike NWAC, the RCMP report does not share details of any one victim’s life. The modifier most often chosen to describe the subjects of their research is the term “Aboriginal,” which can also be preceded by “missing” or “murdered”. It is troubling that the government mandated organized police system uses the biologically based terminology to describe victims of violence in their text. Female is but one physical attribute that can be used to identify a victim of violence, however, the choice of this terminology leaves the reader feeling cold and distant from the subject. For example, the report identifies data related to “murdered Aboriginal females” and the “over-representation of Aboriginal female homicide victims” (p. 9). The message that is conveyed is not one of personhood but rather of biological origin; this use of terminology reaffirms social (re)presentations of Indigenous women as less than human. As a system that has been historically criticized for being racist and apathetic towards Indigenous peoples, it is apparent that whether they knowingly participate in this systemic violence or not, the language that the RCMP employ as their everyday terminology upholds structural violence in modern day society. It must be noted, however, that police utilize this terminology to refer to all peoples across the board; it is perhaps quite problematic that police language in general is dehumanizing to all persons. However, as many police officers carry with them preconceived notions based largely on stereotypes of Indigenous women, and their experiences on the job are often dealing with intoxicated Aboriginal persons in public spaces (HRW, 2013, p. 30), this biological reference and absence of historical context can be extremely detrimental to their ability to view Indigenous women as real persons. As one professor suggests the word female has always been

pejorative, and that it is only recently that people have recognized it as such. Lakeoff recounts in a *Time* article,

A female can be any species, but only a human can be a woman, so to refer to a woman as a female is to subtly downgrade her to a lower mammalian status, rather like calling a guy an ‘ape’. That said, to be able to call a guy an ape is possible only when he is a particular *kind* of guy — clumsy, brutish, etc. But any woman can be called, disparagingly, a ‘female’ just because of the chromosome thing. Same with the very bad *c*-word, vs. what ought to be parallel, *prick*, or *dick*. Any woman can get those words applied to her by the average misogynist, and makes no reference to any specific qualities other than femaleness. But to be one of the male words, a guy has to be obnoxious. (Newton-Small, 2016)

One final observation regarding the use of women versus females is related to the LGBTQ community, particularly transwomen or genderqueer persons. While the NWAC briefly notes that their collected cases include transgender or transsexual Aboriginal women, neither report makes mention of the difficulties associated with including non-gender binary persons; both reports assume a cisgender homogeny in their exclusion of LGBTQ analyses in their gendered research. While this topic could be an entire analysis in its own right, it is essential to make note of the extreme marginalization of persons who do not fit neatly into a gender binary. As Rifkin’s work emphasizes, the ideological roots of heteronormativity are intricately linked to white supremacist ideologies; these ideological binaries are used to identify and designate who fits into the dominant society’s categories which in turn determines whether individuals are granted the full rights of citizenship (2011). The question then is, are transgendered or queer identified persons identified at all by the RCMP and other policing bodies? Where are the deaths

of non-gender binary persons recorded in the RCMP database, and more poignantly, are they granted ‘full rights of citizenship’ by those who are mandated to serve and protect all Canadians?

Homicide or Murder?

The RCMP’s use of the terminology “female victims of homicide” evokes the sense of legalistic terminology that is commonly used in State sanctioned organized bodies that deal with issues of justice. Whereas this in and of itself is not a negative attribute but rather a “norm” for an institution like this, it becomes increasingly relevant to the comparative analysis upon investigating the precise definition of the word “homicide”. Legally speaking there are two distinct categories found under the umbrella term homicide: culpable and non-culpable. Culpable homicide according to Criminal Code section 229 states that homicide is murder if the offender intends to cause the death of the person killed; intends to cause bodily injury that the offender knows is likely to cause death; or, in either of these situations, accidentally or mistakenly kills another person. As Gartner notes, non-culpable homicide can be considered non-criminal:

Legally, some homicides are non-culpable and exempt from criminal penalties.

Even so, many of these non-criminal homicides share important characteristics with criminal homicides. Some argue that the distinctions between criminal and non-criminal homicide are often arbitrary or politically based. (2010. p. 187)

There are three categories of homicide offences: murder, manslaughter, and infanticide. Without entering into the specifics of law—which is beyond the scope of this project—suffice it to say that it is the courts in the justice system who determine the level of culpability, based on intent, provocation, and motive (Roach, 2015). This can be a source of confusion when examining the

statistics of the reports and their semantics, specifically the difference between murder and manslaughter.

Consequently, the NWAC's use of the terminology murder can be misleading, if we are to examine the justice system's use of the terminology. If the reader is to rely on the criminal justice system's understanding of culpable versus non-culpable *homicides*, then perhaps the use of the term murder may be considered an overarching term that does not describe the act that has resulted in the death of an Indigenous woman, according to the law. However, the term murder appears to be deliberately chosen to convey the message that Indigenous women have been killed—murdered—with little consequence. While the NWAC has seemingly deliberately chosen to identify Indigenous women as victims of murder to strengthen their message that Indigenous women are not disposable, perhaps the RCMP have chosen to utilize their technical terminology of homicide, knowing that determining culpability belongs to the Court of Law. Essentially, NWAC is reinforcing notions of humanity in Indigenous women who have lost their lives to violence, and the RCMP has opted for their technical use of homicide—they do not want to determine whether a woman has been murdered, rather they rely on the courts to make this determination for them. NWAC has chosen to determine culpability in certain circumstances that may not match with the RCMP data. Perhaps their use of 'murder' is intended to relay the message that Aboriginal women, regardless of their perpetrators, have been murdered in the sense of a society which has 'forsaken' them; thus, collectively society participated in their demise, which assumes culpability upon all who remained apathetic while knowing that Indigenous women are targeted in their vulnerability and unequal treatment by the justice system (Pearce, 2013; Razack, 2016a).

Risk Factors & High-Risk Lifestyles

Of great importance is the language used to describe the women's life circumstances at the time of their disappearance and/or death. What the author communicates to the reader about the socio-economic circumstances of Indigenous women can have an enormous impact on the reader's perspective of women who are victims of racialized sexual violence. Essentially, the picture that an author paints about their conditions of life can either create empathy or perhaps even reinforce notions of the disposability of Indigenous women's bodies. Furthermore, it is necessary to offer the reader a complete picture of Indigenous women's lives; it is just as vital that one offers an honest perspective of the good, bad, and everything in between in order to present an accurate perspective from which the reader may interpret. The difficulty of this task cannot be understated; "stock narratives" of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls diminishes the individuality of the over one thousand recorded deaths of women, while simultaneously demanding that their collective lives demonstrate enough commonality to render this a critical social issue (Dean, 2016).

Both the RCMP and the NWAC report discuss the life circumstances of Indigenous women in opposing manners. What is noteworthy is the fact that while the RCMP chooses to identify certain 'risk factors' of murdered Aboriginal women, the NWAC utilizes an alternative discourse that avoids any tough discussion directly addressing addiction issues, family violence and the prevalence of women working in the survival sex trade. The RCMP report relies solely on statistics in their analysis while the NWAC utilizes a narrative discourse that attributes the women's life circumstances to historical trauma, which has ultimately led to increased vulnerability to experiencing extreme attacks of violence. As noted above, statistics alone do not tell the entire story, however they do reveal a snapshot that can influence perception of

Aboriginal women. In contrast, solely relying on a discourse of vulnerability to systemic oppression diminishes and veils the fact that Indigenous women are targeted by perpetrators of violence.

Located towards the end of the RCMP report is a section named *Understanding certain risk factors of murdered Aboriginal females*. Here the RCMP prefaces their three ‘risk factors’ in the report:

Any discussion of victim characteristics is vulnerable to the accusation that blame is being assigned to the victim. There is no such intent here. There are certain factors that will make an individual more susceptible to violent victimization. The presence of these vulnerability factors in the cases of murdered Aboriginal women may help provide some descriptive statistics to inform future social interventions or operational crime prevention planning. (p.17)

Defending the identification of the three ‘risk factors’—employment status, use of intoxicants and involvement in the sex trade—the RCMP make a valid point; there are certain factors that make women vulnerable to violence. The issue that remains is how they are presented for consumption by the reader and further, the fact that Indigenous women are social targets for victimization is never discussed in their report. With very little social or historical context, the RCMP set the stage for the numbers to ‘speak for themselves’, which only provides a small piece to this rather large and complex puzzle.

It has been noted that this presentation of data is perhaps not a deliberate attempt on the part of the RCMP to participate in the devaluing of Indigenous women’s lives. Empirical data is often criticized as it assumes an erroneous sense of impartiality, yet statistics are the preferred

method of data collection by most State agencies (Fioramonti, 2014). However, great care must be taken in order to avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes that Indigenous women contend with on a daily basis; without thoughtful evaluation these seemingly innocuous calculations can reinforce the marginalization of Indigenous women and girls. Therefore it is necessary to present the facts, but ensure that context is given; without context, Aboriginal peoples can be misrepresented by research and statistics.

RCMP ‘Risk Factors’

For example, in discussing employment status, the RCMP report states that Aboriginal women are less likely to be employed, more likely to earn their income through illegal means, and more likely to be collecting social assistance or disability insurance than non-Aboriginal women who have been killed (RCMP, 2014, p. 17). They follow up this seemingly benign statistical data with the statement: “This is in line with the data from the 2006 census about the Aboriginal population in Canada” (*ibid*). The effect that this presentation of data has on the reader is significant. While these statistics do present an accurate picture of devastatingly low rates of employment, they do not acknowledge that Indigenous women lack economic opportunities in reserve communities and in urban areas, that they suffer from intergenerational trauma that has affected their education rates and thus their employability, and that systemic racism has virtually excluded them from participating in mainstream Canadian society, including the workplace. Taken as a presentation of ‘just the facts’, these observations perpetuate the image of the ‘lazy Indian’ (Mieder, 1993). Moreover, the RCMP’s deliberate attempt to qualify their analysis with Statistics Canada data serves to further validate their claims. This mis(re)presentation of Indigenous women replicates harmful stereotypes that reinforce the notion that Aboriginal women are disposable. As one scholar asserts,

Aboriginal women are viewed as disposable and so brutal victimization against them is justified because victims are stigmatized as prostitutes, street people, and addicts—even if they are not. The invocation of such stereotypes mitigates the seriousness of their victimization; signaling to the public that crimes against them do not matter. Degrading stereotypes also render racialized women's experiences of violence invisible. (Gilchrist, 2014, p. 376)

The second 'risk factor' identified by the RCMP is perhaps the most insidious of the three. Using toxicology and eye witness reports to stake their claim, the RCMP data reveals that between 1997 and 2012, Aboriginal women were more likely than non-Aboriginal women to have consumed alcohol, drugs and other intoxicants prior to their deaths (RCMP, 2014, P. 17). The sheer difference in the numbers—63% versus 20%—is statistically significant and definitely worth noting. There is no denying the results of toxicology reports—the tests that are run to determine if intoxicants were ingested produce either positive or negative results. However, returning to the idea that empirical research provides an incomplete picture, this statistic can easily serve to reinforce negative stereotypes that diminish Indigenous women's value. Moreover, it assumes that these women were actively participating in their own deaths (Timmer & Norman, 1984). Taken without social context and discussion regarding life circumstances that lead to drug and alcohol dependencies, this data runs the gambit of being used to justify the deaths of women who are deemed to be worthless or forsaken (2012) as the Oppal inquiry found.

Criminologists have identified victim precipitation, whereby the underlying assumption is that victims invite, or provoke the offender's behaviour, and are therefore partly responsible for the crime. Timmer and Norman argue that victim precipitation functions as an ideology which "blames the victim and diverts attention from the structural causes of crime" (1984, p. 63).

Prevailing popular discourses that reinforce victim precipitation theories are commonly used as partial explanations for violent crimes including rape and homicide. In a concept dubbed ‘subintentional’ death, it is postulated that victims play a role in their own homicide through excessive risk taking, poor judgement and self-destructive lifestyles (Allen, 1980), which presumably emerge from making bad decisions. While this rhetoric is certainly present at the policing level (Parent & Verdun-Jones, 1998), others have criticized the ideology that Indigenous women were somehow ‘asking for it’ when they have been viciously attacked, raped, beaten and murdered. The commission on missing women in Downtown Vancouver’s Eastside cautioned that the women who went missing and were murdered in this area were considered sub-human because of their ‘high-risk lifestyle’; they were targeted on the basis of this denigration which made them easy pickings for violent predators (Oppal, 2012).

The NWAC report avoids any direct discussion regarding rates of addiction. In a climate where notions of victim precipitation and sexualized violence committed against a racialized group of women is the ‘norm’, one need not ponder the exclusion of this dialogue. However, the organization missed an opportunity to facilitate an honest dialogue regarding a significant and pervasive issue the Indigenous community knows is a key factor in the vulnerability of MMIWG to becoming targets of violence. Avoiding the conversation entirely does not accurately (re)present Indigenous women, rather, it evades the difficult analyses that need to be undertaken by NWAC in order to truly begin addressing some of the most pervasive issues that contribute to the hazards that correlate with MMIWG. Intricately intertwined with substance abuse addiction is the lived reality of women who engage in survival sex work. The next section is devoted to unpacking the RCMP’s third ‘risk factor’—involvement in the sex trade.

Prostitution, Sex Work & Limited Options

Of primary importance to this conversation is the choice of terminology each author employs as their principal discourse; this is perhaps only slightly more significant than the context in which this conversation is developed, or, rather, absent from the presentation of facts on MMIWG. Given the extremely sensitive nature of this topic, the choice of language becomes even more significant to the overarching tone of the report. There are several words that emerge in both reports: prostitution, sexual exploitation, and sex trade being the main words used to discuss sex work. Examining the frequency of the use of these terms can help the reader critically evaluate the organizational values and perspectives regarding Indigenous women and sex work.

It is equally imperative that one examine the absence of certain terminology and the underlying reasons for excluding said words. The absence of sexual exploitation or sex trafficking in the RCMP text is a stark contrast to the position of the NWAC report. In fairness, the RCMP report does not indicate whether victims of violence under the age of majority are included in their analysis; however, the sex work industry is fuelled by the sexual exploitation of children and youth. This is intricately linked to a lack of choices in a society that is structurally violent towards Indigenous women and girls. Instead, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police choose to employ the term ‘sex trade’ five times and make use of the word ‘prostitute’ once in their report. Interestingly, the definition of sex trade is “the sex industry, specifically the business of prostitution” (English Oxford Living Dictionary, 2016). The author’s use of sex trade implies to the reader that a legitimate business transaction occurs when one is engaged in sex work. There are various perceptions and theories regarding the nature of sex work in academia, however there is a pool of scholarship about the sex work industry that is meant to

alert others to the sexual violence and exploitation that women encounter in the industry (Durisin, 2010, p.128). Without the context of exploitation, the sex trade becomes merely business transaction made between equals rather than a relationship characterized by unequal power relations. This is a critical observation when reminded of the work Razack published that criticizes the Canadian justice system for allowing women who are deemed to be in the midst of trading sex for money to somehow become partly responsible for their own deaths because of the transactional nature of sex work (Razack, 2002; Razack, 2016a). Essentially, the Canadian State has diminished the culpability of perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women engaged in sex work through the ideology of victim precipitation. Indigenous women who engage in sex work are therefore marginalized not only socially, but rather they are deemed to have less value by the justice system than women who do not participate in sex work.

Keeping in mind that the Oppal (2012) report and the Human Rights Watch (2013) report had been released prior to the RCMP (2014) report, and that both reports criticized the police for not protecting vulnerable Indigenous women and girls, it is interesting to note that the report mentions sex work as a ‘risk factor’ when in fact, the federal police deem that the difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women is insignificant. The RCMP report identifies 225 female homicide victims as being involved in the sex trade industry between 1991 and 2012.

The percentage of Aboriginal female homicide victims involved was slightly higher than that of non-Aboriginal female homicide victims—12% versus 5% respectively...As a result, it would be inappropriate to suggest any significant difference in the prevalence of sex trade workers among Aboriginal female homicide victims as compared to non-Aboriginal female homicide victims. (p.17)

If this is in fact statistically insignificant, why has the RCMP identified sex work as a ‘risk factor’? Perhaps the RCMP is attempting to sway public opinion away from believing that they police prostitutes differently than non sex-trade workers. Academics argue that in the case of women working in the sex trade, if they are Aboriginal and/or poor, they are often labelled as living ‘high risk’ lifestyles which implies that the women have made bad choices, thus making themselves vulnerable to sexual violence (Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani, 2008; Razack 2002).

Strategically, it bodes well for the policing body of the federal government to use statistical analyses to their own benefit; this statement does not address the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in sex-work. On the contrary, this tactically positioned paragraph that closes the dialogue on ‘risk factors’ asserts that RCMP data does not indicate Indigenous women involved in the sex trade are any more vulnerable to being murdered than non-Aboriginal women. This is contrary to the Oppal report (2012), the NWAC report (2010), and Maryanne Pearce’s independent research project (2013), which all identify Aboriginal women working in the sex trade as overrepresented and at tremendous risk because of their involvement in the survival sex industry. Furthermore, Pearce’s work identified Aboriginal heritage as one of the ‘risk factors’ for women who disappear and are found murdered in Canada (Pearce, 2013).

Sexual Exploitation

While the RCMP report diminishes the extreme vulnerability of women working in the survival sex industry, the author of the NWAC report makes use of the terminology ‘sexual exploitation’ when discussing women who are working in the ‘sex-trade’. The word ‘sexual exploitation’ is counted five times throughout the document and ‘sexually exploited’ appears an additional three times. What is of critical importance is the significance of sexual exploitation—

it is specific to the experience of minors and/or children. The definition developed by the National Working Group for Sexually Exploited Children and Young People in England states:

Child sexual exploitation is a form of sexual abuse in which a person(s) exploits, coerces and/or manipulates a child or young person into engaging in some form of sexual activity, sometimes in return for something the child needs or desires and/or for the gain of the person(s) perpetrating or facilitating the abuse. (NWG, 2016, para. 6)

Note that this definition incorporates the fact that the victims are children who are being abused by persons who have power over them. It is noteworthy that NWAC has chosen to use this terminology and that the organization identifies missing and murdered women *and girls* as the subject of their research. The author of the NWAC report is communicating to the reader that for many, the crux of ‘sex work’ begins when children and young women are exploited; that sex work is often not a real choice, rather, it occurs in the context of limited options (NWAC, 2010, p.31). As Dodsworth recounts, sexual exploitation is characterized by unequal power relations; “violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterized in the main by the child or young person’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social economic and/or emotional vulnerability” (2015, p. 2).

NWAC’s data provides an incomplete picture of missing and murdered Indigenous women as they are only able to identify participation in the sex trade for approximately one quarter of the women represented in their database. Statistically speaking, this is not an adequate sample from which to draw conclusive observations. Of the 149 women included in the analysis, 74 were not involved in the sex trade, 51 women were known to be involved in the industry, and

a further 24 cases may have been involved, but the researchers were not able to conclusively determine this fact (NWAC, 2010, p. 31). It is interesting to note that upon qualifying their data—which they determine is open to change upon gathering of new information—the report does make a pointed statement regarding women engaged in sex work.

It must be emphasized that involvement in the sex trade is not a cause of disappearances or murders; rather, many women arrive at that point in the context of limited options after experiencing multiple forms of trauma or victimization.
(*ibid*)

NWAC subverts the common rhetoric about women in the sex trade; they contextualize Indigenous women entering the sex trade because they have “limited options” in life, and are often victims of “trauma or victimization”. Moreover, the report recognizes the “extreme vulnerability” (*ibid*) of Indigenous women in the sex trade and once again directs the readers’ attention to the systematically flawed structures which have left Aboriginal women in an extremely vulnerable state of social and economic marginalization in Canada. Pearce and Razack would suggest that it is because of this severe marginalization that Indigenous women—especially sex trade workers—are not only vulnerable to violence, they are targeted for sexual violence.

The imbalance of power demonstrated through the discourse of the RCMP is veiled yet destructive in nature. As one researcher remarks, “the police and the justice system ignore these crimes [involving sex workers] because they view the violence as an outcome of a particular lifestyle, a way of life born of poverty” (Razack, 2016b, p. 229). In an opposing fashion, NWAC deliberately provides additional information to provide context to their use of statistical analysis;

their intention is to convince the reader that Indigenous women have not simply landed in this marginal space, rather, they have survived a series of consequential historical events that have affected their socio-economic status immeasurably, which has in turn made them vulnerable to racialized, sexualized violence. However, the NWAC does evade the topic of personal agency with regards to individual Indigenous women; in their discourse it is as if women have been predestined to work the streets, based on the colonial narrative. It is important to note that while many women do experience a lack of perceived options that lead them to sex work, there is an element of personal choice that culminates in sex work. Dodsworth's research examines the complexities that exist within the identities of sex workers and found that there were several different ways in which women who work in the sex industry consolidate the tensions between personal agency and a perceived lack of alternative means of earning a living. The scholar found

Routes into sex work vary in levels of coercion, drift and agency but such factors are enmeshed and interact with both individual and wider structural factors. Once involved, some women felt strongly that they had a right to make a choice to continue selling sex as a means of funding their lives, and developed practical and psychological coping strategies to enable them to do so. In contrast, some became so immersed in the world of sex work that they see no way out. Others have exited sex work in order to survive. (Dodsworth, 2012, p. 534)

Therefore it is critical that sex work, coercion and personal agency be understood as a spectrum of experiences, shaped by the particular circumstances of each individual woman. However, Shauna Ferris poses a significant question in her work:

When systemic racism, poverty and any number of other sociocultural factors effectively force a woman to her knees and require that she accept as little as five dollars for services rendered, her agency must be understood as severely limited. If cultural racism and colonialism—both their historical legacies and their everyday expressions—have contributed to an Aboriginal woman's impoverishment and/or fuelled her need for cash or drugs, can her participation in the survival sex trade be considered—and respected—as the same manner of 'necessary choice' as that of a poor white woman who does the same? (Ferris, 2008, p. 127)

Historical Trauma

The Native Women's Association of Canada goes to great lengths to discuss historical circumstances of Indigenous women prior to discussing their research findings. In a section labelled *Impacts of Government Policies and Colonization*, NWAC communicates their position on the historical legacy of trauma that has been experienced by Indigenous peoples, and the subsequent effects that have culminated in missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

The experiences of violence and victimization of Aboriginal women do not occur in a vacuum. Violence is perpetuated through apathy and indifference towards Aboriginal women, and stems from the ongoing impacts of colonialism in Canada. While this process is rooted in history, the impacts of colonization continue to affect Aboriginal peoples, and perhaps more profoundly Aboriginal women, today... Systemic racism and patriarchy has marginalized Aboriginal women and led to intersecting issues at the root of multiple forms of violence. The result of the system

of colonization is a climate where Aboriginal women are particularly vulnerable to violence, victimization, and indifference by the state and society to their experiences of violence. (p.7)

The organization asserts that it is their belief that missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is a social issue, one that has historical roots that ultimately point towards colonialism and systemic marginalization of Indigenous women by the State and Canadian society. Furthermore, proponents of this epistemological perspective have critiqued the positivist tradition for staking claim to a single, correct version of reality as opposed to multiple versions of reality that develop within particular contexts (Braun & Clark, 2013, p. 2). The manner in which the RCMP present their risk factors of murdered Indigenous women—whether intentional or not—is a harmful (re)presentation of their lives; identifying the ‘risk factors’ of low employment status, high use of intoxicants, and supposedly statistically insignificant data on women involved in the sex trade work together to reinforce negative stereotypes of Indigenous women as lazy, drug and alcohol addicted prostitutes. Using statistical data without providing some context further marginalizes the women; this presentation of statistics negates the fact that these ‘risk factors’ and their resultant vulnerabilities are part of a larger violent system that disproportionately affects Indigenous women.

Vulnerability, Lifestyle Choices & Targeted Racialized, Sexualized Violence

Taken together, the three risk factors presented as they are in the RCMP report create a sense of impending doom for Indigenous women. As the theory of victim precipitation indicates, it presents a picture of Aboriginal women that denotes a ‘high-risk lifestyle’ which of course, is expected to end in tragedy. This discourse of ‘high-risk lifestyle’ is damaging to Indigenous

women and it negates the complexities of each individual life that has been lost. While all three risk factors most certainly occurred simultaneously in one individual's life, there are a great many other cases of murdered Aboriginal women where none of the risk factors would apply. How does one simultaneously offer important perspectives on vulnerabilities while also respecting the lives of the women whose lives have been taken? One key observation is to remove the rhetoric attached to 'lifestyle' as lifestyle signifies choice. What many researchers have emphasized is that poverty, addiction, colonialism, racism and sexism are not a choice (Adelson, 2005; Amnesty, 2004; Brodribb, 1984; Dieter & Rude, 2005; Goatcher-Bergmann, 2011; Kubik, Bourassa & Hampton, 2009; Olsen-Harper, 2006); women do not choose to have their lives counted as least valuable in the societies in which they live.

The multiplicity of circumstances in which Aboriginal women find themselves at risk of being targeted for violence cannot and should not be primarily read through a lens of risk-taking behaviours. While it is true that some Aboriginal women are working in dangerous conditions like the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver, it does not explain the targeting women for violence. As the *Forsaken* report notes:

The public story about missing and murdered women... focuses almost exclusively on individual stories of women being driven to the survival sex trade by drug addiction and personal tragedies of violence and abuse. The full picture of the missing and murdered women is a more complex, multilayered one consisting of individual histories, broader patterns of social disadvantage and social exclusion, and wholly inadequate police responses. (Oppal, 2012, Exec. Summary)

Therefore, the three risk factors deemed significant by police are not wrong, however, they serve to narrowly (re)present only a small percentage of Aboriginal women who have been murdered or disappeared.

For the Native Women's Association of Canada, the primary discourse revolves around the 'extreme vulnerability' of Indigenous women and girls to violence. A search of the NWAC report found that the word "vulnerable" was used nine times, "increased vulnerability" appeared five times, "vulnerabilities" came up three times; Aboriginal women were described as belonging to the "most at risk group" three times in the report. This use of language to describe Indigenous women is a direct attempt to dispel the victim blaming or victim precipitation rhetoric that is prevalent in society. This language tacitly subverts the notion of victim blaming, and suggests that the women are not deserving of these attacks based on life choices, rather, they are victims of circumstance motivated by survival and their lack of perceived options in life. What is even more interesting is that fact that the word "prostitute" appears only twice; once when quoting a Statistics Canada statistic about prostitution (2010, p. 5) and the other which mentions "women who work as prostitutes or in other areas of the sex industry" (2010, p. 13). One can conclude that the organization made a deliberate choice to refrain from labelling Indigenous women involved in the sex trade as "prostitutes," which has a negative and stigmatizing social connotation attached to it, and rather chose to emphasize that the women were at risk and vulnerable to predators both in the sex trade and in their daily lives. This lack of perceived choices can be traced back to the root causes of systemic inequality which continue to perpetuate the colonial agenda in Canadian society. Pointedly, the Native Women's Association of Canada uses the word "colonization" 24 times and colonial/ism appears six times throughout the document.

While the NWAC report focuses primarily on the extreme vulnerability of Indigenous women via the State, they fall short of emphasizing one aspect of the violence, namely that Indigenous women are targeted because they are women and they are Aboriginal. In a telling statement made early in the report, the author quotes Jacob and Williams (2008, p. 134) who note:

They were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time in a society that poses a risk to their safety. They were targeted because they were Aboriginal and it was assumed that either they would not fight back or they would not be missed.

(NWAC, 2010, p. 2)

The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry had made this claim clear in 1999; the question then is, why would a national advocacy group not emphasize the discourse of targeted violence, but rather rely upon a discourse of extreme vulnerability throughout their research? Razack has strongly suggested that a discourse of vulnerability is simply not enough to combat the issue of MMIWG. In fact, this scholar is adamant that in a country where colonialism is denied, the status quo must be broken and a new pattern established:

This pattern is one that keeps Indigenous sovereignty at the centre of its vision, attends to modern forms of colonization and ongoing practices of unjust enrichment, and confronts the systematized devaluing of Indigenous lives that runs through the institutions of contemporary Canada. (Razack, 2016b, p. iv)

Comprehending racialized sexual violence as a consequence of socio-economic marginalization does not put the onus back onto the violent colonial structures of the State. It is the systematic devaluing of Indigenous lives throughout the structures of the State which need to be dissected in

order to begin addressing the socio-economic marginalization of Indigenous women and girls in Canada.

What Actions Do These Reports Ask Us to Take?

Both the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Native Women's Association of Canada reports proclaim that ultimately, one of their primary objectives for publishing their findings is to create greater awareness about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. However, although they agree in this respect, both reports establish different priorities regarding how people should act on the information they have received from their research. In particular, the RCMP report focuses their action plan on targeted crime prevention, while the NWAC appeals to the need for a two-stream approach of preventative and reactive measures based on their discoveries.

Given their role in the community, it is not surprising that the RCMP would prioritize targeted crime prevention as one of their next steps. As law enforcement officers, much of the police discourse has been historically rooted in the prevention of crime (Marquis, 1991). The agency declares their intention to enhance prevention efforts of Aboriginal women going missing by committing to identifying "communities with the highest risk of violence against women. Within these communities, interventions, diversion and family violence prevention initiatives will be focused towards at-risk individuals" (RCMP, 2014, p. 18). While this may seem reasonable given the scope of their work, it is problematic in several ways. Primarily, targeting communities with high levels of violence against women can mean a great many things to different people. Are they targeting First Nation communities? Or is there a broader community that will be the focus of these prevention programs? Moreover, targeting primarily communities

that experience high rates of violence against women is problematic in that it effectively puts the onus back on the community to somehow resolve the issue of violence within their community. Furthermore, if programs are going to target communities, will they be culturally relevant for Indigenous peoples if they are produced by the RCMP? Finally, targeting crime prevention in specific areas of the country does not address the key issue of Indigenous women and girls being targeted as victims of racialized sexual violence.

As far as reactive measures taken by RCMP, the federal police committed to developing a National Missing Persons Strategy to increase the quality of their investigations. The RCMP plan includes creating a mandatory form to track missing persons, a communications plan for families, ensuring the necessary support for investigations, and providing support to victims' families (2014, p. 18). These outcomes are a welcome shift in policy, however, one must recall that Indigenous families have had great difficulties reporting loved ones missing and receiving support from officers regarding investigating disappearances (NWAC, 2010). Furthermore, while it is understandable that the RCMP is responsible for protecting all citizens in their jurisdiction, this does not specifically address institutional level biases that exist within the police unit that have impacted the quality of investigations for Indigenous women specifically; this is a strategy that does not address the issues that arise for families when they alert authorities to their missing loved one.

A more hopeful reactive measure taken by the RCMP is their change in data collection processes. Recall that the NWAC was highly critical of the lack of homicide data that identifies Aboriginal heritage (NWAC, 2010, p. 16); the RCMP tackle this issue in their next steps:

To continue to ensure there is solid data available for operational decision-making and to ensure RCMP members record the most relevant information possible for Statistics Canada, the RCMP will roll out changes to how it collects data on homicides and missing persons. As a result of this project, the RCMP will ensure that Aboriginal origin is captured as part of Homicide Surveys. (RCMP, 2014, p. 18)

Capturing data specific to Aboriginal heritage presents as both a welcome change and a precautionary challenge as it has been observed that throughout history, data collected on Aboriginal peoples has been used against Aboriginal peoples (Castellano, 2004). For example, a national conversation emerged in 2015 as the RCMP released their *Update to the National Operational Overview* and then Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Bernard Valcourt, dismissed the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women by referencing statistics from the document that indicated 70% of violence that Indigenous women experience is perpetrated by Indigenous men (Barerra, 2015). Aware of the high incidence of family violence in Aboriginal communities, critics were outraged that a politician would flippantly deny the larger social issues by redefining the problem as primarily an “Indian problem” (Galloway, 2015). Additionally, regardless of who is attacking women, the law should apply in every case. These are some of the challenges when statistics are not contextualized—people have a tendency to distort the incomplete picture to suit their position and evade any collective or moral responsibility for the Other.

The NWAC report recognizes the need for both proactive and reactive measures to assist in addressing this complex, multilayered social issue. The articulation of the action that the

women's advocacy organization touts is one that seeks to overhaul largely systemic barriers to accessing support for Indigenous women and the families of victims:

On the one hand, changes are needed to increase safety and lessen vulnerability of women and girls. At the same time, the system must also address the needs of families and communities after a woman disappears or is found murdered. Success in preventing violence will, of course, decrease need for reactive measures, but preventative measures can only be obtained over a long period of time so both must be addressed simultaneously. Immediate improvements to responses to families of missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls are crucial; however, such improvements do not necessarily address the root causes of violence. (NWAC, 2010, p. 31)

In essence, the organization recognizes the need to implement prevention strategies; however, they are advocating for reactive changes that seek to challenge the status quo of structurally violent institutions and policies.

In their discussion regarding prevention, the NWAC takes a somewhat 'magic bullet' approach to violence prevention. The organization advocates for pragmatic educational strategies for Indigenous youth that address topics such as healthy relationships, self-esteem, personal safety and increased awareness of local supports (NWAC, 2010, p. 32). However, they preface this call to action with the same call to returning to traditions that many Indigenous organizations claim as being the 'solution' to all that ails Aboriginal communities: cultural revitalization.

To truly address violence against Aboriginal women, it is necessary to support the revitalization of our ways of being. It is necessary to reclaim the balance inherent in traditional gender roles and to take responsibility for the transmission of pride, cultural awareness and traditional knowledge of future generations... The roles and guidance of Elders and culturally relevant teachings around traditional roles and responsibilities must be understood as integral to this process. (NWAC, 2010, p. 32)

At first glance, many would agree with this popular statement—the push for cultural revitalization, learning through the wisdom of Elders, and in general cultural awareness has been a focal point of many Indigenous advocates and scholars. Where this statement becomes problematic is identifying the return to ‘traditional gender roles’ as a ‘cure’ of sorts for violence within Indigenous communities. As scholars have proclaimed, ‘traditional gender roles’ in Indigenous communities have been romanticized in many ways (LaRocque, 2002; Green, 2007), and ideals that have been passed down through the generations have been impacted by the Victorian ideals of propriety that settlers brought with them during the colonial project. While not necessarily bad or wrong, the emphasis on the power of learning traditional gender roles negates the fact that hundreds of years of dysfunctional, violent and abusive behaviours within Indigenous communities are not going to be resolved by simply returning to the teachings; the depth of illness in Aboriginal communities requires a pragmatic approach to dealing with generations of complex trauma, broken familial relationships, lost parenting skills, and a plan to unlearn unhealthy coping strategies. It is simply short-sighted to place such an emphasis on traditional gender roles, as if this alone is a ‘cure’ for family and community violence.

The report notes that part of the healing process for Aboriginal men who enact violence may involve “reclaiming traditional gender roles and responsibilities to regain or maintain traditional ways of being” (NWAC, 2010, p. 34). Other than simplifying the solution to a rather complex psycho-social-spiritual issue, this reliance on cultural revitalization negates the broader social reality of racism, sexism and misogyny of the current social climate. Reintroducing cultural values is not inherently wrong, rather, it oversimplifies the fact that a comprehensive, multilayered approach to addressing violence against women is essential; what the NWAC has chosen to bring into focus lacks clear vision for addressing the root causes of violence in Aboriginal male perpetrators. Many Indigenous men will require ongoing, comprehensive psychological and therapeutic assistance to help them out of the cycle of abuse. Relying on a return to traditions does not address the deep-rooted personal issues that both perpetrators and victims need to address in order to affect real change and positive social outcomes. As LaRocque reminds us, sexual violence is a global and universal issue, replete with an attitude of male domination and privilege; misogyny and sexism in popular culture objectify and degrade women, turning them into “sexual playthings” that are useful only to fulfill the sexual desires of men (LaRocque, 2002). While colonization has exacerbated sexual violence against Indigenous women, LaRocque contends that the issue is more than a “colonial-generated” phenomenon; in fact, LaRocque is troubled that many women, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, continue to tolerate or explain male violence against women often in defence of cultural difference. This position obscures the fact that “as far back as humans have existed this crime against humanity has existed” (LaRocque, 2007, p. 61).

An additional observation regarding reactive measures brings the focus back to helping families immediately to cope with the loss of their loved one. In order to do this, the NWAC

suggests that police need to develop a greater awareness of the impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples, and further, that families of victims require advocates for navigating the police system in their time of need. The fact that navigators are suggested to assist the families of missing and murdered women demonstrates the complexity of colonial systems that are both difficult to navigate and seemingly hostile towards Indigenous peoples; supporting families during their time of need becomes essential to rebuilding broken relationships between the justice system and Aboriginal peoples in Canada (RCAP, 1996). Furthermore, the organization specifically calls on readers to remember the children that missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls have left behind, and prioritize supports for children and the family members who raise them.

Finally, as the report emphasizes from start to finish, the Native Women's Association of Canada claims that unless the root causes of systemic violence are addressed, the cycle of violence will continue.

Equality is essential for the health and well-being of Aboriginal communities. At the same time, it is hard to focus on culture and healing when families and communities lack clean water, access to childcare or the economic security to have safe, affordable housing. In this way, the physical, spiritual, mental and emotional needs must be seen as interconnected and mutually re-enforcing.

(NWAC, 2010, p. 32)

The primary message of the NWAC has been relayed throughout the report—the status quo must be challenged. The organization recognizes the desperate need for decolonization; this includes

a social climate where Indigenous peoples are able to fulfill their basic needs in a consistent manner.

No amount of targeted crime prevention or cultural revitalization is sufficient for breaking the ongoing cycle of poverty, addiction, violence, and dysfunction in Canada or in Indigenous communities. The call to readers is one that Indigenous peoples have been decrying for decades—social and gender inequality, racism, sexism and the reverberating effects of colonialism require a comprehensive, holistic solution. Without social and gender equality, the cycles that perpetuate violence against women and girls will continue to systematically recreate the conditions of our current social climate, which upholds racialized sexual violence as a ‘norm’. Until Aboriginal women and girls are prioritized on the social agenda, they will continue to be left in a vulnerable state where they become easy targets for perpetrators of violence.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Blind Spots in Their Research

Both the NWAC and the RCMP represent large portions of the Canadian social climate—one advocates for Indigenous women and girls in Canada and the other enforces Canadian law in federal jurisdictions across the country. What this analysis has demonstrated is that each report is lacking in accurate (re)presentations of Indigenous women and MMIWG, and both organizations have a tendency to ‘blame the other’. Conversely, they both fail to assume any kind of responsibility for addressing the outstanding issues within their own organizations; they both have blind spots in their assessment of MMIWG. NWAC whitewashes racialized sexual violence against women and evades the personal responsibility of Indigenous perpetrators of violence against women. They avoid difficult conversations about family and community violence, addiction and its impact on safety, and they do not emphasize the targeting of Indigenous women for violence, but rather depend on a discourse of vulnerability to convince readers that Aboriginal women and girls are simply victims of a violent system. On the other hand, the RCMP is subtle in their analysis of what the primary issue is; they create an image of MMIWG as unemployed, drug addicted prostitutes which reinforces the notion that Indigenous women and girls are disposable. Furthermore, the RCMP misses the mark by failing to acknowledge some of their own systemic biases and they avoid addressing discrimination within their agency. Essentially, both of these organizations are engaged in contesting each other’s position in their own texts.

The RCMP report is cognizant of the previous data collection, noting that the *National Operational Overview* is intent on adding to the research already completed by NWAC (2010) and Mary Anne Pearce (2013). What is significant is that this 2014 RCMP report makes no mention of the Oppal report, *Forsaken*, nor does it allude to the Human Rights Watch report

Those Who Take Us Away. Interestingly enough, these reports were published in the two years prior to the release of the *National Operational Overview*. One cannot help but wonder if these hyper-critical reports addressing missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls were deliberately left out of the RCMP analysis because they specifically address police dysfunction and alleged abuse of Indigenous women and girls by police officers. One can sense the tension between the State administered RCMP and the NWAC in both of their reporting.

Strengths & Weaknesses

The organizations, while blind to their own responsibilities, did have specific strengths in their reporting. In comparing the available data from both reports, the NWAC proved to have unreliable data from which they drew very specific and large claims. For example, their analysis that determined more than half of their cases remain unresolved by police was a claim made with very little available data. Further, the organization does not possess the insider information that is required to make claims like this. Given that they are working with publically available data from websites and newspaper articles, it would be difficult to follow up with charges being laid in cases that they have deemed as unresolved since most deaths that are reported on in the news are not followed up in the news. The RCMP report has much more reliable data in their report, aside from their deliberate attempts to distort their data to make themselves look better than they are. Leaving the women out of their database who have not had culpability assigned in their homicide case works in their favour tremendously when calculating their clearance or solve rate for the deaths of Indigenous women and girls; having a high solve or clearance rate makes the RCMP appear as though there are no biases in how they work cases of MMIWG and non-Aboriginal women who have disappeared or gone missing. It is as though the RCMP were

silently combating the recent reports that suggest there is racism and sexism deep within the culture of the federal police.

However, the RCMP reproduces stereotypical (re)presentations of Aboriginal women in a subtle manner. This is where the NWAC did succeed—the organization used discourses of family positions to effectively rehumanize Indigenous women and girls to the reader. By claiming the MMIWG as relatives to family members and by defining their personhood through nouns that evoke humanity and a universal human experience, the organization did accomplish what I believe to be one of their primary objectives that they did not outline. However, by avoiding the difficult discussions, they over romanticize the image of Aboriginal women and girls. The RCMP, although perhaps not intentional in their pursuit, reproduces violence against Aboriginal women and girls conjuring up images of lonely street prostitutes being murdered. Both of these images of Indigenous women are not accurate (re)presentations.

Language is a Choice

Language plays a vital role in shaping how people view a social issue. What is perhaps more relevant is the manner in which it moulds perceptions about people based upon the language that is used to describe them; (re)presentation of Indigenous women in Canada is intricately intertwined with the use of the colonizers language and how authors employ that language in their texts. As critical discourse analysts insist—language is never neutral, although it is often assumed to be. The literature review provided in this project demonstrates a plethora of platforms where discourses undermine the humanity of Indigenous women's lives and contribute to a culture that perpetuates the racist, sexist rhetoric that Indigenous women's bodies are disposable. As this project has demonstrated, certain discourses can be applied that either

reinforce this notion of disposability, or others that can be applied in an attempt to shatter popular rhetoric that continues to dehumanize Aboriginal women and girls.

What is perhaps most disconcerting is the fact that dehumanizing language is ingrained in police discourse. Police and RCMP are trained to view people as victims, perpetrators, criminals and citizens—these are opposing dichotomies that simplify their task of law enforcement, yet the personhood of those persons they categorically label gets lost in their application of language. The Native Women’s Association of Canada on the other hand, is fully aware of the stigmatizing language that Indigenous women contend with on a daily basis, and that ultimately harms public perception of them as a socially marginalized group. Consequently, one observes how the NWAC utilizes language to effectively rehumanize Indigenous women and girls, particularly by using their given names, and by utilizing nouns such as sister, daughter, mother and friend to highlight their humanity to the reader. The sterile, anatomical reference to biological sex reduces Indigenous women to the sum of their female body parts, whereas proper names and nouns ascribe human characteristics to the women who are victims of violence.

Limited Solutions

Both reports are limited in the scope of their approach to solutions. While the RCMP acknowledges the need for modifying their data collection methods, they fail to recognize the need for an internal review of racist and sexist practices, as well as the culture of its police force. There is little to no recognition of the issues brought forward by other researchers regarding the biases that Indigenous peoples face in navigating the justice system, and the severely broken relationship between law enforcement and the Aboriginal community. Furthermore, the RCMP fail to recognize the targeting of Indigenous women for racialized sexual violence; their next

steps stop short of addressing the failure of police to respond to the needs of Indigenous women and girls, as well as the families of missing and murdered women. Additionally, the NWAC acknowledges the overarching theme of social inequality for Indigenous peoples, but they rely on cultural reclamation as a sort of ‘silver bullet’ solution to much of violence against women and girls. Both organizations oversimplify the solutions to ending violence against women and girls, while simultaneously overlooking their own role in the process of overhauling the dysfunctional systems that perpetuate racism and sexism against Indigenous women and girls. In a complex, multifaceted and interconnected world, people want simple solutions to complicated issues—real solutions to these insidious issues are apt to be filled with complexities and nuances. However, this should not deter us from confronting harsh realities—every human life that is lost or taken is important and deserves to be counted as such. Oversimplifying these issues is an injustice to those women and girls who have lost their lives to violence.

While increasing public awareness is fundamentally an altruistic goal of the RCMP, it does nothing to address the internal discrimination that resides within the system of the police force itself. How can an agency that is steeped in colonial tradition of ‘policing the Natives’(Nettelbeck & Smandych, 2010) imagine themselves advocates for creating awareness until they first aim to resolve the discrimination within their own ranks? The report does not identify the need to reform their system which has proven to be detrimental to the protection of Indigenous women and girls. The federal police missed an opportunity to commit to educating their employees about the history and legacy of colonialism and Indian Residential Schools, and its long-lasting, cyclical and contemporary issues that officers encounter daily in their professions. The RCMP had an opportunity to take some of the onus onto themselves, reconcile their reputation for racist, sexist police practices, and commit to an internal review of processes,

as well as ensuring that they were addressing some of their identified systemic biases that others have illustrated in their work (HRW, 2013; NWAC, 2014; Oppal, 2012; Pearce, 2013). Moreover, there is no discussion regarding how to address the women who—in their own perspective—present the highest risk for experiencing violence, namely those who are unemployed, suffer from addictions, and are involved in the survival street sex trade; the RCMP is oddly silent on how to deal with those women who have been dubbed the most vulnerable to becoming the next MMIWG. Furthermore, one must seriously consider the image the police have conjured up of this poor, addicted prostitute—is this really the women who are most vulnerable to experiencing violence? Certainly survival sex work is fraught with danger but are sex workers the only Aboriginal women being targeted for violence?

Impact of Reports

Aside from the direct exclusion of Indigenous women's perspectives from the development of policies that directly affect their quality of life, like most global governments, the Canadian state chooses which reports they will use to drive their decision-making. Moreover, governments who wield power to drive decision-making through policy development can choose to make decisions based on their ideological perspectives alone. Structural violence is underscored when a report like the one produced by the RCMP in 2014 is given unspoken legitimacy over NWAC's community based research approach. The two organizations' approaches to the topic are in opposition: one unintentionally dehumanizes Indigenous women and the other over-romanticizes them in their (re)presentations. Both the RCMP report and the NWAC report fail to offer a truly honest picture of missing and murdered Indigenous women that both respects their personhood and engages in difficult discussions about complex, multifaceted issues at play in their lives.

Future Research

This research opens the door for many future research projects. One area in which there is a paucity of information is family and community violence in Indigenous communities. Many Indigenous people recognize the violence that exists within our own communities, yet there seems to be a fear of discussing it. Often, we would rather focus on the broken system and legacy of colonialism as opposed to turning that mirror on ourselves and taking a good look at our own dysfunction. Missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are an important topic to research, however, what of the women and children who experience violence and are not murdered? Racialized sexual and physical violence harms the lives of those who live in its aftermath—it is vital that researchers pay attention to those who have survived violence and gain insight from the victims and those who perpetrate violence in their communities. Continuing to attribute this violence to the legacy of colonialism and Indian Residential Schools is insufficient. The truth is, as this project has demonstrated the issue is far too complex to ignore the personal experiences of victims and perpetrators. Additionally, the personal agency or responsibility of perpetrators must be assessed—Indigenous peoples are not simply victims of the colonial narrative. Further research focused on the personal responsibility of perpetrators of violence would offer further insight into this pervasive social issue.

There are multiple groups of Indigenous women who remain under-researched and under-reported in the research. As this research displays, most of the existing research on violence is focused primarily on First Nations women, to the detriment of Metis and Inuit women. Additionally, there is the matter of the children under the age of majority who disappear and are found murdered. Research that focuses on underrepresented women is not only necessary but respectful. There are also areas within Canada where Indigenous women

experience the highest rates of violence; areas such as Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and Saskatoon would be ideal to study in future research projects.

The National Inquiry

As the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls begins their visits to communities, it is vital that that this team is cognizant of popular discourses that (re)present Indigenous women in Canada. Furthermore, this Inquiry should examine those structures and institutions that comprise the justice system in Canada and reproduce violence against Indigenous women and girls. As Razack reminds us, often Inquiries serve to reproduce colonial narratives (2016b). Great care must be taken to examine the issues both within and outside of Indigenous communities that facilitate violence perpetrated against women and girls, while respecting the notions of personhood, agency, and simultaneously assigning responsibility in a respectful manner. In other words, the National Inquiry should ask—what does sexual violence have to do with colonialism? (*ibid*)

Regardless, Violence is Deplorable

It stands to safely assume that while the statistics differ at times and agree at others, Aboriginal women and girls remain at risk of losing their lives both at home, in their communities at the hands of their spouses and family members, and in the greater community by strangers and acquaintances. As the Human Rights Watch report reminds readers, perhaps this can be attributed to an inherently violent system that remains apathetic about violence committed against women and girls:

Police apathy in cases involving violence against women and girls—or violence against certain groups of women and girls—sends a message that such behaviour

is accepted and will carry no consequences for perpetrators. It may, in effect, encourage the targeting of certain groups for violence. (HRW, 2013, p. 80)

Whether at home in the city, on reserve, or in the streets of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Indigenous women and girls remain easy targets for persons wanting to abuse them physically and sexually. Systems of oppression that participate in the extreme marginalization of Aboriginal women are the primary factor that contributes to a set of social circumstances where women and girls can be targeted and killed without consequence.

Thus, when I read the *Forsaken* (2012) and *Awkward Silence* (2013) reports in particular, I related to the stories of the women on a profound level—I lived my life in a similar fashion as many Indigenous women have: hopeless, depressed, addicted, and hurting. Again, I found myself wondering, if I had died during the time of my life that I was using, would people think that I brought that fate upon myself? Would they blame me for engaging in activities that put my life in danger? Or would they ever know that I suffered from a deeply wounded childhood that affected my adult life and led me to my addictions? Now, as a scholar and successful Indigenous woman, how would that change someone's perspective of me if I were to experience racialized sexual violence? Would I still somehow be 'asking for it', or would my life count for something because I finally 'got it together'? What does it mean that at one time my life was not as valuable to society because of my struggle to survive without healthy coping mechanisms? Does my new social status afford me the dignity and respect that perhaps my old life did not? Because in both aspects of my life, I am a broken, hurting human being, just trying to make it in the world—the only difference is that I have more tools in my toolbox today than I used to. Is it a crime to live one's life the best way we know how in order to survive? My final analysis is

simply this—it could have been me. And it still can be me. As it stands, today people may still have to fight for society to acknowledge my humanity if it were me.

Bibliography

- Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, (2010). Need for 'action' behind funding cut to Sisters in Spirit: Cabinet minister's letter. Retrieved from <http://aptn.ca/news/2010/12/01/need-for-action-behind-funding-cut-to-sisters-in-spirit-cabinet-ministers-letter-2/>
- Acker, S. (2001). In/out/side: Positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research. *Resources for Feminist Research*, 28(3), 153-172.
- Acoose, J. (Misko-Kisikawihkwe). (1995). Iskwewak. *Kah'Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak: Neither Indian princesses nor easy squaws*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- Adelson, N. (2005). The embodiment of inequity: Health disparities in Aboriginal Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 96, S45-S61.
- Allen, N.H. (1980). *Homicide: Perspectives on prevention*. New York, NY: Human Sciences Press.
- Amnesty International. (2004). *Stolen Sisters: A human rights response to discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in Canada*.
- Amnesty International. (2009). *No more stolen sisters: The need for a comprehensive response to discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada*.
- Anderson, K. (2001). *Storied communities: Narratives of contact and arrival in constituting political community*. In H. Lessard, R. Johnson, J. Webber (Eds.), *Native women, the body, land, and narratives of contact and arrival* (pp. 167-188). Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press.
- Anderson, K. (2013). *Gender and women's studies in Canada: Critical terrain*. In M.H. Hobbs, Rice, C. (Eds.), *The construction of a negative identity* (pp. 269-279). Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- Armstrong, G.S. & Griffin, M.L. (2007). The effect of local life circumstances on victimization of drug-involved women. *Justice Quarterly* 24(1), 80-105.
- Atleo, E.R. (2004). *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Bailey, J. (2007). English marital violence in litigation, literature and the press. *Journal of Women's History* 19(4), 144-153.
- Barerra, J. (2015, 03 25). Valcourt used unreleased RCMP data to claim Aboriginal men responsible for majority of murders of Aboriginal women: Chiefs. *Aboriginal Peoples Television Network*. Retrieved from <http://aptnnews.ca/2015/03/25/chiefs-say-valcourt-used-unreleased-rcmp-data-claim-indigenous-men-responsible-majority-indigenous-women-murders/>

- Bloor, M. & Bloor, T. (2007). *The practice of Critical Discourse Analysis: An introduction*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Bradford, T. & Horton, C. (2016). Introduction: The mixed blessings of encounter. In Bradford & Horton (Eds.). *Mixed blessings: Indigenous encounters with Christianity in Canada* (pp. 1-20). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Braun, V. & Clark, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: Sage Publishing.
- Brodribb, S. (1984). The traditional roles of Native women in Canada and the impact of Colonization. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 4(1), 85-103.
- Cameron, S. (2010). *On the farm: Robert William Pickton and the tragic story of Vancouver's missing women*. Toronto, ON: Vintage Canada.
- Canada., Erasmus, G., & Dussault, R. (1996). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa: The Commission
- Canada's First Peoples. (2007). *Family, social structure, leadership*. Retrieved from http://firstpeoplesofcanada.com/fp_groups/fp_nwc6.html
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (2014, 08 22). Harper rebuffs renewed calls for murdered, missing women inquiry. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/harper-rebuffs-renewed-calls-for-murdered-missing-women-inquiry-1.2742845>
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (2016 01 12). MMIW consultation was encouraging, say Yukon families. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/mmiw-preinquiry-whitehorse-families-encouraged-1.3399424>
- Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. (2017, 06 03). Winnipeg police locate remains of homicide victim Christine Wood. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/christine-wood-homicide-1.4144931>
- Canada's universal periodic review and beyond—upholding Canada's international reputation as a global leader in the field of Human Rights*. (2010). Canada: Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.
- Carter, S. (1997). *Capturing women: The manipulation of cultural imagery in Canada's prairie West*. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Carter, S. (2012). Categories and terrains of exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the early settlement era in Western Canada. In Burnett & Read (Eds.). *Aboriginal history: A reader*. (pp. 307-317). Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press.

- Carty, L. (1999). The discourse of Empire and the social construction of gender. In Dua & Robertson (Eds.). *Scratching the surface: Canadian anti-racist feminist thought*. (pp. 35-48). Toronto: Women's Press.
- Castellano, M.B. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 1(1), 98-114.
- Dean, A. (2016). Moving beyond 'Stock Narratives' of murdered or missing Indigenous women: Reading the poetry and life writing of Sarah de Vries. In Reder, D. & Morra L. (Eds.). *Learn, teach, challenge: Approaching Indigenous literatures*. (pp. 354-360). Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Debuk. (2015, May 16). Call me woman. *Language: A feminist guide*. [web log comment]. Retrieved from <https://debuk.wordpress.com/2015/05/16/call-me-woman/>
- de Finney, S. (2015). Playing Indian and other settler stories: Disrupting Western narratives of Indigenous girlhood. *Continuum*, 29(2), 169-181.
- DeKeseredy, W.S. & Schwartz, M.D. (1998). Measuring the extent of woman abuse in intimate Heterosexual relationships: A critique of the Conflict Tactics Scales. *Applied Research Forum*. Retrieved from <http://stoprelationshipabuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/A-Critique-of-the-Conflict-Tactics-Scales.pdf>.
- Des Rosiers, N. (2016). Public Inquiries and Law Reform Institutions: "Truth Finding" and "Truth Producing", *Canadian Journal of Women and Law*, 28(2), 374-392.
- Dieter, C. & Rude, D. (2005). *Human security and Aboriginal women in Canada*. (No.: SW21-133/2005E-PDF). Canada: Status of Women Canada.
- Dodsworth, J. (2015). *Pathways into sexual exploitation and sex work: The experience of victimhood and agency*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Dodsworth, J. (2012). Pathways through sex work: Childhood experiences and adult identities. *The British Journal of Social Work* 42(3), 519-536.
- Durisin, E. M. (2010). Perspectives on rape in the Canadian Sex Industry: Navigating the terrains between sex work as labour and sex work as violence paradigms. *Canadian Woman Studies* 28(1), 128-135.
- Dwyer, S. & Buckle, J. (2009). The space between: On being an Insider-Outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
- Fairclough, N. (2009). Language, reality and power. In J. Culpeper et al. (Eds.). *English Language: Description, variation and context*. (pp. 512-522). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Female. (2017). In *English Oxford Dictionaries Online*. Retrieved from <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/female>
- Ferris, S. (2008). Working from the violent centre: Survival sex work and urban Aboriginality in Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*. *English Studies in Canada*, 34(4), 123-145.
- Fioramonti, L. (2014). *How numbers rule the world: The use and abuse of statistics in global politics*. London: Zed Books.
- Fiske, J. (1995). Political status of native Indian women: Contradictory implications of Canadian state policy. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 19(2), 1-30.
- Galloway, G. (2015, 04 09). 70 per cent of murdered Aboriginal women killed by Indigenous men: RCMP. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/70-per-cent-of-murdered-aboriginal-women-killed-by-indigenous-men-rcmp-confirms/article23868927/>
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6, 167-191.
- Galtung, J. (1990). Cultural violence. *Journal of Peace Research*, 27(3), 291-305.
- Gartner, R. (2010). Homicide in Canada. In J.I. Ross (Ed.), *Violence in Canada: Sociopolitical perspectives 2nd Edition* (pp. 190-219). London: Transaction Publishers.
- Gilchrist, K. (2014). "Newsworthy" victims? *Feminist Media Studies*, 10(4), 373-390.
- Goatcher-Bergmann, E. (2011). Recent Neo-liberal policy at the federal and provincial levels: Impacts on First Nations women in British Columbia. Retrieved from <http://web.uvic.ca/~onpol/fall2011/One-Elyse.pdf>
- Green, R. (1975). The Pocahontas perplex: The image of Indian women in American culture. *The Massachusetts Review*, 16(4), 698-714.
- Green, J. (2007). Balancing strategies: Aboriginal women and constitutional rights in Canada. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for indigenous feminism* (pp. 140-157). Winnipeg, MB, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- Haskell, L. & Randall, M. (2009). Disrupted attachments: A social context complex trauma framework and the lives of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. *Journal of Aboriginal Health* 5(3), 48-99.
- Hellinger, M. (1989). Revising the patriarchal paradigm: Language change and feminist language politics. In R. Wodak (Ed). *Language, power and ideology: Studies in political discourse* (pp. 273-289). Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

- Ho, K. (2007). Structural violence as a human rights violation. *Essex Human Rights Review*, 4(2), 1-17.
- Human Rights Watch. (2013). *Those who take us away: Abusive policing and failures in protection of Indigenous women and girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada*. USA: Human Rights Watch.
- Indians.org. (2017). *Pow Wow*. Retrieved from <http://indians.org/articles/powwow.html>
- Indian Country Today. (2011 01 28). *Origin of women's jingle dress dancing*. Retrieved from <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/origins-of-womens-jingle-dress-dancing/>
- Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. (2016). *Indigenous peoples and communities*. Retrieved from <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1304467449155>
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (2014). *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in British Columbia, Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
- Jacobs, B. & Williams, A. (2015). Legacy of Residential Schools: Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women. In *Speaking My Truth Volume 1: From Truth to Reconciliation*. (pp. 121-139). Canada: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.
- Jiwani, Y. (2008). Mediations of domination: Gendered violence within and across borders. In K. Sarikakis & L.R. Shade (Eds.), *Feminist interventions in international communication: Minding the gap*. (pp. 129-145). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.
- Johnson, H., & Dawson, M. (2011). *Violence against women in Canada: Research and policy perspectives*. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Kubik, W., Bourassa, C., & Hampton, M. (2009). Stolen sisters, second class citizens, poor health: The legacy of colonization in Canada. *Humanity and Society*, 33, 18-34.
- Kubik, W. & Bourassa, C. (2016). Stolen sisters: The politics, policies, and travesty of missing and murdered women in Canada. In Lavell-Havard, M. & Brandt, J. (Eds.), *Forever loved: Exposing the hidden crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada* (pp. 17-33). Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2008). Globalization as racialized, sexualized violence. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 10(2), 216-233.
- LaRocque, E. (1989). Racism/sexism and its effects on native women. *Public Concerns on Human Rights*, Winnipeg, MB.

- LaRocque, E. D. (2002). Violence in Aboriginal communities. In McKenna, K. M. J. & Larkin, J. (Eds.), *Violence against women: New Canadian perspectives* (pp. 147-162). Toronto, ON: Inanna Publications and Education Inc.
- LaRocque, E. (2007). Métis and feminist: Ethical reflections on feminism, human rights and decolonization. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 53-70). Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- Lawrence, B. (2008). Regulating native identity by gender. In M. A. Wallis, & S. Kwok (Eds.), *Daily struggles: The deepening racialization and feminization of poverty in Canada* (pp. 59-78). Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholars' Press Inc.
- Lavell-Harvard, M. & Brandt, J. (2016). Introduction: Forever loved. In M. Lavell-Harvard, & J. Brandt (Eds.), *Forever loved: Exposing the hidden crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada*. Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.
- Lazar, M. M. (2005). Feminist CDA as political perspective & praxis. In M. M. Lazar (Ed.), *Feminist critical discourse analysis: Gender, power and ideology in discourse* (pp. 1-30). New York: Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.
- Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women (LSC). (2015). *Analyzing The 2014 Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) report, Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Review*. British Columbia: Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence Against Indigenous Women.
- Locke, T. (2004). *Critical discourse analysis*. London: Continuum Research Methods.
- Machin, D. & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis: A multimodal introduction*. London: Sage Publications.
- Marquis, G. (1991). Canadian police chiefs and law reform: The historical perspective. *Canadian Journal of Criminology*, 33(385), 385-406.
- McDermott, R. & Hatemi, P.K. (2011) Distinguishing sex and gender. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 44 (1), 89–92.
- Mieder, W. (1993). “The only good Indian is a dead Indian”: History and meaning of a proverbial stereotype. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 106(419), 38-60.
- Montgomery, M. (2017, 07 11). Long troubled Indigenous inquiry, now more controversy. *Radio Canada International*. Retrieved from <http://www.rcinet.ca/en/2017/07/11/long-troubled-indigenous-inquiry-now-more-controversy/>
- Muehlenhard, C.L. & Peterson, Z.D. (2011). Distinguishing between sex and gender: History, current conceptualizations, and implications. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 64 (11), 791-803.

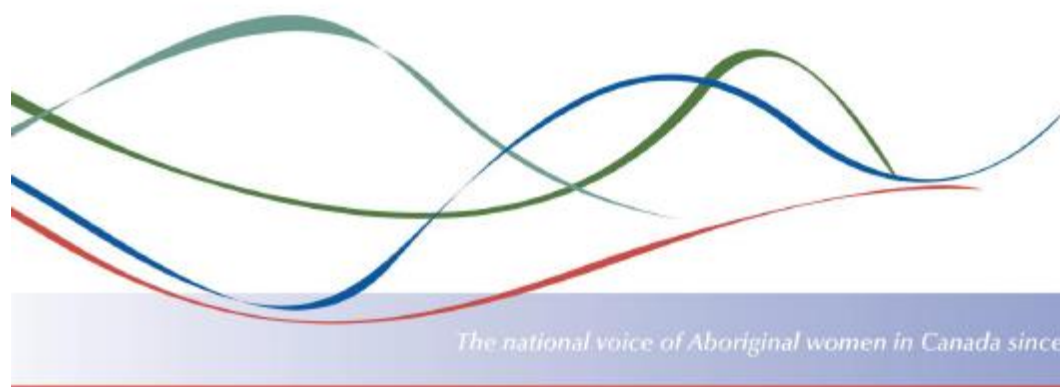
- Nahanee, T. (1990). *Indian women, sexual equality and the Charter*. Paper presented at the Canadian Women and the State Conference at the University of Ottawa Law School, November 1990.
- Native Dance. (2007). *Women's jingle dress dance*. Retrieved from http://www.native-dance.ca/index.php/Renewal/The_Powwow?amp
- Native Languages of the Americas. (2014). *Native American clothing and regalia*. Retrieved from <http://www.native-languages.org/clothing.htm>
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (2004). *Background document on Aboriginal women and housing: For the Canada-Aboriginal Peoples roundtable sectoral follow-up session on housing*. Canada: Native Women's Association of Canada.
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (2009). *Voices of our sisters in spirit: A report to Families and communities, 2nd Edition*. Canada: Native Women's Association of Canada.
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (2010). *What their stories tell us: Research findings from the sisters in spirit initiative*. Canada: Native Women's Association of Canada.
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (2011). *Aboriginal lateral violence*. Retrieved from <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/2011-Aboriginal-Lateral-Violence.pdf>
- Native Women's Association of Canada. (2016). *2016 National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: Outcomes and Priorities for Action to Prevent and Address Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls*. Canada: Native Women's Association of Canada.
- Nettelback, A. & Smandych, R. (2010). Policing Indigenous peoples on two Colonial Frontiers: Australia's Mounted Police and Canada's North-West Mounted Police. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 43 (2), 356-375.
- Newton-Small, J. (2016, 04 19). Why we need to reclaim the word 'female'. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4300170/female-word/>
- Ng, R. (1991). Sexism, racism, and Canadian nationalism. In Vorst et. al (Eds.). *Race, class and gender: Bonds and barriers*. (pp. 12-26). Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Olsen-Harper, A. (2006). Is Canada peaceful and safe for Aboriginal women? *Canadian Woman Studies*, 25(1), 33-38.
- Olsen-Harper, A. (2016). Sisters in spirit. In Lavell-Havard, M. & Brandt, J. (Eds.), *Forever loved: Exposing the hidden crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada* (pp. 79-110). Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

- Oppal, W. T. (2012). *Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry*. Victoria, BC: Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.
- Paling, E. (2015, 12 10). RCMP Commissioner admits racist officers are a problem on the Force. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/12/10/rcmp-racist-bob-paulson_n_8777126.html
- Palmater, P. (2016). Shining a light on the Dark Places: Addressing police racism and sexualized violence against Indigenous women and girls in the National Inquiry. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(2), 253-284.
- Parent, R.B. & Verdun-Jones, S. (1998). Victim-precipitated homicide: Police use of deadly force in British Columbia. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 21(3), 432-448.
- Peach, I. & Ladner, K. (2010). Missing out and missing: Connecting the economic and political marginalization of women to the phenomenon of disappearance. In Anderson, B, Kubik, W. & Hampton, M. (Eds.), *Torn from our midst: Voices of grief, healing and action from the Missing Indigenous Women conference, 2008* (pp. 86-103). Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Centre.
- Pearce, M. (2013). *An awkward silence: Missing and murdered vulnerable women and the Canadian justice system* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/thesescanada/vol2/OOU/TC-OOU-26299.pdf>.
- Pedersen, K., Lee, D. & Moore, H. (2016, 06 29). Indigenous leaders demand action on ‘no foul play’ MMIW cases: ‘The lives of Indigenous women and girls are important,’ says AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde. *CBC News: Indigenous*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/mmiw-unresolved-chiefs-reaction-1.3657180>
- Pierce, A. (2015). “Sexual Savages:” Christian stereotypes and violence against North America’s Native women. In A.J. Johnson (Ed), *Religion and men’s violence against women* (pp. 63-98). New York: Springer.
- Pyne, S. (2005). Profile of Helen Betty Osborne. In D.R. Newhouse, C.J. Voyageur, & D. Beavon, (Eds.), *Hidden in plain sight: Contributions of Aboriginal peoples to Canadian identity and culture* (pp. 246-251). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Rapley, T. (2007). Doing conversation, discourse and document analysis. In U. Flick (Ed.), *The Sage Qualitative Research Kit* (series). London: Sage Publications LTD.
- Razack, S. H. (2002). Gendered racial violence and spatialized justice: The murder of Pamela George. In S. H. Razack (Ed.), *Race, space, and the law: Unmapping a white settler society* (pp. 121-158). Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.

- Razack, S.H. (2016a). Gendering disposability. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 28(2), 285-307.
- Razack, S.H. (2016b). Sexualized violence and colonialism: Reflections on the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 28(2), i-iv.
- Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba. (1999). Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Government. Retrieved from <http://www.ajic.mb.ca/volumell/chapter10.html>
- Rheault, D. (2011). Solving the “Indian problem”: Assimilation laws, practices & Indian Residential Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.omfrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/specialedition8.pdf>
- Rifkin, M. (2011). *When did Indians become straight?: Kinship, the history of sexuality, and native sovereignty*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rider, E. A. (2005). *Our voices: Psychology of women* (2nd ed.) Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons.
- Roach, K. (2015). *Essentials of Canadian law: Criminal law* (6th ed.). Toronto: Irwin Law Inc.
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2014). *Missing and murdered Aboriginal women: A national operational overview*. (No.: PS64-115/2014E-PDF). Canada: Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2015). *Missing and murdered Aboriginal women: 2015 update to the national operational overview*. Retrieved from <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/wam/media/455/original/c3561a284cfbb9c244bef57750941439.pdf>
- Sallot, J. (2007, 4 16). Allegations of misconduct pile up against RCMP. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/allegations-of-misconduct-pile-up-against-rcmp/article683226/?page=all>
- Sayer, A. (1997). Essentialism, social constructionism, and beyond. *The Sociological Review* 45(3), 453-587.
- Sexual exploitation. (2016). In *NWG Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.nwgnetwork.org/>
- Sex Trade. (2017). In *English Oxford Dictionaries Online*. Retrieved from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/sex_trade
- Simeone, T. (2015). Indigenous Peoples: Terminology and identity. Retrieved from <https://hillnotes.ca/2015/12/14/indigenous-peoples-terminology-and-identity/>
- Smith, A. (2005). *Conquest: Sexual violence and American Indian genocide*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

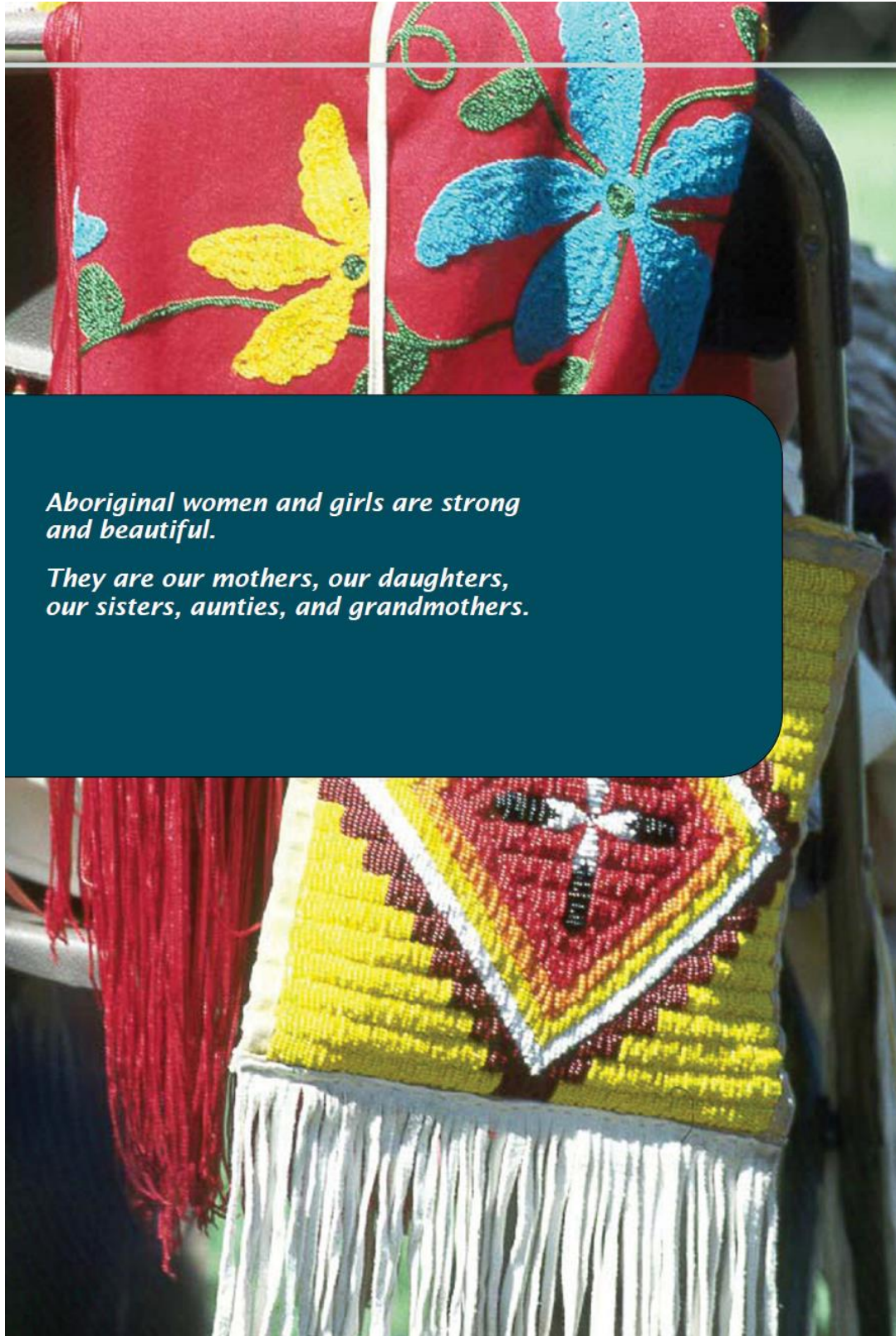
- Statistics Canada. (2017, 02 27). *The General Social Survey: An overview*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89f0115x/89f0115x2013001-eng.htm>
- St. Denis, V. (2007). Feminism is for everybody: Aboriginal women, feminism and diversity. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 33-51). Winnipeg, MB, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.
- Stevenson, W. (1999). Colonialism and First Nations women in Canada. In M. J. Cannon & L. Sunseri (Eds.), *Racism, colonialism, and Indigeneity in Canada* (pp. 44-54). Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Tasker, J.P. (2016, 02 16). Confusion reigns over number of missing, murdered indigenous women: RCMP said 1,017 indigenous women were killed between 1980 and 2012, activists say it's closer to 4,000. *CBC News: Politics*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mmiw-4000-hajdu-1.3450237>
- Taylor, G. (2016). *The Chief Public Health Officer's report on the state of Public Health in Canada: A focus on family violence in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada.
- Timmer, D.A. & Norman, W.H. (1984). The ideology of victim precipitation. *Criminal Justice Review* 63(9), 63-68.
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Canada's residential schools: The Legacy*. In The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Volume 5.
- Tuli, F. (2010). The basis of distinction between qualitative and quantitative research in social science: Reflection on ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences*, 6(1), 97-108.
- Vennen, M.V. (2008). Standing up for a just justice system. *Catalyst*, 31(1), 3.
- Victor, W. (2007). *Indigenous justice: Clearing space and place for Indigenous epistemologies*. Canada: National Centre for First Nations Governance.
- Voices-Voix, (n.d.). Sisters in spirit: What happened? Retrieved from <http://voices-voix.ca/en/facts/profile/sisters-spirit>
- Walter, E. (2015). *Stolen Sisters: The story of two missing girls, their families and how Canada has failed Indigenous women*. Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd
- Weaver, H. N. (2009). The colonial context of violence: Reflections on violence in the lives of Native American women. *The Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 24 (9), 1552-1563.

- Weist, K. (1983). Beasts of burden and menial slaves: Nineteenth century observations of Northern Plains Indian women. In P. Albers & B. Medicine (Eds.), *The hidden half: Studies of the Plains Indian women* (pp. 29-52). Lanham, MD: University press of America Inc.
- Welch, M.A. (2014, 01 24). New database lists 824 murdered, missing Native women in Canada. *Winnipeg Free Press*. Retrieved from <https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/grim-number-jumps-in-study-241776001.html>
- Widom, C.S. (1989). The cycle of violence. *Science*, 244(4901), 160-171.
- Wingard, B. (2010). A conversation with lateral violence. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, 2010(1), 13-17.
- Wooffitt, R. (2005). *Conversation analysis and discourse analysis: A comparative and critical introduction*. London: Sage Publications.



What Their Stories Tell Us

Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative



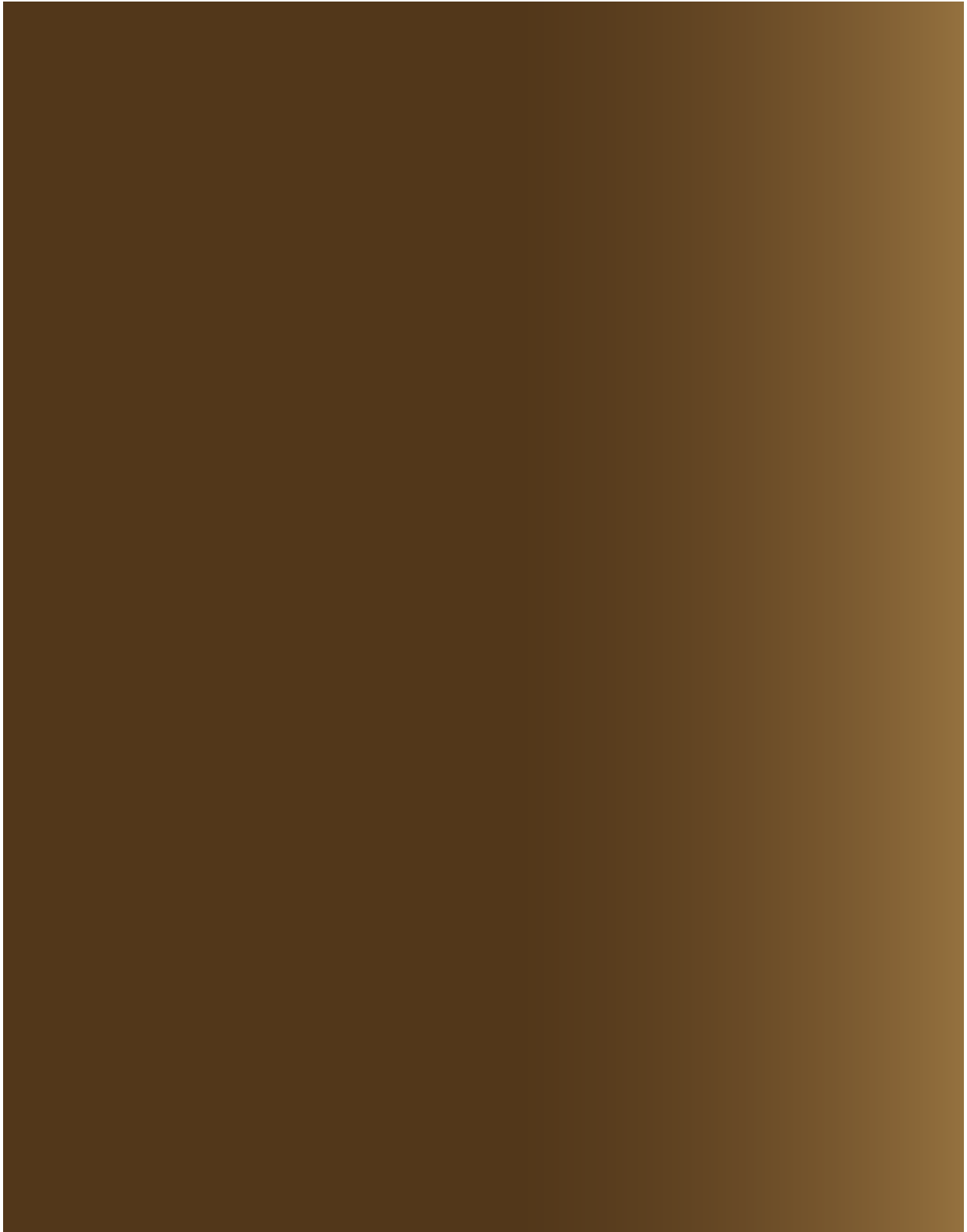


Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A NATIONAL OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW



Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada



Timeline of Reports: MMIWG

