

Social Denial:  
An Analysis of Missing and Murdered  
Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada

Rebecca Bychutsky

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
University of Ottawa  
for the Master's Degree in Sociology

© Rebecca Bychutsky, Ottawa, Canada, 2017

## Dedication

To those Indigenous women and girls who are missing and forever lost. And to those who work tirelessly to find them.

## Acknowledgements

With sincere gratitude, I acknowledge the support and assistance of Willow Scobie and Karine Vanthuyne. Their willingness to participate in the construction of this thesis is deeply appreciated. Also, I am forever grateful for the contributions made by José López. His time, thoughts, and guidance throughout this process have been invaluable.

It is a privilege to have received the unyielding support of my parents and siblings. My parents, Rachael and Vadim, taught me to critically reflect and pursue justice. They inspire me in all the work I do – to them I owe every gratitude.

Most notably, I would not have completed this work if it was not for the constant encouragement I received from Shawn Betel. His earnest passion for education and critical discussion challenges me to create work I am proud of. I thank him for keeping me happy, for keeping me sane, and for accompanying me on walks with the dog.

## *Abstract*

Key words: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), Social Denial, Indigenous women, News Media

Understood sociologically, denial is best conceptualized as a social practice. As a phenomenon, social denial refers to patterned behaviour where actors both know and do not-know about uncomfortable truths (Cohen, 2001). Put simply, social denial is a socially reproduced blindness in the face of traumatic events and processes. In opposition to social denial is a different social practice, bearing witness. Bearing witness is engaged when society's actors give voice to those who would otherwise be silent. Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Stanley Cohen's work *States of Denial* and Fujiko Kurasawa's work *Global Justice*, this thesis aims to critically reflect and explore the registers and mechanisms of both social denial and bearing witness. The exploration of social denial is sociologically relevant, and generally important, as a means for understanding the role it plays in society, and to further understanding what social denial is and how it works. The better actors understand an issue the more capable they are of addressing it. This thesis conducts a media frame analysis of selected published articles from the *National Post* and the *Globe and Mail* that speak to the issue of MMIWG. This analysis reveals social denial through the frames "culpable victim", "poster child", and "the extra"; and bearing witness through the frame of the "honourable victim". The analysis and research of this thesis reveal how social denial covers up the relevance of colonialism with respect to MMIWG. Furthermore, it suggests that social denial acts to both camouflage the gritty details underlying MMIWG and erase the identities of MMIWG.

# Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
<i>Colonialism</i> .....	6
<i>Residential Schools and the TRC</i> .....	11
<i>Historic and Intergenerational Trauma as Connected to MMIWG</i> .....	16
<i>Colonialism, Land Dispossession, and Trauma</i> .....	22
<i>Indigenous Women and MMIWG</i> .....	24
<i>Historic Relationship of Indigenous People and the North American Media</i> .....	27
SOCIOLOGY OF DENIAL.....	29
<i>Denial: Definitions and Concepts</i> .....	29
<i>Denial: Theoretical Frameworks</i> .....	35
BEARING WITNESS.....	47
<i>Theoretical Framework</i> .....	47
CONCLUSION.....	51
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY.....	53
KEY CONCEPTS .....	53
<i>Suffering and the Media</i> .....	53
<i>Women as victims: Femicide</i> .....	57
<i>Stigma and stereotyping of Native women: The Squaw/The Princess</i> .....	58
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK .....	60
<i>Combining the Elements of the Theoretical Framework</i> .....	60
METHODOLOGY .....	63
<i>Media Frame Analysis</i> .....	63
<i>Shortcomings to research</i> .....	67
CHAPTER 3: FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF MMIWG.....	69
COMMUNITY RESPONSE.....	73
<i>Sisters in Spirit (SIS)</i> .....	73
<i>Symposium on Highway of Tears</i> .....	75
GOVERNMENT OF CANADA RESPONSE .....	77
<i>Forsaken</i> .....	77
<i>RCMP and Police: Reports, Projects, and Criticisms</i> .....	78
ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP .....	85
<i>Forever Loved</i> .....	85
NGO RESPONSE .....	86
<i>Amnesty International Stolen Sisters 2004 and No More Stolen Sisters 2009</i> .....	86
GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS MADE .....	87
FRAME ANALYSIS: BEARING WITNESS.....	90
<i>Community Response</i> .....	91
<i>Academic Response</i> .....	92
<i>NGO Response</i> .....	93
CHAPTER 4: FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS CONTINUED: MEDIA FRAME ANALYSIS OF SELECTED NEWS MEDIA SOURCES AND TINA FONTAINE.....	97

TINA FONTAINE.....	98
<i>Culpable Victim</i> .....	99
<i>The Poster Child</i> .....	105
<i>The Extra</i> .....	109
<i>Summary of Findings</i> .....	114
CONCLUSION.....	117
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS.....	119
WORK CITED:.....	127
APPENDIX A.....	139
APPENDIX B.....	141
APPENDIX C.....	145

## Introduction

This thesis is a contribution to research on the sociology of denial and its connection to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada (“MMIWG). The research and suggestions found within these pages do not propose a solution to a problem, or a single answer to any one question, but do explore the nature of social denial with respect to MMIWG. The overarching questions being asked are: what *is* social denial? And, *how* does it manifest within society? Colloquially phrased, the crux of this analysis asks how does social denial *work*? Social denial as a theory is clarified in chapter 1, but is explored more thoroughly in chapter 4 through a frame analysis of newsprint media portrayals of MMIWG. More specifically, this thesis establishes a thorough understanding of the registers and mechanisms of social denial so that one can propose and examine appropriate solutions to the problems inherent to social denial.

The sociology of denial is the study of the social mechanisms through which social phenomena are denied. Simply put, denial occurs when people convince themselves of a falsehood. On its face, denial can be seen as a range of social responses, some being subtle apathy or indifference towards suffering, while others are more overt, like denial of the Holocaust. In short, social denial is a type of willful blindness. Cohen (2001) identifies the manifestations of social denial as ‘literal denial’, ‘interpretive denial’, ‘implicatory denial’, ‘personal denial’, ‘official denial’, and ‘cultural denial’. Each of these categories and terms are explored explicitly in chapter 1 and are woven throughout the framework developed in chapter 2 and the application in chapter 4.

The analysis in this thesis reviews social denial in relation to MMIWG. The relationship between settlers and First Nations communities in Canada is grounded in historical and ongoing colonialism. The relationships between aboriginal women, aboriginal peoples, and settlers are

imbalanced by their colonial past and ongoing legacy. Historically, aboriginal women have been – and continue to be – among the most disadvantaged groups in Canada. The intersections of their race, gender, and cultural heritage place aboriginal women in a social location where they are susceptible to violence and exploitation. This is evident in the number of aboriginal women and girls who have been found murdered or have gone missing in Canada. As of August 2016, the Government of Canada has acknowledged 1,181 MMIWG across Canada (Government of Canada, October 2016).

Understanding social denial draws attention to an important component of the MMIWG phenomenon. Contemporary scholars working on social denial such as Irene Bruna Seu and Stanley Cohen establish the general applications of denial as a theory. This thesis uses those theories to study the portrayal of MMIWG in the news media.

The research surrounding the interaction between aboriginal peoples in Canada and the media has been incorporated into chapter 1. The research conducted in this thesis explores media frames surrounding MMIWG emerging from two news publications, the National Post and the Globe and Mail. This research draws on two types of data: publications coming from governmental departments, human rights campaigns and aboriginal communities, and the news story of one particular murdered aboriginal teenager; Tina Fontaine. The frame analyses conducted in chapters 3 and 4 reveal that news media does engage with ‘social denial’ and ‘bearing witness’. The frames identified from the publication samples show that the phenomenon of MMIWG is still being explored separately against the backdrop of the denial of its colonial roots.

This thesis is presented in four chapters: chapter 1 offers a literature review; chapter 2 develops the theoretical framework and identifies the methodological approach; chapter 3

presents and analyzes a variety of public documents dealing with MMIWG; and chapter 4 presents a media frame analysis of selected news sources on Tina Fontaine's murder.

The literature review in chapter 1 provides a general overview of aboriginal peoples in Canada and the broad context to the structure and workings of a sociology of denial. Chapter 1's literature review on aboriginal peoples in Canada begins with a statement of concepts followed by their application to the issue of MMIWG. These include: the role colonialism has played in the history of Canada's aboriginal peoples; the connections between colonialism, genocide, and gendered relations between aboriginal peoples and the Canadian government; a discussion and review of the residential school system in Canada and the subsequent truth and reconciliation commission (TRC) that followed; and a review of the scholarship detailing historic and intergenerational trauma. The application of these concepts is laid out in the sections connecting historic and intergenerational trauma with MMIWG and the review of historic relationships between aboriginal peoples and the North American media. The second part of the literature review focuses on scholarship concerned with sociology of denial. In chapter 1 the review of denial is broad, acting as a contextual backdrop for the framework and analyses to come in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Chapter 2 reviews the construction of the theoretical framework upon which chapters 3 and 4 rest. Two frameworks are used in this thesis: the framework of social denial (highlighting problems associated with social denial) and the framework of bearing witness (focusing on solutions to those problems). The framework of bearing witness is founded on Fuyuki Kurasawa's work *The Work of Global Justice* and his development of 'bearing witness' as a practice and tool for social justice. The practice of bearing witness supports the framework used in chapters 3 and 4 to construct media frames that negate denial. The chapter concludes with an

outline of the chosen methodology (i.e. media frame analysis), the steps to be taken in chapter 4's analysis of Tina Fontaine, and shortcomings of the research.

Chapter 3 reviews community-driven, government, NGO, and academic documents about MMIWG in Canada. This chapter serves three purposes, to show the publically available information on MMIWG, review and critique existing government reports concerning MMIWG, and review the role community and academic scholarship play in promotion of awareness and prevention of violence against aboriginal women and girls. Publications from groups such as Amnesty International (AI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) (Sisters in Spirit) are reviewed and analyzed through the framework of bearing witness. Also in this chapter, considerations and criticisms of the RCMP report on MMIWG and the government commissioned report "Forsaken" are reviewed to further explore their role in the public discourse surrounding MMIWG.

Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the sociology of denial as a social practice, and bearing witness as a tool of social justice used by news media. This chapter focuses on the story of Tina Fontaine, a murdered aboriginal teenager from Manitoba, and the manipulations of her narrative by news publications the National Post and the Globe and Mail. The analysis offered in chapter 4 uses the theoretical frameworks from chapter 2 to uncover media frames around Tina's story. In this chapter, the frames identified through Cohen's framework of denial are: "culpable victim", with sub-frames "the run-away", and "alcohol, drugs, and violence"; "the poster child"; and "the extra". Additionally, Kurasawa's framework of bearing witness is used to identify the frame "honourable victim" in response to that of "culpable victim".

This thesis concludes with a brief restatement of the major research findings, what this thesis represents to the study of sociology of denial, and what research questions are left

unanswered or are prompted by the research itself. The goal of this research is to explore the ways in which society denies uncomfortable truths which in this case is colonialism and its ties to MMIWG. As a whole, it is important to fight against the tendency to deny the existence of injustice. To fight injustice, the Honourable Rosalie Abella (2010) has pointed to 3 principles: “Indifference is injustice’s incubator” (p. 885); “It’s not just what you stand for, it’s what you stand up for” (p. 886); and “We must never forget how the world looks to those who are vulnerable” (p. 887). When reading through this thesis it is important to be mindful of these principles and the implications of justice on discourse surrounding the impacts of historical and ongoing colonialism.

# Chapter 1: Literature Review

## Literature Review

This research aims to contribute to work on aboriginal communities and their histories by drawing attention to the theoretical usefulness of a social denial framework. Therefore, in this chapter I review the literature on aboriginal communities in Canada and the sociological theory of social denial. In the former, the following areas are discussed: colonialism and its impact on the aboriginal community, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the residential school system, historic and intergenerational trauma, the situation of indigenous women in Canada, and a brief review of the media and its role at the intersection of the settler and aboriginal communities.

### Colonialism

Colonialism can be described as the occurrence of an imbalanced power relation where a people are taken over (or ‘colonized’) and exploited (King, 2014). Typically, colonization is orchestrated through acts of violence and physical dominance creating an uneven power structure reaching into different aspects of society such as “social, political, and physical power” (King, 2014; Logan, 2015). Swilto (2002) notes that this violence driven power structure leads to the inevitable blending of the indigenous peoples with the colonizers, either through conquest or other institutional mechanisms of government. Conceptually, colonialism can be understood as the product of the processes of absorption and distinction (Krebs, 2010); “a *distinguishing* process that functions as the limit of ... an *absorptive* process” (Krebs, 2010, p.65). In his doctoral thesis, Krebs (2010) argues that absorption/distinction creates colonialism, that they

are dual processes that function throughout colonial society; they are flows and forces that absorb and distinguish in producing colonial subjectivity, in marking out white and Aboriginal spaces, and in shaping institutional actions and responses. Absorptive flows and distinguishing forces are thus *productive* of colonialism (p.75).

For example, the Indian Act<sup>1</sup> ‘distinguishes’ between peoples and between land. It does this by separating aboriginal people from non-aboriginal people (and even further separating and classifying categories of aboriginal people) (Manzano-Munguia, 2011) and by distinguishing what land can be used for and by whom it can be used. Following the Indian Act, residential schools represented a further attempt to ‘absorb’ aboriginal culture (Krebs, 2010). These processes are an inextricable part of the working of colonialism.

The history of colonialism structures the current relationships and politics between settlers and various First Nations communities. The legislated attempts by the Canadian federal government to ‘integrate’ the indigenous peoples of Canada through programs of assimilation are viewed by some as an attempt at genocide. These programs and attempts have contributed to the image of the ‘savage Indian’, by pointing to indigenous communities as the others of immoral descent “the term indigenous peoples has come to represent a distinct form of counter-modernity” (Niezen, 2010, p.123). This ‘vernacularization’ of the word ‘indigenous’ being synonymous with relic approaches and thoughts serves to produce a sense of ‘Otherness’: us vs. them (Niezen, 2010).

This otherness is a tool commonly deployed in the subjugation and discrimination of peoples by those in power, in this case the colonizers. It is a contested point as to whether the term genocide can be applied to the colonial experience of indigenous peoples in Canada.

---

<sup>1</sup> For further reading, the Indian Act can be found in full (including previous versions) online via the Government of Canada, at <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/i-5/>

Raphael Lemkin wrote extensively on genocide and its implications within international law and mentions the targeted destruction of ‘high culture’ (i.e. art, literature) as a form of genocide (Niezen, 2010). The destruction of high culture is a generational attack with a lasting cultural ripple. Art can be an expression of culture and experience that affects the inherited cultural identity of those sharing in ethnic and cultural markers (i.e. race, religion). Furthermore, the destruction of high culture is not limited to existing works but extends to include the potential to create new works. Lemkin called this destruction a ‘vandalism’ of culture: the “destruction of a people’s capacity to produce [works of science and arts] in the future” (Niezen, 2010).

Lemkin’s explanation of genocide and the present cultural interpretation of genocide<sup>2</sup> tend to sit in conflict. Million (2013) suggests the root of this conflict lies in the conception of the term genocide stemming from the Holocaust. Before the Holocaust, there was no formal word for the mass murder of a people based on ethnic markers. Because the attempted destruction of aboriginal peoples began long before the Holocaust occurred, some believe the term genocide does not apply. Furthermore, Million (2013) points to further categorical conflict insofar as genocide exclusively refers to human beings. Specifically, the attempt to invalidate the genocide of First Nations people through colonial actions is described as follows:

There is *before* and *after* [the Holocaust], and according to history the poor natives lay on the wrong side of this event in western imagination. There was only one [Holocaust], but

---

<sup>2</sup> According to the United Nations’ Resolution 260 (III) A, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Article 2: “genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.”

‘genocide’ is a feature with massive precedent in the Americas and is a practise that continues unabated. ... In addition to condemning any state’s right to murder its citizens without international comment, the [Holocaust] established the post-WWII moral ground for relations between those with great power and those who are subject to its effects/affects, between colonizer and colonized. (Million, 2013, p.72)

The practice taken on by some historians, to mislabel and cower behind formal labels, is contributory to the denial of indigenous history and perpetuation of discrimination. And this denial is prevalent through the history of indigenous peoples in Canada.

Those who oppose the validity of the genocide of aboriginal peoples, in essence denying that it is based on the premise outlined above, are debating the historic truth of the genocide. Further, this denial serves as an example of both colonialism and denial in action together. By disallowing the use of the word genocide for aboriginal people, but allowing it for Europeans, one is led to infer that the suffering of aboriginal people is not as great as the suffering of Europeans and therefore does not deserve the designation of genocide. This colonial technique of distancing the European settler from the aboriginal is masked through a seemingly benign semantic debate. It is mechanisms of denial like this which will be highlighted and discussed throughout this thesis.

Colonialism acted not only as a tool to create the image of the ‘powerless-Indian’, it also created gendered legislation which has led to male centered heteronormative trends within current indigenous culture (for example, until 1985 the Indian act defined an Indian as a man (Million, 2013)).

The Indian Act altered gender relations in the [Indigenous] communities, because it is the law that constructed a hierarchal patriarch in Indian Canada. ... This discursive ‘act’ as law underwrote church and social programs to reorganize Indigenous familial and clan relations and thus reorganize social relationships at the level that ‘society’ is conceived. It introduces patriarchy and hierarchy into Indigenous social leadership, reforming them

around colonially sanctioned male chiefs, Indian agents, and priests. It defined and banished Indian women who married outside the 'identity.' (Million, 2013, p.41)

This is a clear example of colonialism erasing the indigenous woman and replacing her with an indigenous man. The indigenous social and cultural roles of men and women differed greatly from those of the settler nations. The attempt to assimilate 'Indian' societies into settler society was not only an attempt to erase the indigenous culture, but it enforced gender and race stereotypes onto nations where more complex cultural-gender roles had once existed (Million, 2013). The effect of the gendered nuance of colonialism is felt today through the MMIWG of Canada and their susceptibility to violence as a consequence of their inferior social power compared to their male counterparts.

The ongoing effects of colonialism are many. Colonialism was not exclusively about assimilation or the importation of western-Christian ideals but was about the creation of those ideals (Million, 2013). Further, trauma is a by-product of colonialism that is produced through the violence of colonial practice, passing from victim to victim, and emerging in future generations as small scars. The ties between colonialism, indigenous peoples, and trauma will be clarified, however it is worth noting that the colonizer holds the power to create his own image (Million, 2013), which inevitably colours any discussion surrounding colonialism.

The power dynamic between Canada and First Nations communities is imbalanced and structured to promote the image of the colonizer as isolated from that of the aboriginal, while the image of the aboriginal remains hinged on the values generated by the colonizer. The image of the colonizer, as perceived by society, is one created by the colonizer where – in both cultural and legal scenarios – power is held by the colonizer over the aboriginal. Because the colonizer stands unattached from subjugated groups they can write and rewrite their own identity. This

revision is done by colonizers through pivoting their image to be perceived historically as equal to indigenous communities as opposed to their oppressors. This power structure enables the reproduction of colonialism, with everlasting traumatic effects on the indigenous peoples of Canada.

## **Residential Schools and the TRC**

The indigenous peoples of Canada have a lengthy relationship of mistrust and experience of abuse with the Canadian government and its agencies. For reasons that will become apparent below, I believe that this relationship plays a significant role in understanding MMIWG.<sup>3</sup> Namely, residential schools have contributed to this current relationship of mistrust (Logan, 2015; Miller, 1996). The collaboration between church and government to create residential schools has contributed to images of both state sanctioned and religious approved abuses experienced by indigenous children.

Residential schools (established in 1867) were schools based on the US model of Indian boarding schools implemented by the federal government of Canada in collaboration with a variety of different Christian missions (i.e. Anglican, Catholic – namely the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who were responsible for some 60% of the residential schools across Canada) (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Miller, 1996; Milloy, 1999; Niezen, 2010). These schools existed for roughly 100 years, and housed approximately 150,000 children, the last of which closed in 1996 (Capitaine & Vanthuyne, 2016; Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Jung 2011; Niezen, 2013). In his book *Truth and Indignation*, Ronald Niezen (2013) provides an anthropological analysis of the

---

<sup>3</sup> MMIWG are victims of crime. They experience unreported and reported violence (these details are discussed in chapter 3). The dynamic between the criminal justice system, the police, the RCMP, and marginalized indigenous communities provides a contextual backdrop for the discussion of why indigenous women go missing and experience violence.

TRC convened to address the issues of abuse, neglect, and loss of life, due to the Canadian residential school system. He documents the testimony given at the TRC by past students of the residential schools. These testimonies highlight abuses both psychological and physical, such as, but not limited to, forced removal from family groups, banning of cultural practice and language, rape and sexual assault, and demeaning physical abuse (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Miller, 1996; Niezen, 2013). The TRC highlights the very clear Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) experienced by the aboriginal community as a direct response to the trauma experienced in residential schools.

PTSD is notably associated with child sexual and/or physical abuse and sexual and/or physical assault, and may commonly result in fear and/or anxiety, sadness and/or depression, guilt and/or shame, anger and/or irritability, and behavioural changes such as alcoholism and drug use. (Understand PTSD, 2013). The residential school system, and the abuse it engendered, links directly to the intergenerational trauma felt by its survivors. These survivors are a part of the indigenous communities of Canada in which MMIWG is a concern.<sup>4</sup> Connecting survivors of the residential schools to MMIWG and their communities reveals social dynamics where victimization becomes a foundational cultural layer. For example, if a child was born in the 1980s to parents who survived residential schools, then this child was born as part of a generation removed from a traumatic historic event. However, the last residential school closed in 1996, meaning that the child in question was also alive during the traumatic historic event.

---

<sup>4</sup> According to the settlement reached between the Government of Canada and the survivors of residential schools a total of 139 residential schools qualified for compensation. The schools are publically listed and organized by province and territory: Alberta, 25 schools; British Columbia, 18 schools; Manitoba, 14 schools, Northwest Territories, 14 schools; Nova Scotia, 1 school; Ontario, 18 schools; Quebec, 12 schools; Saskatchewan, 18 schools; Yukon, 6 schools. The schools were prevalent throughout Canada and, as seen through the distributions of residential schools, their impact on First Nations communities at large is felt mainland the Canada. For more information on the Residential School Settlement please visit their website <http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca>.

This child is both considered a generation removed from the residential school system as well as part of a community experiencing the trauma as an active event. Unlike other cultures that experience genocide (e.g. the Holocaust) the assimilationist strategy of the residential schools did not halt, it petered out. The overlapping of new births and old wounds within the aboriginal communities contributed to reinforcing intergenerational trauma. Furthermore, the historic denial of abuses at the residential schools contributes to the current atmosphere of mistrust between aboriginal communities and settlers.

There are several qualities of the Canadian TRC that stand out as unique from TRCs conducted in other countries. For example, “Canada is the first western nation to use [the TRC] in an Indigenous context” (Million, 2013, p.2). The Canadian TRC was created to address the feeling of indignation in aboriginal communities. However, unlike other countries, Canada’s TRC was born from civil litigation with special provisions drawn around what was and was not allowed to be revealed. The TRC was not self-imposed by the Canadian government, nor was it born from transnational justice or regime take-over. Because Canada’s TRC was born out of civil litigation public awareness of the issue did not stem from the acknowledgement of state responsibility, and – because it was a court case – the legitimacy of the claims of the people giving testimony in the TRC was questioned from the outset. Furthermore, just because something is true in law does not de facto make it true in the social realm; therefore, negative aboriginal stigma was able to survive through the establishment of the TRC into the testimony being given (Niezen, 2013). For example, the Canadian courts found wrongdoing against aboriginal peoples (i.e. the residential school system) and spurred on the TRC, but this legal action does not confirm that Canadian people understand the colonial biases of negatively portraying aboriginal people.

Also, the TRC was created in an attempt to assuage the feelings of indignation in aboriginal communities while also protecting the priests and nuns who committed atrocious acts of abuse against aboriginal children. Litigation and corrective justice do not necessarily overcome indignation, another flaw in the foundational parameter surrounding the TRC (Llewellyn, 2002). Because of agreements made in the settlement of the civil litigation no individuals could be named and thus no new charges could be laid against anyone involved in the residential schools (Niezen, 2013). This lack of legal ramification dampened the effect of justice.

The testimony in the TRC revealed detailed accounts of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse experienced by aboriginal children (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997; Miller, 1996). The residential school system aimed to assimilate the indigenous peoples in Canada by removing children from their homes and teaching them Christian-Settler values synonymous with then present day Canada (Chrisjohn & Young, 1997). “Forced assimilation is a form of violence particularly destructive of what we recognize as the normalcy of childhood. State-sponsored programs of cultural assimilation are today associated with lasting, insidious forms of post-traumatic mental illness, resulting above all from [the] forced removal of children from the security of families, communities and identities” (Niezen, 2010, p.187). The forced removal of children from their homes was not the only abuse outlined in the TRC. The physical and psychological abuse of native children in the residential schools also reinforced stereotyping and stigma associated with aboriginal women. The stigma and stereotyping of aboriginal women will be explored in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

The residential school system’s goal was to erase the existing aboriginal culture and replace it with western-Christian ideals. “The residential schools would also implant a desire for a ‘morality’ always couched in western terms, a desire for a ‘decency’ that is always defined by a

Christian discourse” (Million, 2013, p.45). The hypocrisy of the promotion of these harsh definitions of morality coinciding with the sexual abuse perpetrated by the clergy at the residential schools created an atmosphere facilitating the growth of trauma. Million aptly labels this hypocrisy “a basic training in helplessness” (2013, p.45). While sexual abuse was experienced by both the boys and the girls at the residential schools, it is arguable that the abuse suffered by the girls helped create a culture of victimized women.

The victimization of aboriginal women was not limited to residential schools. By the early twentieth century there was a shift from the church’s control on reserves. The Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) became the policing force that monitored the moral fiber of aboriginal women. “Women, particularly young women, could be sanctioned or incarcerated for acting outside the church’s and the Indian agent’s sense of proper behaviors” (Million, 2013, p.45). Million (2013) outlines how these women were active in their rebellion against these unfair sanctions, either through social withdrawal or by physically removing themselves from the community. However, many indigenous women experience residual traumas from experiences like residential schools and the Sixties Scoop.

The Sixties Scoop, a punishment for indigenous women’s alleged immoral behaviour, was an initiative of the state where indigenous children were removed from their homes and communities. This action “[reflected] mainstream social work’s ideation on a profaned, sexualized Indian mother in contrast to [settler] ‘femininity,’ [such as] stay-at-home mothers in pumps and pearls...” (Million, 2013, p.45). This type of punishment for immorality is another way in which dominance and control was asserted (Million, 2013). Despite the changing social landscape, the hierarchy of control over the aboriginal community, particularly the aboriginal woman and the agency over her own body, remains primarily unchanged.

## **Historic and Intergenerational Trauma as Connected to MMIWG**

Evans-Campbell examines American Indian and native Alaskan communities (AIAN) in an effort to build a framework towards healing historic and intergenerational trauma. The connection she draws between the American indigenous communities has thematic similarities to the Canadian indigenous communities and their struggles with historic and intergenerational trauma. For example, there is a higher rate of violent crime experienced by women in the AIAN community (Evans-Campbell, 2008), as is also the case in female aboriginal communities across Canada (Statistics Canada, 2016). The violence experienced by both AIAN women and Canadian aboriginal women have links to both witnessed and experienced childhood abuse (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Statistics Canada, 2016). The role historic trauma, intergenerational trauma, and colonial trauma response (CTR) play in the analysis and understanding of the current aboriginal communities is significant.

Logan (2015) notes a connection between the experiences of MMIWG, colonialism, and residential schools. This connection can be drawn through historic trauma, intergenerational trauma, and CTR. Historic trauma is the compounding of traumatic events experienced by peoples sharing identity/affiliation markers such as ethnicity, nationality, and religion. The compounding of these events and experiences over generations leads to corresponding psychological and social responses (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Historic trauma is best identified through three key characteristics:

First, [the traumatic events] are generally widespread among [indigenous] communities, and thus .... many people in the community experienced or were affected by the event. Second, the events generate high levels of collective distress and mourning in contemporary communities. ... Third, the events are usually perpetrated by outsiders with purposeful and often destructive intent. This third characteristic is critical to the definition

of historical trauma. Indeed, as noted above, many of these events are not only human initiated and intentional but also fall under the category of genocide (e.g., physical, cultural, or ethnocide), making them particularly devastating (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p. 321).

These traumatic events affect social groups on the individual, community, and familial level.

These levels interact and reinforce each other: individual responses (such as mental and physical health (like PTSD, guilt, anxiety, grief, depression, etc.)) are influenced by familial experiences, and familial responses are dependent on community responses to historic trauma.

Simultaneously, “community responses are constantly reinforced by actions at the individual and family levels” (Evans-Campbell, 2008).

Historic trauma is transmitted and passed on through the compounding interpretations of traumatic events. For example, if a parent experiences a traumatic event with lingering mental and physical implications (such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, etc.) they are likely to carry those implications forward into their parenting style. Then, when this parent’s child learns of the traumatic event, they have both the knowledge of the original event, the experience of a relationship with a parent who experienced the event, and first hand experiential knowledge of being parented by someone with mental and physical implications from said event. The compounding of historic trauma is the coming together of all these facets of trauma.

Furthermore, when the original trauma is passed and compounded from one (e.g. a parent) to another (e.g. a child) a traumatic event becomes intergenerational trauma. “Thus, although the events involved may have occurred over the course of many years and generations, they continue to have clear impacts on contemporary individual and familial health, mental health, and identity” (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p.320).

Similar to historic trauma, intergenerational trauma is understood as operating on at least two levels: the interpersonal and the societal (Evans-Campbell, 2008). From an interpersonal standpoint, the current generation can experience trauma vicariously through the previous generation(s) who experienced the trauma first hand either directly or indirectly. The previously stated situation of parents with lingering mental health conditions due to trauma and their parenting of children is an example of direct trauma. Those effects of trauma will be felt by the children through the direct interaction and parenting of the parent. Indirectly, through storytelling, children can feel as though the trauma is their own, triggering mental health considerations. From a societal standpoint, where there has been a notable loss (e.g. loss of life/lives, loss of culture), if that loss is not addressed, mourned, or resolved, etc., it will compound and continue, passing from generation to generation. “In this way, the trauma, like a wave, continues to roll forward over generations leaving an array of effects in its wake. To stop this forward momentum, some form of social healing in which the loss is mourned and perhaps replaced by something new and healthy in the community may be called for” (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p.328).

Layered on top of historic and intergenerational trauma, and unique to the indigenous community, is CTR. CTR encompasses both historic and contemporary trauma responses to traumatic events with emphasis on connections to traumatic events and colonization (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Macroaggressions, “contemporary events involving discrimination, racism, and daily hassles [targeting] individuals from diverse racial and ethnic groups” (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p.332), are strongly linked to CTR. For example, the use of a racial/ethnic slur intended to trigger offence through connection to a communal and historic sense of injustice and trauma (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p.332).

In a study of AIAN communities the connection of past colonial trauma, residential school trauma and current counter-intuitive behaviour is drawn. While PTSD, and other such diagnoses, explains some of the symptoms that Niezen notes exist within the indigenous community (e.g. nightmares, depression), it does not fully encompass the experience of “intergenerational transmission of trauma from person to person or within communities” (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p.317). Traumatic experiences are passed on as if genetically inherited, allowing a past abuse to exist as a ripple throughout a community. With regard to intergenerational trauma, the trauma being experienced is one existing outside the parameter of ‘expected trauma’ (i.e. an expected part of life). For example, an expected trauma could be learning of death or material loss, and while these expected traumas are sometimes damaging they are typical of a human experience. “Traumatic events, on the other hand, are outside the normal range of an individual’s experience and constitute, for that individual, an exceptional mental and physical stressor” (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p.318).

These ‘exceptional mental and physical stressors’ are evident in the residential school experience (Jung, 2011), namely the forced separation of children from their families (Niezen, 2013) which is a known stressor linked to higher likelihood of severe PTSD (Evans-Campbell, 2008). It has further been suggested that “historical trauma may also play a role in AIAN family violence. For example, high numbers of AIAN parents grew up in boarding schools or foster care and were thus deprived of traditional parental role models” (Evans-Campbell, 2008, p.326). Not only did the lack of parental role models negatively affect the AIAN community, but the Indian boarding school experience contributed negatively to childhood development (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Also, by removing children from their parents the government sent the message that AIAN families were not suited to raise children (Evans-Campbell, 2008). Furthermore, this study

notes that the community-level impact of the Indian boarding school experience was traumatic not only for the children and families involved, but had dire consequences over generations (Jung, 2011). As children were removed from their communities, they were also subjected to assimilationist strategies and punished for practicing ancestral cultural and spiritual ways. The resulting loss of language and traditional practice ripples throughout the community generations after Indian boarding schools first began (Evans-Campbell, 2008).

There is a clear link between the aboriginal communities in Canada, MMIWG, and their past of residential schools. The issue of MMIWG throughout Canada holds elements of inherited traumas and stigmas that place the aboriginal community and its women in a vulnerable social tier. Niezen (2010) notes that “[c]ollectively, indigenous peoples are seen as ‘victims of progress...’” (p.125). The residential schools, while abusive, were held under the guise of aiding aboriginal communities in becoming more ‘modern’, ‘Canadian’, and Christian. By resisting the residential school system, aboriginal people appeared to play into the stereotype of the relic nation, savage and barbaric. Some links between past events and present concerns are clearly seen, such as the trauma carried forward from generation to generation (Jung, 2011; Niezen, 2010), while other links are more nuanced and subtle, like the reinforcing of cruel stereotypes and stigmas. Combined, these links help create a victimized community caught in cycles of violence. The women of these communities are particular victims of these links.

However, there are some problematic implications with associating historic trauma with Indigenous communities. There is a notion that trauma has replaced cultural narratives in communities who have experienced large-scale injustice. More specifically, for the past 30 years “trauma has emerged as a mode for organizing and representing our relationship with the past” (Crawford, 2014, p. 341), replacing a traditional narrative of injustice with a new narrative of

victimization. Trauma itself is a broad term. Strictly defined, the American Psychological Association (APA) defines trauma as an emotional response to a terrible event sometimes accompanied with physical reactions like headaches or nausea (APA, 2017). This is not to be confused with PTSD, historic trauma, or cultural trauma.

Both PTSD and historic trauma require a violent and emotional experience as a catalyst. Important differences between PTSD and historic trauma are: (1) that in 1980 PTSD was introduced as a way to better capture the experience of an individual as tied to both clinical psychiatry and politics (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009, p. 77), whereas historic trauma (sometimes also referred to as ‘collective memory’ or ‘shared traumatic memory’) is a term made popular by Dominick LaCapra (2001) used to capture the experience of a certain group perpetuated across generations (Crawford, 2014, p. 342); (2) that historic trauma “tends to ahistoricize the traumatic incident, treating all traumatic stressors as essentially equal” (Crawford, 2014, p. 342), whereas PTSD focuses on the experience of the individual as tied directly to a historic event (Crawford, 2014, p. 342); and (3) that historic trauma is cumulative, such that trauma is passed from generation to generation (this phenomenon is sometimes referred to as ‘intergenerational trauma’), whereas PTSD is singularly tied to the experience of one individual (Crawford, 2014, p. 343). Dissimilarly, cultural trauma refers to “a dramatic loss of identity and meaning” (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009, p. 16).

These multiple categories of trauma that blend psychiatry with politics create a problematic discourse around MMIWG and historic trauma. Because of the blending of psychiatry and politics, historic trauma “is articulated as a traumatic relationship with the past in which [a] group identifies itself as a victim through its recognition of a shared experience of violence. Notwithstanding the different contexts, the moral framework that emerges is the same:

suffering establishes grounds for a cause; the event demands a reinterpretation of history” (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009, p. 15-16). This moral framework that leads to a reinterpretation of history speaks to the role social narratives play when discussing historic trauma. When a traumatic event is put into a narrative (such as testimony) it transitions to other members of the shared cultural group who then confirm or modify their own related cultural experience (Crawford, 2014, p. 343).

Million (2013) articulates the relationship between indigenous people and trauma as multi-faceted:

[t]here are myriad reasons that First nations people readily took up trauma as a discourse. For one it is a powerful thesis for explaining the relations between present pain, circulating within many disparate behaviors and cycles of tragedy. It is a thesis connected to a promise for justice, since it locates blame for the historical acts of colonization to present conditions in Indigenous lives. For another, it was attached to practice of self-disclosure in the communities, allowing individuals, often for the first time, to articulate key issues in their lives and in Native communities” (p. 93).

Thus, the problematic nature of historic trauma as a discourse is that it replaces both the discourses surrounding the psychiatry of trauma and the historic narrative of trauma with a blended narrative. This could lead to a conflation of trauma and injustice. Therefore, it is important to understand these nuances when discussing trauma and the role it plays in the narrative surrounding MMIWG.

### **Colonialism, Land Dispossession, and Trauma**

Colonialism, land dispossession, and trauma are linked. Each suggest a different aspect when framing MMIWG. However distinct each may be, they share narratives of historic violence and grief. These links are displayed through the captivity narrative. The captivity narrative is a “literary and historical tradition that is vital to the construction and maintenance of an American

‘self’ (vis-à-vis otherness) because [settlers] select which stories and histories will authorize dominance or the always precarious power of a dominant group” (Simpson, 2009, p. 107). In essence, history is told through a lens which requires one be captive while another dominant. The captivity narrative, an off-shoot of colonial narratives, plays a role in this analysis as it sometimes blends trauma with colonial settlement. As discussed above, it is important to understand the nuances of trauma as both a psychiatric and political topic which ties justice to the individual and community.

Audra Simpson (2009) posits that the relationship between colonial narratives and laws actively *do things* within society (p. 107). For example, the Indian Act effectively required white women who married indigenous men to trade their settler status for indigenous status (Simpson, 2009, p. 118). Simpson (2009) argues that these political implications of status associated with the Indian Act create forms of citizenship that are social, which implicate both loss and gains of identity and thusly are citizenships of grief (p. 124). This argument ties back to the captivity narrative through the connection of political status and culture of the indigenous person and the settler.

White women do not lose their citizenship in the Canadian state—or access to their home territory upon their out-marriage to Indian men—but Indian women lost their Indian ‘status’—a deeply colonial and strangulated form of citizenship-membership, or recognition by the colonial state in theirs,—upon their out marriages. The Canadian state made all Indians in its jurisdiction citizens in 1956, however, the marriage of Indian women to non-status men would alienate them from their reserves, their families, and their rights as Indians until the passage of Bill C-31 in 1985. Thus, one can argue that these status losses, and citizenship gains, would always be accompanied by some form of grief. (Simpson, 2009, p. 124)

This joining of political status (i.e. citizenship) and grief (i.e. trauma) exemplifies the deeply rooted link between trauma and colonialism.

The link between colonialism and violence is ongoing (Simpson, 2016). This link addresses both the psychological (trauma as connected to colonialism) and the physical (e.g. land dispossession) components of colonialism. The settlement of Canada de facto notes the taking of land from indigenous peoples as inherently violent (Simpson, 2016). Historically, land dispossession through the settlement of Canada has taken many shapes. The technique of legally dispossessing indigenous peoples of their lands creates a type of violence with systemic ramifications. For example, the “legal move to dispossess people of land[] or territory, to kill traditional governance forms[,] ...supplant traditional indigenous governance, sovereignty and political life” (Simpson, 2016) exemplifies legal land dispossession, dismantling of Indigenous governance over land. Simpson (2016) links legal land dispossession with MMIWG as a matter of both crime and sociology. She contends that the disappearances of indigenous women and girls “are explained not only by police ineptitude, by police racism, by gendered indifference, but by Canada’s dispossession of Indian people from land” (Simpson, 2016). Legal land dispossession dismantles the individual-indigenous person and strips them of their claim to land, again linking land dispossession to trauma, colonialism, and ultimately grief.

### **Indigenous Women and MMIWG**

Indigenous women experience hardship both within the indigenous community as well as the settler community. Comparing aboriginal women to non-aboriginal women, the General Social Survey (GSS), conducted by Statistics Canada in 2014, revealed that: “Aboriginal people (9%) were more than twice as likely as non-Aboriginal people (4%) to report experiencing spousal violence in the previous five years”; “Aboriginal women (10%) were more likely to be victimized by current or former partners, compared to non-Aboriginal women (3%); “Aboriginal

people more often reported having experienced abuse as children” allowing a connection to be drawn between childhood experienced trauma and adult experienced spousal abuse; “40% of [respondents] who identified as Aboriginal indicated that they had been either sexually abused, physically abused, or both sexually and physically abused as children[] compared with 29% of non-Aboriginal persons”; and “[w]hile rates of self-reported spousal victimization among the non-Aboriginal population decreased between 2009 (6%) and 2014 (4%), rates for Aboriginal people were virtually unchanged from 2009 (10%) to 2014 (9%)” (Statistics Canada, 2016, p.3). The glaring differences of reported experiences of aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples showcases the uniqueness of the aboriginal woman’s experience.

Pamela Palmater said that “[t]he highest risk factor for any human being in this country is being born Indigenous and female” (Mitton, 2017). This sentiment is echoed through the scholarship on MMIWG. Dion Million (2013), an indigenous woman and author of *Therapeutic Nations*, points towards the gendered violence and disenfranchisement of aboriginal women in Canada. She qualitatively substantiates the findings of the 2014 GSS, connecting the experience of aboriginal women in Canada to both spousal violence and violence from the broader community (both aboriginal and settler):

It is most usually men who brutalize us, and though there are statistics pointing to many of these men being non-Native, I certainly don’t think it safe or realistic to assume it’s not our own fathers, brothers, and husbands who do this as well. We know it is. We are rightly campaigning to put laws in place to enhance our chances of safety, and to seek justice for ourselves and our families. We are not safe because our societies, our local communities, or the nation-states are not safe. To simply posit this violence as a man-versus-woman dichotomy is to pretend that this is not the system. The abject heart of colonialism and neocolonialism, and their practice of capitalism, is *gendered violence*. Gendered violence is perpetrated by individuals and polities in times when heteronormative order is threatened, and likewise when there is a threat to the power still invested in a racialized white male universal subject. We live in such a time when these

structures of power are under enormous social pressure to change. Thus, I think that such violence is not incidental but common to the stresses that race, gender, and sexuality play in ordering and reordering power in our times. (Million, 2013, p.177)

Perhaps more notable is the disenfranchisement of aboriginal women from within the aboriginal community with respect to leadership and role-modeling. Million (2013) connects the Indian Act to the present day governing structure of First Nations decision making:

The [] Indian Act and subsequent gendered Indian policies had altered any once-reciprocal gender relations into well-entrenched western hierarchal patriarchal power relations that gave Indian men an inordinate power over Indian women... Indigenous communities had deep fault lines where the Indian Act had racialized, gendered, and forced them into heteronormative relations, cracks that split into factions when Canada patriated its own nation. (p.126)

Furthermore, she points to the divisive nature of the Indian Act as a blue print for the current division of gender roles within the aboriginal community:

Yet, overall, women were not represented [in First Nations' governing positions]. Anderson cited a national study by Judith Sayers and Kelly McDonald that found a 'lack of women's representation in decision making... [and] that concerns articulated by First Nations women (accountable governing structures, gender equality, and social issues) are not incorporated into the discourse on government and self-government'. (Million, 2013, p.135)

In sum, the present day combating of the gendered language, and subsequent gendered power structures, are an attempt to correct colonial influence in aboriginal communities. Million correctly links pieces of gendered violence in the aboriginal community together: past government policy (i.e. the cause), a history of violence against women (i.e. the effect), and current attitudes promoting reintegration of aboriginal women into positions of power (i.e. the

response). Understanding these contextual pieces helps bring into focus the issue of MMIWG and its connection to historic and present subjugation of aboriginal women.

### **Historic Relationship of Indigenous People and the North American Media**

There is a long-standing relationship between the aboriginal community and the news media which showcases the use of stereotyping and the presence of colonial attitudes. Through language and rhetoric, aboriginal people have been made to appear ‘less’: less Christian in moral value, less humane, less adult, overall – less human. The toll that this history takes on the present-day representation of aboriginal people in the media is not to be understated (Harper, 2006). Robert Harding (2006) believes that the “[media plays] a decisive role in promulgating racist ideology and in maintaining white dominance in Canada” (p.206). By drawing connections between media depiction of aboriginal peoples in the 1860s (Canada) and its parallel depiction in the 1990s, Harding (2006) demonstrates that although the language has changed, the bias and visceral reaction to the content has not. By playing on emotion, the news media has successfully moved from its colonialist roots of describing aboriginal people as weak and childlike (Harding, 2006) to a more sensationalist tone where grisly images of crime scenes and explicitly violent headlines mark the aboriginal woman as ‘social waste’ (García-Del Moral, 2011).

The amount of print news media in Canada has remained relatively unchanged with approx. 120 newspapers in print, and even though the ownership of these papers has transitioned with time from independent ownership to corporate entities the content of these papers continues to portray aboriginal peoples through basic stereotypes and archetypes (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). These stereotypes are categorized and analyzed at length by Mark Cronlund Anderson and Carmen L. Robertson (2011) in their book, *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers*, as being made up of three main components: (1) that aboriginal ancestry is the

epitome of moral depravity (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.7); (2) that aboriginal peoples are inferior because of their race (for example: “alleged stupidity, poor decision making (with links to depravity), and childish, irresponsible, frequently irrational behaviour” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.7)); and that aboriginal people are “an unprogressive and non-evolving [nation], as if they exist outside of linear time. Behaviour associated with this theme includes excessive stubbornness, childishness, and maladaptive cultural characteristics that make it difficult for [aboriginal] culture to progress in the ways understood and appreciated by the mainstream” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.7).

In addition to the above mentioned stereotypes are the archetypal categories that have existed within the media for the Native person: “the moribund Native, the savage, the Indian princess, the stoic or noble Native, [and] the intemperate native (a.k.a., the drunkard)” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.7). There is often cross over and shared stigma between the stereotypical and the archetypal character of the Native person. For example, the first stereotype listed – moral depravity - is often shared with the archetype of ‘the savage’, that the aboriginal man is often violent (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.7). The power of the news media’s wielding of these representations is that it reinforces and reproduces the social norm of the ‘aboriginal-other’ to both settler Canadians and new immigrants, aiding to position the aboriginal community as one of the most marginalized in Canada (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.6).

The prevalence of these stereotypes and archetypes has waned over the last century. Whereas in the past newspapers could once mark their headlines with outwardly racist and sexist notions of the aboriginal person, today such blatant discrimination has no home in news media (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). However, the same colonial stems that bent towards such apparent discrimination still holds true today through a more disguised attempt to assimilate – or

*erase* – the aboriginal person (Anderson & Robertson, 2011). Canada’s history with colonialism is not limited to antiquated thinking and behaviour, the idea that the Canadian nation exists as a unified entity is a continuation of the same colonial thinking which acted to assimilate and erase the First Nations peoples of Canada. For an aboriginal person to fight against the progressive Canadian way of life is to be anti-Canadian, anti-modern, and exist as the new iteration of the same aboriginal stereotyping which has existed as long as print media (Anderson & Robertson, 2011).

Anderson and Robertson (2011) put it well, “[it] is important not to confuse a minor change in tone with significant qualitative diminution” (p.267). The media acts as a lens through which certain social issues are framed and reflected out to various publics. The framing of an issue does not erase the issue, instead it aids in the perception and communication of a certain bias (or message) as perceived by respective publics.

## **Sociology of Denial**

### **Denial: Definitions and Concepts**

Stanley Cohen and Irene Bruna Seu have contributed substantially to the scholarly literature of social denial. Stemming from Cohen’s 2001 path breaking work *States of Denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*, Seu has been able to build and expand on the interplay between social denial and human rights organizations. While the topic of social denial is not extensively explored in scholarly literature, Cohen’s work contributes to a conceptualisation of how one can simultaneously ‘know’ and ‘not-know’. It has been praised as contributing to multiple areas of study including psychology, social-psychology, sociology, transitional justice, human rights, and socio-economic studies on denial (Bickford, 2002; Marinetto, 2003; Olick, 2002) – arguably spearheading a new topic at a time when its relevance has yet to peak.

In this thesis, denial, as a social practice (i.e. social denial), is the main theoretical driver of the discussion of how the Canadian media frames issues of MMIWG. The process through which truth becomes shaped and then passed around to publics interacts with social denial. Social denial is not as simple as declaring a ‘truth’ or a ‘lie’ at one’s convenience; it is through various tactics and techniques that truths, and in turn victims, become denied.

When discussing denial on a societal scale, the role of the public, or publics, must come into focus. Publics are an abstract concept, physically intangible, representing the “intended audiences of outreach engaged in by those with very tangible grievances” (Niezen, 2010, p.xi). They are anecdotally known as ‘the masses’. To appeal to a public is to ask that your cause be elevated above others - that your cause, or cry-out, be embraced and rallied for. Unfortunately, to catch the attention of a public is a fleeting success. Publics can be understood as having nine primary qualities: they are persuadable, self-interested, hypocritical, curious, unfocused, emotionally responsive, theoretically ‘just’, ismatic, and universally predictable (in the case of Settler audiences; Christian) (Niezen, 2010). A problem with appealing to a public is that it cannot be done by the will of one person alone. This problem is two-fold: firstly, a public is not a tangible thing; and secondly, a person cannot connect to a public without some form of intermediary.

Ronald Niezen writes at length on the topic of publics and their role in the success and short-comings of various human rights campaigns. He captures the intangibility of publics quite clearly as living “in the imaginations of those who are reaching out to them... Because of this, outreach to publics is almost always in some ways like sending a message in a bottle, oriented toward a future audience of unknown provenance and uncertain sympathies” (Niezen, 2010, p. 26). This inability to connect directly to a public triggers the need for media, the need for a lens

and frame. The connections between marginalized groups, the media, and a public, influences the successes and failures of human rights and social justice campaigns. In instances reflecting indigenous rights in Canada (such as the TRC's evaluation of residential schools and MMIWG) an appeal to the Canadian public is paramount for general public acceptance of the relevance of the protection of indigenous rights and the relevance of taking steps forward towards repair of past injustices. The role social denial has to play in the negotiation between human rights campaigns, the media, and the public will subsequently be addressed.

When discussing social denial one must view it as connected to a larger sociology of denial. Cohen (2001) defines social denial as an occurrence where people “seem apathetic, passive, indifferent and unresponsive” (p.x) towards public ‘events’.<sup>5</sup> He argues that social denial is more than a personal processing of uncomfortable truths; it is a social process. Therefore, a sociology of denial approaches denial as a construct of social awareness, social denial (Cohen, 2001). There are multiple reasons that individuals in a group will collectively move from understanding a truth to denying that truth. Asking *why* one denies truths touches upon the interdisciplinary nature of social denial and falls out of scope of this thesis. The following sections of this chapter will review *what* social denial is and *how* it works – leaving space for further discussions of *why* people deny.

Denial, according to Cohen's (2001) definition, manifests itself through many outward mechanisms and rhetorical devices used in day-to-day life such as: “Normalization” (p.51), the process through which undesirable events become streamlined into categories and therefore validated and explained away; “Defence mechanisms and cognitive errors” (p.52), these two mechanisms work hand-in-hand to help an individual psychologically reframe an event to allow

---

<sup>5</sup> The word ‘event’ is used to describe a large array of public wars, natural disasters, elections, protests, local crime, etc.

an easier reality to exist in place of the harsher one. For example, when someone receives bad news, perhaps unchangeable news (like chronic illness), they may deny that information and label it as untrue. The denial of the information is the defence mechanism, and the belief that the information is untrue is the cognitive error; “Accounts and rhetorical devices” (p.58), the negotiation of self between real responsibility and justifying inaction towards an event; “Collusion and cover-up” (p.64), “the commitment between people - whether partners (*folie à deux*) or an entire organization – to back up and collude in each other’s denials” (p.64); and “Everyday bystanders” (p.68), the individuals who have no direct inclusion in the physicality of an event, but are both physically present witnesses and/or secondary witnesses (i.e. those witnessing through a televised broadcast).

In broader strokes, Cohen’s (2001) definitions of denial can also be broken down and understood as six umbrella categories:

1. “Literal denial”: “the assertion that something did not happen or is not true” (Cohen, p.7).  
An example of this is Holocaust denial,<sup>6</sup> denial that the event occurred in spite of overwhelming factual evidence and testimony to the contrary (USHMM, 2016).
2. “Interpretive denial”: when facts are assigned different meanings away from the obvious conclusions of an event (Cohen, 2001, p.7). For example, those who oppose the Armenian genocide do not dispute the facts of the event, rather they believe those events do not qualify as ‘genocide’ (Stanton).
3. “Implicatory denial”: when one denies or minimizes the psychological, political, or moral implications of an event (Cohen, 2001, p.7). In this instance, the denial is of the implication of

---

<sup>6</sup> ‘Holocaust denial’ is a phenomenon whereby people refute the factual basis that Nazi Germany sought out to murder whole cultures and races. A common example of this denial is the Leuchter Report: An Engineering Report on the Alleged Execution Gas Chambers at Auschwitz, Birkenau and Majdanek, Poland, an erroneous report written by Fred Leuchter, and commissioned by Ernst Zundel (a public Holocaust denier).

an event. For example, one may not feel the need to act against homelessness because one does not feel that homelessness is deserving of action. The moral upset usually following injustice is not felt, but denied and deemed unreasonable, leading to inaction and unresponsiveness.

4. “Personal denial”: when denial is focused on a personal experience. There is overlap with ‘Defence mechanisms and cognitive errors’, such as psychological denial in a personal sense (e.g. a patient forgetting a diagnosis of incurable illness) (Cohen, 2001, p.10).
5. “Official denial”: instances where a governing or authoritative body will deny an official status or draw the facts of an event into question (Cohen, 2001, p.10). For example, the June 4, 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square, where martial law was invoked and hundreds of students were gunned down for a democratic protest, was – and continues to be – officially denied by the Chinese government.<sup>7</sup>
6. “Cultural denial”: this denial is “neither wholly private nor officially organized by the state” (Cohen, 2001, p.10). It is the unacknowledged agreement of societies about “what can be publicly remembered” (Cohen, 2001, p.11). For example, there is a modern western idea that animals are pets, and that pets are loved. One would never kill and devour their pet, but there is little conscious cultural concern for the treatment of animals in factory farms; factory farms still exist and produce meat for mass consumption.

Cohen’s work on social denial has helped shed light on new directions of research into the way societies and peoples deny atrocities. Seu’s theory of audience denial shares similar veins to Cohen’s social denial. Seu suggests that

---

<sup>7</sup> An example of this active denial can be found in a 1999 CNN interview with Zhu Muzhi, the then secretary-general of China (<http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9906/02/tiananmen/MacKinnon/zhu.muzhi.html>)

audience denial is an operation of power and production of knowledge in so far as it plays a role in sustaining and colluding with more systemic and official operations of passivity and denial. The normative implication of audiences' justifications for their passivity is illustrated in their banal, everyday contribution to a morality of unresponsiveness (Seu, 2010, p.438).

This 'morality of unresponsiveness', akin to Cohen's interpretation of social denial, touches upon the six mechanisms and various categories given by Cohen to better understand and define sociological denial. However, particular to audience denial, is the perspective of one side in the denial power structure. To understand denial, its mechanisms, and its role in society, it is important to include all perspectives.

Similar to the dynamics between the aboriginal community, the media, and the publics within an event there is perpetrator, victim, and witness/bystander. Cohen's 'social denial' touches upon all three, whereas Seu's 'audience denial' emphasizes the role of the witness and the bystander. How does the bystander frame the event which triggers denial? It is this question Seu explores through her analysis of the morality of unresponsiveness; the justification (or 'accounts and rhetorical devices') bystanders give themselves to determine whether they need to respond to an event. The justification of the denial takes shape as the rationale used to validate inaction and is a key component in the perpetuation and success of social denial en masse (Cohen, 2001). Seu pinpoints the role of denial for the bystander – the action of inaction – as being connected to social denial and audience denial as social practices. This 'active inaction' manifests itself concretely as the choice not to act, further affirming that the analysis of social denial hinges on the conceptualization of denial as a social practice.

Seu and Cohen both call on the implications of 'otherness' when discussing denial. For example, the issue of MMIWG is one where the actions occur between the perpetrator and their

victim, but is witnessed by the general public through news and media broadcast. The denial of the event occurs when the witnesses do not legitimize the event, as well as when the perpetrator does not acknowledge their violence thereby denying the validity of their act as an event. The witness is 'us' and the perpetrator and victim are 'them', likewise the perpetrator is 'us' and the victim is 'them'. Both actors, the witness and the perpetrator, are denying the event. The processes of this denial manifest differently between roles. However, no matter the circumstance the denial remains and is repeated in similar events.

## **Denial: Theoretical Frameworks**

### ***Mechanisms***

In his 2001 work *States of Denial*, Cohen has produced a comprehensive framework for sociologically analysing social denial. This framework analyzes responses from the perpetrator and the bystander in terms of actions and inaction. The main components of this framework are: 'normalization' (how to identify when an event is being denied), 'defence mechanisms and cognitive errors' (why an event is being denied), and 'accounts and rhetorical devices' (how the event is being denied). Each component will be briefly outlined to provide a better understanding of Cohen's framework.

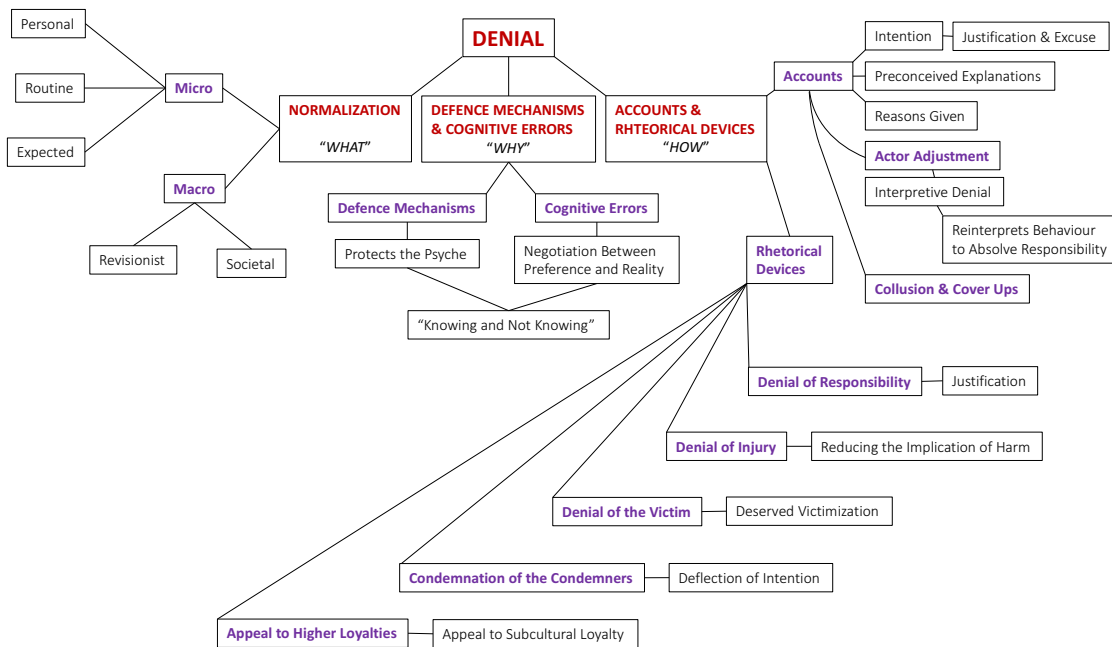


Diagram 1: Cohen’s Framework of Denial, A Complete Overview

When an event is denied, is it being denied based on facts (that the event never *really* happened), or is it being denied on merit (that the event happened, but it wasn’t *really* traumatic)? Every abuse and event is unique insomuch as it is interpreted differently by different social actors (Cohen, 2001). When an event is ‘normalized’, the suffering taking place is not acknowledged. This occurs in both micro and macro states. Micro-denial takes place on a personal level, the event is made to be routine or expected (Cohen, 2001). For example, when someone is in an abusive relationship they may view the abuse as an expected response, making the abusive event seem routine. Unlike micro-denial, macro-denial works on a societal level, the event is historically denied or “hidden from public gaze” (Cohen, 2001, p.51). An example of macro-denial could be the re-scripting of poverty from having a systemic origin to one being based on individual choice: as if to say, ‘I have no sympathy for the homeless person who lives on my street because they are choosing to be poor, and therefore choosing to have no home’.

The denial of an event occurs for many different reasons, understanding why an event is denied draws our attention to the type of denial at play. Denial can be used as a defence mechanism, protecting the psyche from the physical event not within the individual’s control (e.g. terminal illness, or war) (Cohen, 2001). However, denial can also appear as a cognitive error, as a negotiation between one’s understanding of reality and one’s preference of reality. In this instance, one understands denial “... as a search for some hope in the wreckage of [one’s life]” (Cohen, 2001, p.55). Individuals construct their denial in an instance when they both know and don’t know they are doing it, for example, when one searches for meaning in the midst of tragedy (Cohen, 2001).

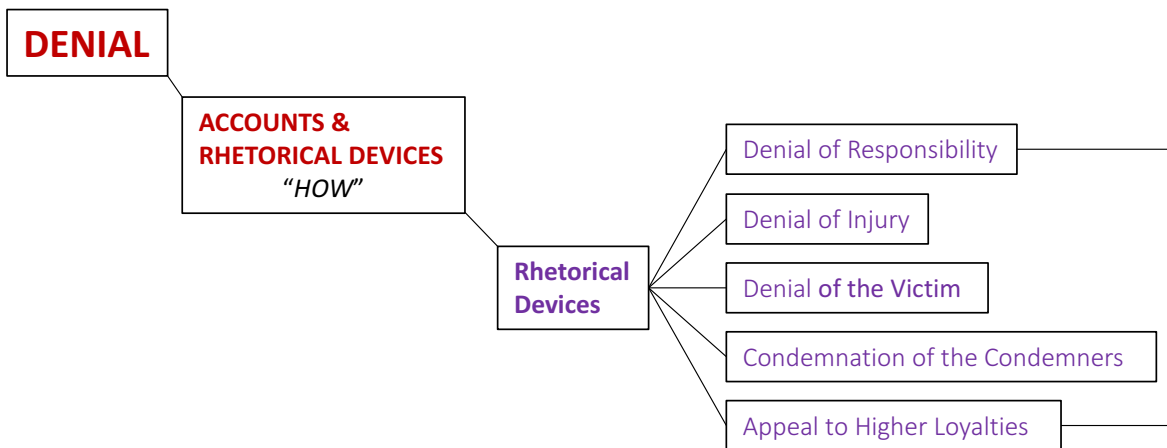


Diagram 2: Cohen’s Framework of Denial, Accounts & Rhetorical Devices

Complexity enters this framework with the specification of various techniques and rhetorical devices used to support feelings and internalization of denial. Seen from the perspective of the perpetrator or perpetrators, there are three main groupings of techniques used to support denial: ‘accounts’, ‘act/actor adjustment’, and ‘collusion and cover-ups’ (Cohen, 2001). Accounts are the reasons given by deviants themselves (Cohen, 2001, p.58). These accounts are not after-thoughts (or cover-ups); they are preconceived explanations to acts not yet

committed (Cohen, 2001). This premeditation points to deviant actions and attitudes, not accidents. An account can be a justification or an excuse: when justifying an action, the individual accepts responsibility but denies the malice or thought involved in the action; when excusing an action the individual denies responsibility for the action but admits to the malice or thought involved in the action (Cohen, 2001). An example of these two accounts are vigilantism (one who justifies their crimes), and the Nuremburg Defence (one who is ‘just following orders’). The key feature of accounts is that they are only powerful if they are accepted by victims, bystanders, and those with the power to hold people accountable. The account must be interpreted as credible, otherwise it holds no weight and falls away as the veil over denial.

‘Act/actor adjustment’ is a technique of interpretive denial, for instance “popular accounts of everyday misdemeanours” (Cohen, 2001, p.62). Act adjustments are used to fritter away responsibility to commonplace offences (Cohen, 2001). For example, while driving, if someone conducts a rolling-stop at a stop sign in place of the legal full-stop they are breaking traffic laws even though one may argue that ‘everyone conducts rolling-stops’. Similarly, actor adjustment reinterprets behaviour as existing in special circumstances, therefore not typical of the individual (Cohen, 2001) (for example, ‘it’s not like me to be abusive, I just get angry when I drink’; again, absolving oneself of responsibility of one’s actions. Both act and actor adjustments work to remove responsibility from the individual for their actions; this removal of responsibility is the denial of culpability not the denial of action. Denial of responsibility is a rhetorical device discussed in the following section.

There are five main rhetorical devices at play when giving accounts of denial: ‘denial of responsibility’, ‘denial of injury’, ‘denial of the victim’, ‘condemnation of the condemners’, and ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ (Cohen, 2001) (for reference see Diagram 2 above). ‘Denial of

responsibility' is the insinuating (and believing) that one's actions were out of one's control, that one had no choice but to act the way one did, that it was not one's fault despite the action being one's own (Cohen, 2001). 'Denial of injury' is the minimizing of the act by reducing the implication of harm and injury (e.g. "[vandalism] is only 'mischief' - and, after all, the owners of the property can afford it; auto theft is 'borrowing'; gang fighting is a private quarrel, of no interest to the wider society" (Cohen, 2001, p.61). 'Denial of the victim' is not necessarily a 'denial of responsibility' so much as it is one's qualifications to choosing the victim. In this form of denial, there is a sense of deserved victimization (e.g. 'he had it coming', or 'he hit me first') (Cohen, 2001). 'Condemnation of the condemners' is a rhetoric that reflects judgement from the perpetrator back to the authority and accuser, such as 'maybe I'm guilty of this crime, but the police are the real criminals here'. It is an attempt "to deflect attention from [one's] own offence to the motive and character of their critics, who are presented as hypocrites or disguised deviants" (Cohen, 2001, p.61). And lastly, an 'appeal to higher loyalties' diminishes social controls and favours the "demands from intimate groups (friends, gang) who are owed more immediate loyalties. If caught in these conflicting demands, delinquents respond to the more pressing ties of subcultural loyalty – thereby, unfortunately, breaking the law" (Cohen, 2001). These rhetorical devices are used by individuals to protect and insulate themselves from the truth of their actions. The last technique of accounting, 'collusion and cover-ups', requires two parties participation, making it unique from the other rhetorical devices.

When an event occurs between two parties, both must agree to alter and deny the implications of the event in similar enough ways for denial to be accepted (Cohen, 2001). The outcome of this collusion is "mutually reinforcing denials that allow no meta-comment" (Cohen, 2001, p.64), for example, cruel teasing in a family is joked away – labelled a 'private joke'

between family members – thereby denying the cruelty and damage of the comments to the victimized individual. The joining of two parties adds a sense of credibility to the denial, and reinforces the altered truth as the accepted truth.

Though explained above from the perspective of the perpetrator for simplicity, Cohen's (2001) framework does not exclusively focus on one subject position (the victim, the perpetrator, or the bystander), it can be applied evenly and simultaneously to all. Furthermore, because various actors experience an event simultaneously, Cohen's framework of denial can be used to analyse all the actors around which denial gets constructed. However, bystanders have their own vocabulary and rhetoric used to cement notions of denial as truth. The term bystander has many applications and meaning, but, in Cohen's framework, it is simply understood as the 'on-looker', someone who observes events of victimization and injury but remains inactive and non-intrusive. The accounts given by bystanders are similar to accounts given in denial by perpetrators, insomuch as the behaviour of the account aims for the same type of legitimacy in both scenarios. Small variances exist between perpetrator and bystander accounts: 'responsibility' to the bystander infers obligation to act, while to the perpetrator it infers culpability (Cohen, 2001). By not acting when under obligation to act one is participating in moral passivity, which implies its own rhetoric (Seu, 2013).

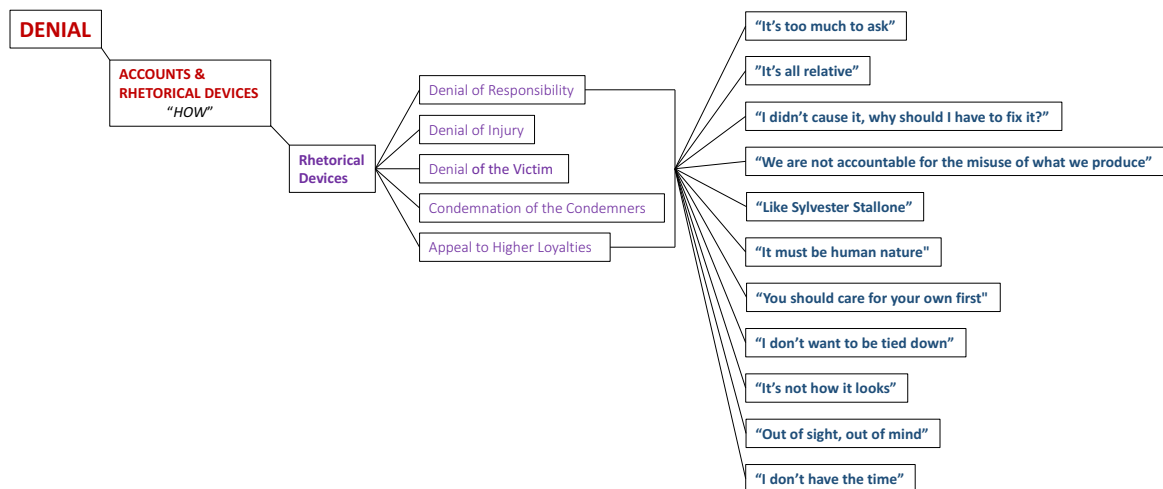


Diagram 3: Cohen’s Framework of Denial, Accounts & Rhetorical Devices with Seu’s Vocabulary of the Bystander

Moral passivity is not human indifference; it is the practice of moral disengagement “such as diffusion of responsibility, [as it is] rooted in the organisational and authority structures of societal systems” (Seu, 2013, p.40). Social constructs and actors help shape society into valued and devalued groups (Seu, 2013). Every part of the social structure (i.e. the groups, the actors, the moral obligations and phenomenon), are produced, upheld, and perpetuated by human activity (Seu, 2013). This perpetuation is, in essence, the processual nature of society: that society is simultaneously the product and the process – a piece of which is moral disengagement. Certain socio-structural practices encourage moral passivity: inaction instead of action.

As just noted, the vocabulary of moral passivity of the bystander is not dissimilar to that of the perpetrator. Seu (2013) narrows down the vocabulary of the bystander to paradigmatic phrases taken from focus-groups conducted to explore moral passivity. In these focus groups, Seu (2013) asked participants to respond to representations of human rights abuses. The

following are key phrases, identified by Seu, as embodying the language of the bystander:

‘It’s too much to ask’ (Seu, 2013, p. 42) – This term connotes constant flow of demand leading to fatigue. By equating human rights concerns to onerous action, bystanders excuse themselves from responsibility and deny the issue as one valid to them (Seu, 2013).

‘It’s all relative’ (Seu, 2013, p. 44) –The violation of rights is sometimes denied based on relativism. An ‘event’ and a ‘violation’ will differ circumstantially. The issue may not be relevant to the bystander’s culture and law, and therefore bystanders do not believe themselves implicated as part of collusion of denial (Cohen, 2001; Seu, 2013)

‘I didn’t cause it, why should I have to fix it?’ (Seu, 2013, p. 46) – This tactic allows responsibility to shift exclusively to the perpetrator and the authorities sanctioned to persecute injustice. In this instance bystanders believe it is not their responsibility to act, because there is a clear path of action to be taken to achieve justice through necessary authorities (Seu, 2013).

‘We are not accountable for the misuse of what we produce’ (Seu, 2013, p. 47) – Similar to the Nuremberg Defence, this vocabulary allows the bystander to feel as though they could not have predicted or known of the human rights violations their actions were directly contributing to. Specifically, these bystanders “see themselves as decent, legitimate practitioners of their trade rather than as parties to deathly operations” (Seu, 2013, p.49).

‘Like Sylvester Stallone’ (Seu, 2013, p. 49) – Here, participation in proactively fighting a human rights abuse is eschewed through techniques of humour “mainly based on hyperbole, wilful misunderstanding or reduction to absurd” (Seu, 2013, p.49). This is not done to diminish the event or mock victims; it is used to remove oneself from the responsibility of action.

‘It must be human nature’ (Seu, 2013, p. 50) – Bystanders will deflect responsibility by constructing the failure of “human rights as inevitable because human beings are quintessentially nasty” (Seu, 2013, p.50).

‘You should care for your own first’ (Seu, 2013, p. 51) – This statement depends on othering to enact denial (Seu, 2013). In this instance, the bystander is claiming there are always more pressing concerns, trumping the validity of whatever human rights violation they are faced with.

‘I don’t want to be tied down’ (Seu, 2013, p. 51) – Committing to a certain cause or charitable action is perceived as stifling individual freedom (Seu, 2013). This is an excuse aimed to relocate the bystander as victim, that if the bystander gave all their time to a certain cause then they would be unable to pursue their own personal freedoms and endeavours.

‘It’s not how it looks’ (Seu, 2013, p. 52) – By implying that un-recognized facts of a situation invalidate the suffering, bystanders are able to obviate the need to act (Seu, 2013).

‘Out of sight, out of mind’ (Seu, 2013, p. 53) – The bystander is claiming acceptable inaction because the human rights concern is physically distant from them. This distance creates the illusion that the bystander could not be helpful even if they wanted to be (Seu, 2013).

‘I don’t have the time’ (Seu, 2013, p. 54) – “Because human rights issues require complex solutions and understanding, and because time is a rare commodity in the West, personal and relatively smaller-scale commitments become pressing immediate demands which take priority of ‘bigger than self’ problems” (Seu, 2013, p.54). Bystanders act as if to believe that they do not have the physical time to commit to human rights concerns.

These phraseologies have clear connections to Cohen’s framework of denial, with overlapping themes of ‘denial of the victim’, ‘responsibility’, and the like. To combat this denial, it is important to recognize that bystander or audience denial

is an operation of power and production of knowledge; it enables the replacement of the moral, compassionate subject by the ‘consumer-savvy bystander’, equipped with sophisticated analytical tools to assess and critique the style, function and effects of the appeal, and the trustworthiness of the appeal-maker, like a consumer debating whether to ‘buy’ the product (Seu, 2013, p.94).

Framing responses to human rights abuse in terms of the free market reduces the success or failure of campaigns that fight injustices to their appeal to audiences. The ‘worthy’ victim is supported while the ‘undeserving’ victim is abandoned. The question is, however, to understand how and why some victims are portrayed as deserving or not. It is here that an elaboration of the denial framework can contribute to an understanding of moral passivity that renders certain categories of victims and types of abuse as invisible. Or, if they are visible, not worthy of a moral response.

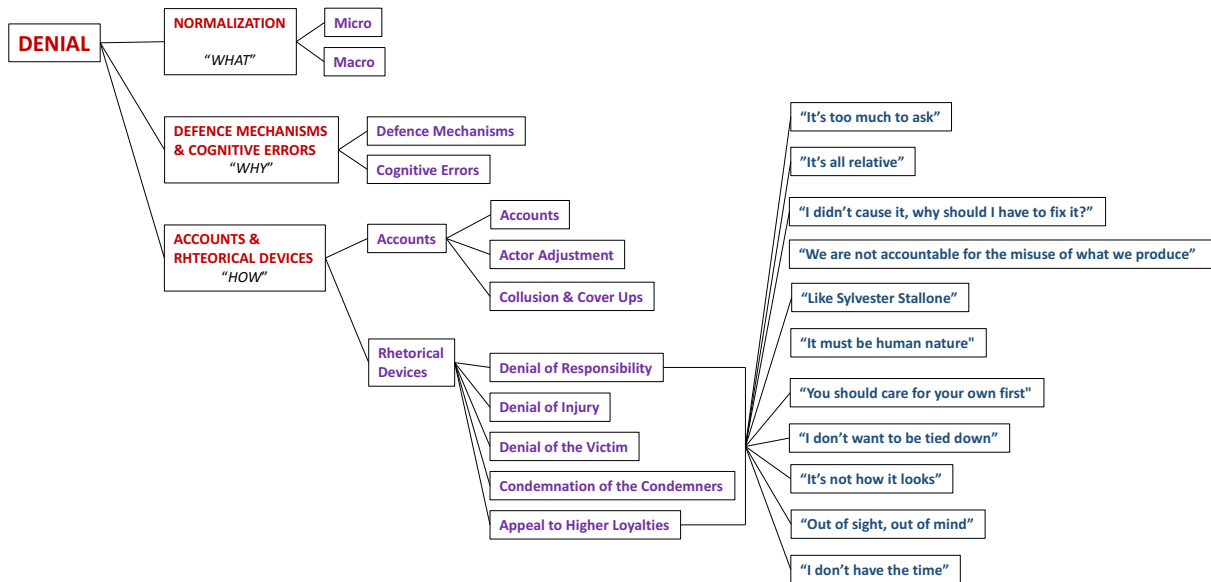


Diagram 4: Cohen’s Framework of Denial, Accounts & Rhetorical Devices with Seu’s Vocabulary of the Bystander, a Complete Overview

How are events and victims deemed deserving of attention and care? For the purposes of this analysis, emphasis is placed on representations in print news media sources as they report on the issue the MMIWG in an attempt to analyse systematic mechanisms of denial. These representations frame the social distribution of affect:

[t]he question, though, of whose lives are to be regarded as grievable, as worthy of protection, as belonging to subjects with rights that ought to be honoured, returns us to the question of how affect is regulated and of what we mean by the regulation of affect at all... ..that our moral responses – responses that first take form as affect – are tacitly regulated by certain kinds of interpretive frameworks (Butler, 2010, p.41).

These interpretive frameworks are the intersectional frameworks that shape the individual’s response to social phenomena. The theory of identity intersectionality appropriately coincides with Butler’s ‘theory of affect’ and builds upon the theoretical framework of social denial.

Intersectionality sheds light on the social positioning of actors. Social denial draws on intersectional relationships to frame certain individuals as not inherently grievable. The theory of identity intersectionality explains that differently positioned identities interpret phenomena differently, and that identity positions are multi-dimensional. An individual “does not possess a single identity but multiple identities that may shift and change over time and/or with changed contexts” (Mullaly, 2009, p.188). The multiple identities contained within an individual person open up that individual equally to multiple types of discrimination and oppression, as well as multiple types of dominance and positions of power.

One’s identity is no longer a list of factors spanning from race to religion; identities within an individual are multiplied and intersect. There is a spectrum of possible placement within each identity context, creating a web of intersectional identity. The more factors encompassed in an identity, the more complex the web becomes. For example, one is not an aboriginal person, and a female person [aboriginal + female = individual]. Instead one is an aboriginal woman [aboriginal x female = individual]. The experience of the aboriginal Canadian woman is one that encompasses all the pieces of her diverse multi-sectional identity. As previously shown, the historical, social, and cultural locations of an aboriginal woman place her in a position where she is highly susceptible to experience discrimination, oppression, and violence. However, we can go further and ask whether it also exposes her to systemic forms of denial of her discrimination, oppression and the violence that weaves into her everyday life.

Social denial silences victimization and erases victims by removing, minimizing, or normalizing the event that victimizes them. Denial however is not alone in the field; it can potentially be subverted through social processes such as ‘bearing witness’, which attempt to resituate events of injustice away from distortion: “societal amnesia and a faulty or

opportunistically selective remembrance of the past” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.28). To bear witness is to attempt to undo the silence and tactics of social denial; however, this is not always successful. To “genuinely ... hear a message of this sort demands that civil society actors be willing to learn from it, that they pay careful attention to the forms of representation of catastrophic experiences and explanations of structural violence” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.35). Similar to accounts of denial, they must be socially credible: an account, testimonial and witness have to be heard and embraced.

## **Bearing Witness**

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Mechanisms***

Kurasawa (2007) identifies bearing witness as the product of ‘social labour’, a social practice. He also points to the larger goal of a *work* of global justice which is exemplified by the work surrounding MMIWG. In his discussion of global justice, he places bearing witness as the first of several steps towards achieving justice (see Kurasawa’s “Figure 3” below). Combative in nature, bearing witness exists to rebut the general attitudes towards ignoring (or in some cases, denying) traumatic events: “*voice* against silence, *interpretation* against incomprehension, *empathy* against indifference, *remembrance* against forgetting and *prevention* against repetition”<sup>8</sup> (Kurasawa, 2007, p.25). These ‘perils and tasks’ of bearing witness provide the registers and mechanisms that inform the frame analysis around the community organizations whose work challenges the social denial of MMIWG in news media.

---

<sup>8</sup> Italics added for emphasis.

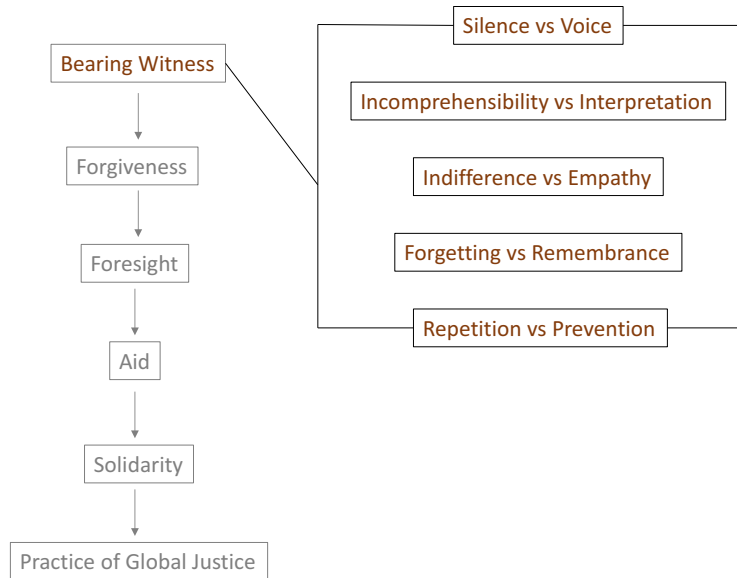


Diagram 5: Kurasawa's Framework of Bearing Witness

These registers (voice, interpretation, and prevention) and mechanisms (empathy and remembrance) can be identified and explained as follows:

‘Voice’ is the speaking out against denial. Calling denial to the attention of the public, for example, the TRC is an act of voicing witness testimony against counter testimony and an effort to raise consciousness about the abusive nature and history of residential schools.

‘Interpretation’ is “making sense of the experiences of those subjected to [traumatic events]” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.35). Kurasawa identifies ‘interpretation’ as a direct combatant to ‘incomprehensibility’ due the experiential and historical/cultural nature of witnessing and testifying. Discussed in the sections to come are the links between suffering, distance, and the media (and/or the interpretative lens of the event). These factors interrupt the ability of

witnessing to effectively convey the message of testimony against denial. Consequently, interpretation is pivotal to the success of combating social denial. An example of ‘interpretation’ in action is community initiated campaigns (such as Drag the Red). These groups help give a voice and express the interpretation of the violence experienced by the MMIWG.

‘Prevention’ acts against the repetition of an event. The catch-all phrase ‘never again’ is an echo of events past. While it is hopeful to believe that mass suffering will not be repeated, that lessons are learnt and people are better for their histories, it is undeniably naïve. The acts of prevention are the steps taken to ensure the repetition of an event is impossible.

‘Empathy’ fights indifference through its ability to foster connection between publics and events. Primarily, first person accounts accomplish empathy building “when inserted into parallel institutional mechanisms... as well as politico-legal performances addressing crimes against humanity...” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.43). Kurasawa lists the following works as exemplary of fostering empathy through first person testimony: Lanzmann’s *Shoah*, Primo Levi’s writings, Hersey’s *Hiroshima* and Menchu’s autobiography. These works “invoke the audience’s sense that the occurrence of [an event] is intolerable because it shatters collective responsibility for the well-being of our fellow human beings” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.43). The techniques used to achieve empathy are found in different media (whether it be of film or print media), filming techniques, and editing choices elected by the creator of the work (Kurasawa, 2007, p.43). In sum, a works’ production of empathy “depends upon [its] gaining approval from opinion-makers (reviewers, prominent intellectual and political figures, etc.) and being distributed through media channels reaching broad sections of the general public” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.43).

‘Remembrance’ acts to counteract societal ‘forgetting’. Societal forgetting encompasses a range of ways societies and individuals work to move past an event (Kurasawa, 2007). This can be done through denial and its various mechanisms as outlined by Cohen or through mnemonic denial (or ‘social amnesia’), which “seeks to discredit both eyewitnesses and actual evidence of mass human rights abuses” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.47). For example, in less extreme rhetoric, mnemonic denial can be expressed as a desire to move past an event, or to ‘move on’, ‘start fresh’, etc. (Kurasawa, 2007, p.47). ‘Remembrance’ works against mnemonic denial through “the ritualization of commemoration, the establishment and regular performance of public ceremonies of collective remembrance such as memorial days or events, school-organized visits to site of memory and the broadcasting and circulation of testimonies within public spaces” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.49). The portrayal of these rituals in the media will guide the coming analysis of campaigns which promote awareness, and fight the issue, of MMIWG.

The frameworks and mechanisms of both social denial and bearing witness explore the relationship between three types of social actors: the victim, perpetrator, and bystander. The role that each play in understanding and reacting to an event contributes to the social practices of denial or bearing witness. In the analysis of media representations of MMIWG the framework of social denial will be used to understand the news media articles surrounding Tina Fontaine (more on this in the Methodology section found in Chapter 2). The framework of bearing witness will be used to analyze the community led initiatives which aim to combat the issue of MMIWG, both through organized commemorative ceremonies, as well as published literature and community led initiatives (again, more on this is found in the Methodology section).

## Conclusion

The above sections have served to contextualize MMIWG in a discourse surrounding abuse and victimization. The aboriginal community as it exists today has been forever changed by the impacts of colonialism (Jung, 2011). “Put simply, buried somewhere in the Canadian imagination lies a kind of colonial amnesia” (Anderson & Robertson, 2011, p.275), a willingness to deny the ramifications of colonial attitudes and their presence and reinforcement in news media. Colonialism fed directly into the assimilationist residential schools that led to the TRC. Throughout all this, historic and intergenerational trauma layer and spur more trauma forward, adding fragments of itself onto an already divided community.

Furthermore, the literature reviewed so far raises questions regarding denial as a social practice and its connection to MMIWG. For example, to what extent is colonial amnesia reproduced in contemporary representations of MMIWG? What is the relationship between social denial and the ongoing reproduction of colonial relationships? How is violence against aboriginal women represented? And, to what extent do such representations imply a denial of historical and contemporary relationships of colonial exploitation? In short, through what mechanisms do social denial and colonialism interact to shape the discourse surrounding MMIWG? These questions will guide and shape the coming analysis of news media and its role in the framing (and reframing) of MMIWG.

The media, and its framing of aboriginal people, acts as an active mechanism connecting many of the contextual variables that lead to social denial. It, as we shall see, relies on its colonial roots to frame MMIWG in a way that marks them as invisible. However, what are the specific mechanisms used in media representations of violence against aboriginal women? To

what extent do they contribute to the societal reproduction of the denial of this violence? The next chapter aims to provide the theoretical framework and methodology that will guide the analysis in chapters 3 and 4.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

This chapter introduces the components of the theoretical framework that will be used in the analysis in Chapters 3 and 4. Concepts related to femicide and aboriginal stereotypes are explored. This chapter also further elaborates on Cohen's framework of social denial (with a focus on its active mechanisms), as well as on Kurasawa's framework of bearing witness (with a focus on its registers and mechanisms). This chapter concludes with a brief overview of the shortcomings to research and the methodology to be used in Chapters 3 and 4.

### **Key Concepts**

#### **Suffering and the Media**

Frequently, we are not all able to directly witness injustice. More often than not, the day-to-day life of an individual is filled with the mundane passing of typical days and typical lives. There is a reliance on media outlets to provide information on unwitnessed injustices, in a sense to witness on behalf of those not physically present to do so. However, there are innate problems in the trusting nature between audience and media. The media ensures distance between audience, victim, and perpetrator (Boltanski, 1999), and infuses events with news media practices (Jiwani & Young, 2006). Specifically, with relation to suffering and victimization, the media "increases the uncertainty inherent in communication which ... is made fragile by the existence of a conflicting number of ways of being affected when faced with suffering" (Boltanski, 1999, p.151).

Using a hierarchy of crime news stories (Katz, 1987), the media establishes qualities of newsworthiness which are used to measure events (Jiwani & Young, 2006).

Homicide tops this hierarchy; a story is more newsworthy if the crimes are committed by one person. In other words, serial killers, or the possibility of a serial killer out there,

demand more attention than the single case of domestic violence that results in the murder of a woman and her children. Naturally, other criteria such as locality, relevancy, timeliness, and immediacy also prevail in determining what gets counted as news worth telling. (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p.900).

The hierarchy of newsworthy crime also connects to colonial attitudes towards race, sex, gender, ethnicity, etc. For example, the case of Reena Virk as portrayed in the news media reveals the treatment of low ranking news stories. Reena Virk was a teenage girl from Victoria, BC, who was beaten and murdered by a pack of teenage peers. The assailants involved were prosecuted and are serving their prison sentences under the law. This case received a lot of media attention as it worked its way through the court system, eventually being heard at the Supreme Court of Canada. Jiwani (2006) argues that Canadian news media omitted Reena Virk's race (South-Asian) symbolizing the denial and erasure of qualities unwanted by the news. Other not-newsworthy crimes are events of violence against women, particularly women of colour. Reena Virk's case was one the media could not avoid reporting because it touched upon so many sensitive social and legal issues (such as trying teenagers as adults and the charge of second degree murder for some participants and not others). It appears as though the media had to make Reena Virk visible to the Canadian public by making her race invisible (Jiwani & Young, 2006).

The portrayal of suffering in the media is directly related to the race and sex of those being highlighted and reported on in an event (Jiwani, 2006; Jiwani & Young, 2006). Women of colour are less likely to be highlighted in news media as victims of crime than their white counterparts, just as men of colour are more likely to be highlighted as perpetrators of violent crimes than their white counterparts (Jiwani & Young, 2006). The colour washing of the media triggers mutated stories of factual events, contributing to interpretational denial of the crime and erasure of the victim. Jiwani has contributed significantly to the literature surrounding

representations of race and gender in North American news media sources. She highlights the above-mentioned colour washing through comparative analyses of news media framing (Jiwani, 2006; Jiwani & Young, 2006). She points out the use of language and symbols as tactics deployed to achieve a biased racialized representation of individuals and events. Here, language and representation are communicative techniques used to skew public perspective and portray certain people as culpable instead of as victims. The representations of individuals in the media work to undo the intersectional identity of the individual, and strip away the complexity of what makes up a human being leaving them vulnerable to certain forms of violence. This action gives way to a form of moral bias and cultural promotion, making it so victims and perpetrators have equal chance of being romanticized or villainized.

Romanticizing and villainizing is done through the use of archetype, language, and framing by the news media. Use of stigma and stereotype allows the media to use individuals as archetypes within an issue. Likewise, language is used to establish the morality (or immorality) of a person or an act. These communicative techniques feed into media-created frames which point the public audience towards certain assumptions and conclusions about social issues. For example, the case of Reena Virk is an instance where the news media used archetype, language, and framing. Kelly Ellard, convicted of the second-degree murder of Reena Virk, was labeled the evil teenage bully. Reena Virk was made to seem racially ambiguous. And the murder itself was framed as girl-on-girl violence in spite of the male assailants present at the murder. When discussing media framing and communicative techniques this case is particularly notable because of the ages of those involved. Not quite adults, not quite children, at 15 years old the interpretation of the crimes and the victim can be framed in multiple ways, leaving who is socially innocent and who is to socially culpable of crime open to interpretation.

Similar to Jiwani's frame analyses, Gilchrist conducted a qualitative comparison study utilizing a comparison-based content analysis of six disappeared women (three white and three aboriginal) in Canada (2010). She found overwhelming support to conclude that systemic racism and gender bias resulted in a downplaying of the aboriginal women's stories and a 'media celebration' of the white women's stories. It appears that national and local media, through the discrepancies in their reporting of missing women, communicate that white victims are less deserving of the crimes committed against them than their aboriginal counterparts. This study exemplifies how the media frames the narrative around representations of race and gender in society. There is also a connection to 'newsworthiness' and how something is deemed 'high ranking' in the editing room: worth publication and dissemination (Katz, 1987). The media is able to undo the complexity of an intersectional identity by closing in on one aspect of a story/narrative (e.g. the race of a victim or the economic situation of a perpetrator – we will see this in detail in Chapter 4).

By undoing this complexity an audience can counter-intuitively be led to conflate a victim with a perpetrator. For example, if a man of colour assaults a woman of colour, then we can assume that based on concepts of gender and race in the media it is not a matter of the victim being innocent, it is a matter of the victim being *more* innocent than the assailant. What we will see in the coming analysis of Tina Fontaine's portrayal in the media is that although Tina Fontaine was a teenager and a victim of murder, she is also shown as disobedient. Yes, she is the victim, but she is not innocent in her character. This is how an intersectional identity of the aboriginal woman allows them to be what I call 'culpable victims'. This is explored in detail in Chapter 4.

The danger of this singular representation of individuals creates an identity structure which no longer incorporates aspects of their social positioning. In Cohen's term this would be a case of 'interpretive denial', aspects of an individual's social position and identity are removed so that it is not possible to see the broader systemic conditions producing the violence, thus relieving the bystander, or for the purposes of the analysis in Chapter 4, the reader, of the responsibility to act. It is, in essence stripping away the contextual factors of life and boiling someone down to their separate pieces devoid of experience. In doing this, stereotypes and archetypes reduce complexity. For example, "[in] the realm of [stereotypical] representations, prostitution and Aboriginality mark [MMIWG] as missing, but as naturally so..." (Jiwani and Young, 2006, p.902). This sentiment encompasses denial of the victim, implicatory denial, as well as media representations of stigmatic stereotyping of aboriginal women. The media is tasked with reporting honestly, but even so the frames and lenses that the media use in an effort to create something newsworthy distort the truth of both testimony and crime (Jiwani, 2006).

### **Women as victims: Femicide**

Gendered experiences of violence thread this analysis. Femicide, referring to the killing of women (Taylor & Jasinski, 2011), is marked by race, age, and socio-economic status of both the victim and the offender (Muftic & Baumann, 2012). Minority women of colour are disproportionately overrepresented in research on femicide (Muftic & Baumann, 2012). "Put simply, minority women are at significantly greater risk of [femicide] than their white counterparts" (Muftic & Baumann, 2012, p.2826), furthermore, "the literature indicates that lower levels of employment and education are risk factors for femicide" (Muftic & Baumann, 2012, p.2827). In an effort to identify the mechanisms of femicide one must understand femicide as a social phenomenon. Feminist theory contributes to this understanding.

Feminist theory argues that patriarchy and oppression are woven into social structures: “According to proponents, oppressive views of women are not only culturally sanctioned but also embedded in and expressed through all social institutions” (Taylor & Jasinkski, 2011, p.342). The fact that oppression is commonplace in society allows for the diffusion of injustice and denial. Specifically, with regard to femicide and violence against women, when women are categorized as separate and lesser than men, their victimization becomes understood as a ‘common hazard’ and contributes to a less newsworthy image. Femicide is understood as commonplace; this is in part due to patriarchal oppression and in part thanks to media representations of violence against women (Gillespie, Richards, Givens & Smith, 2013). Not surprisingly then, the rhetorical techniques used by the media to diminish victimization and erase the victim corresponds to those of the framework of denial (such as victim blaming). “In many cases the media miss the opportunity to use their influence to portray femicide as an issue deserving of public outrage and intensified policy development” (Gillespie, Richards, Givens & Smith, 2013, p.240). Even more so the media should be putting forward interpretive schemes, such as bearing witness, and drawing attention to the structural conditions that lead to femicide. Instead, stigma and stereotyping thrive in media presentations of minority women and perpetuate the denial of the systemic conditions leading to femicide.

### **Stigma and stereotyping of Native women: The Squaw/The Princess**

The images of Canada’s indigenous women in the media have colonial roots, facilitating settler dominance over aboriginal communities. Historically, when European settlers arrived in the “new world” they had preconceived ideologies of civilization as being the antithesis of the state of nature (Stevenson, 2005). Based on this ideal, women were expected to be domestic and were confined to household work as a subordinate class to their male counterparts (Stevenson,

2005). “The ideal woman was characterized by the virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity” (Stevenson, 2005, p.55), she was to be selfless and totally generous, while also burdened with the sole responsibility of child rearing (Stevenson, 2005). This depiction of civility became the model used to contrast Indian savagery. The Native woman in Canada was every opposite to the settler vision of civility,

[her] appearance, [her] social, economic, political, and spiritual positions, activities, and authority – was a violent affront to the European ideal...Where European women were fragile and weak, Aboriginal women were hard-working and strong; where European women were confined to affairs of the household, Aboriginal women were economically independent and actively involved in the public sphere; where European women were chaste and dependent on men, Aboriginal women had considerable personal autonomy and independence – they controlled their own sexuality, had the right to divorce, and owned the products of their labour (Stevenson, 2005, p.56).

These differences culminated in an adaptation of the virgin-whore dichotomy; the Indian Princess-The Squaw Drudge (Stevenson, 2005). The Indian Princess is a virginal archetype: childlike, naïve, physically beautiful, and Christian, while the Squaw Drudge is haggard, ugly, licentious, and savage (Stevenson, 2005). This kind of sexism is interwoven with racist tones, pointing to an intersectional discrimination unique to the native woman. “If we accept that Othering is a way of defining and securing one’s own positive identity through the stigmatization of an ‘other’, we are also saying that this process carries the intrinsic danger of self-affirmation dependent upon the denigration of the other group” (Seu, 2013, p.111). The othering of the native woman is not simply the definitions projected by the settler on to the aboriginal, it is more so the self-reflective definition that the settler understands themselves as settler because the aboriginal is perceived as other than them.

## **Theoretical Framework**

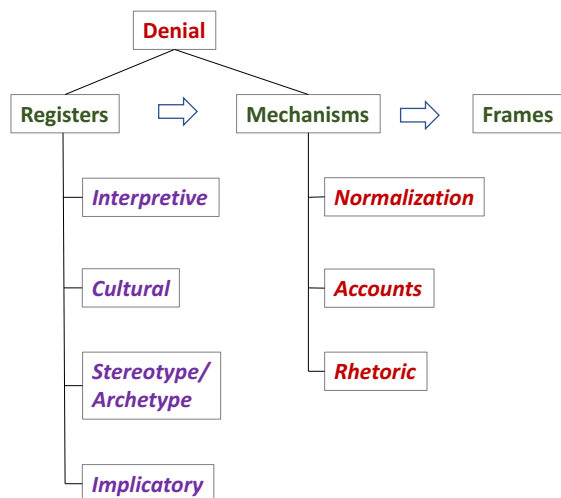
### **Combining the Elements of the Theoretical Framework**

The elements used to construct the theoretical framework for this project are: denial as a social practice, bearing witness as a combatant to denial, suffering as shown in the media, femicide, and stigma and stereotyping of indigenous women. These elements help contextualize MMIWG as entrenched in Canada's history of violence against women and aboriginal peoples. These elements alone have their own respective histories in a Canadian context, but together they showcase the perfect-storm of social factors which create a foundation from which MMIWG as a social issue emerges. The theoretical frameworks of denial and bearing witness help to account for downplaying in the media and the general public invisibility of MMIWG as well as recent efforts to bear witness against the erasure of the structural conditions that contribute to the violence against women and minimizes it once it has taken place.

The scope of the original frameworks, i.e. Cohen's framework of denial and Kurasawa's framework of bearing witness, have been adapted to allow for the frame analysis of media representations of MMIWG. The diagram below shows how social denial informs the frames of the analysis. Denial is broken into two main components: registers and mechanisms. Social denial registers into four parts: 'interpretive', 'cultural', 'stereotype/archetype', and 'implicatory'. These four registers act as indicators for denial and inform the mechanisms of denial, which are: 'normalization', 'accounts', and 'rhetoric'. These mechanisms form the basis of the analysis of frames in media articles surrounding the case of Tina Fontaine and the government inquiry into MMIWG.

'Interpretive', 'cultural', and 'stereotype/archetype' incorporate the concepts previously explored involving aboriginal peoples and women. Interpretive denial focuses on the othering of aboriginal women within representations of violence, women, and violence against women.

Cultural denial connects to colonialism and its implications on aboriginal women, while stereotype/archetype draws clear connection to the representation of aboriginal women in media. Implicatory denial, perhaps more abstract than the other registers of denial, focuses on the moral implications of denial on the individual level. Here, Seu’s discussion of moral passivity is pulled into the framework to help support Cohen’s foundational layout of the theoretical framework of denial. The registers of denial inform the mechanisms of denial. The mechanisms of denial (‘normalization’, ‘accounts’, and ‘rhetoric’, all previously discussed in sections on denial) pull the denial itself from abstraction to concrete practice. These mechanisms are manifest in media through particular narratives, representations and rhetorical techniques that promote certain interpretations and images above others. In doing this, the mechanisms create frames of denial in the media discourse surrounding MMIWG.



Denial Framework

Denial functions in the context of MMIWG through mechanisms that diminish the visibility of the systemic violence aboriginal women experience and in turn erases aboriginal women as victims. Based on my analysis, I believe that the media uses denial (in a state of both knowing and not-knowing) to represent violence against aboriginal women as anticipated, and

normal, through tactics of accounts and rhetoric. Social denial is preformed through everyday actions and is a long-established practice within Canadian news media. The media normalizes MMIWG through micro-denial (allowing the violence against aboriginal women to become perceived as expected, or inevitable), as well as through macro-denial (promoting the issue of MMIWG as something internal to aboriginal communities, and therefore not deserving of ‘too much attention’ or comment).

Accounts and rhetorical devices (as explored in the section “Denial: Mechanisms”) often work hand-in-hand, but not exclusively so. Accounts come from the person being accused of participating or initiating an event. This does not *have* to be the perpetrator; it can be any social actor attempting to conceal their culpability and engagement in the practice of denial. These accounts are only powerful if they are believed, placing the news media in a unique place of power in effectively communicating certain messages over others. Accounts are given form through particular rhetorical devices (hence, accounts and rhetoric are often coupled together in action).

Using specific phraseology and editing techniques, the news media provides ample sources of common ‘denial rhetoric’, such as promoting attitudes which deny responsibility (or in the case of MMIWG): incorrectly attributes responsibility to various scape goats (more of this is discussed in the analysis of Tina Fontaine); denies injury by reporting on MMIWG and over focusing on one area of abuse while neglecting another, or similar misattributed facts; denies the victim by painting the MMIWG as somehow deserving or responsible for their circumstances leading to violent encounters; misappropriates blame to government/regional offices (such as the RCMP) in an attempt to ‘condemn the condemner’; and appeals to other loyalties (often those political in nature) to promote certain ideals over and above the victim and the issue of MMIWG.

This theoretical framework will support the frame analysis of news media’s representation of MMIWG.

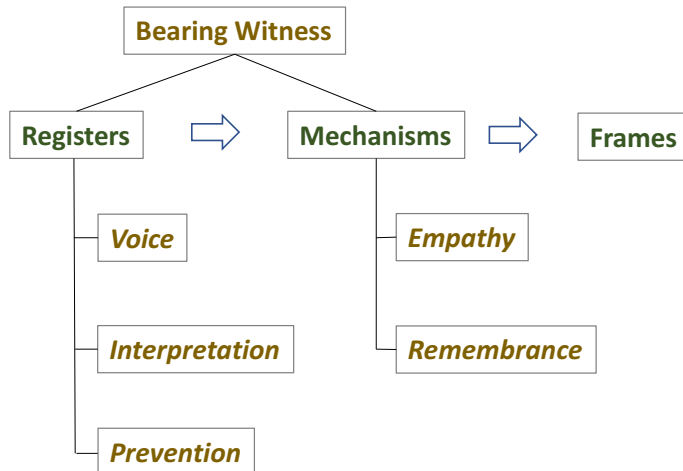


Diagram 6: Bearing witness framework

Bearing witness, like denial, has a hierarchal framework where general concepts lend themselves to active mechanisms allowing frames to be drawn. ‘Voice’, ‘interpretation’, and ‘prevention’, are more abstract in nature, as opposed to ‘empathy’ and ‘representation’ which manifest more concretely. The two frameworks (denial and bearing witness) function the same way and accomplish the creation of frames to be titled and organized as ‘Frames i’ for denial, and ‘Frames ii’ for bearing witness.

## **Methodology**

### **Media Frame Analysis**

According to Vividata (the newly merged NADbank and PMB) 58% of adults surveyed read a news source daily, either online or in print, and digital readership increased by 139% between 2012 and 2015. The increase in digital readership comes at a decrease of print media readership, but an increase in news media readership overall. The rising trend in online news

media, and the increasing readership that comes with it, give cause to an analysis of the way media frames issues of social denial with regard to MMIWG.

A media frame analysis has been selected to conduct an analysis of the Canadian national print news sources (sources selected and outlined in the following section). The role the media has in reproducing social denial has been outlined, establishing the “news media’s tendency to oversimplify a given global injustice in order to gain an audience and keep its attention” (Kurasawa, 2007, p.37). The question remains, how do these tendencies and tactics interact with social denial? A media frame analysis “...entails *selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution*” (Entman, 2003, p.417). This analysis will highlight the various frames and lenses that the media creates and wedges between the event and the audience, and in doing so hopes to provide clarity and exploration to the role of media as it constructs, aids, or diminishes social denial.

Erving Goffman developed the foundation for frame analysis through his corpus of work on media studies and social interaction. He argued that the media was constantly scripting reality, in a sense adding a narrative and reformatting truth (Entman, 2003). Goffman (1974) theoretically suggested that framing is based on a ‘primary framework’. He points to many different frameworks, but seems to narrow on the most problematic one being the primary framework (Goffman, 1974). He uses the word ‘primary’

because application of such a framework or perspective is seen by those who apply it as not depending on or harking back to some prior or ‘original’ interpretation; indeed a primary framework is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful (Goffman, 1974, 21).

The attribution of meaning onto an event is, in short, is what this analysis hopes to uncover and explore.

The hopes of this thesis are to contribute to a dialogue surrounding social denial and the way media interacts with it. As previously outlined, MMIWG is an issue that has a long history embedded in factors like sex, race, economic and social location, and colonialism (to name a few). Building a comprehensive study of media portrayals, and frames, of this issue is a task perhaps too large for the scope of this analysis. For this reason, I have narrowed the scope to review articles from Canadian national news print editions of the Globe and Mail and the National Post. Both these papers are national dailies with a strong reader following and subscription base across the country, with good variability and span among ages and economic groups (“Newspaper Topline Readership”, 2015; “Canada’s #1 national newspaper”, 2016; “Reaching your audience”, 2016). Also, both papers were selected in an effort to balance media political bias, the Globe and Mail being centrist,<sup>9</sup> and the National Post embracing a right-wing stance.<sup>10</sup>

The issue of MMIWG will be explored through a focused analysis of the story of Tina Fontaine, a murdered teenager from Winnipeg, MB. Frames will be constructed on her narrative as an individual, a community member, as well as an aboriginal woman. Regarding the newspaper sources, the time frame is uniform and spanned August 2014 (the time that Tina Fontaine initially went missing) to October 19, 2015 (ending on the day of the 2015 federal election).

---

<sup>9</sup> I use the term ‘centrist’ here in an attempt to best encapsulate the political history of party endorsement from the Globe and Mail. Most recently the Globe and Mail endorses the Conservative Party, but not their leader at that time Stephen Harper (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/the-tories-deserve-another-mandate-stephen-harper-doesnt/article26842506/>).

<sup>10</sup> I have chosen to label the National Post as a right-leaning news source based on their most recent political endorsement of the Conservative Party and then leader Stephen Harper (<http://news.nationalpost.com/full-comment/national-post-view-our-choice-for-government>).

There are many studies (some of which are discussed in this thesis) which conduct media frame analyses (such as Entman, 2003; Gillespie et al., 2013; Harding, 2006; Jiwani & Young, 2006; and Nelson et al., 1997) sharing similar approaches to finding frames within news media reporting on social issues (like crime and violence against women). The approaches I followed in the analysis of Tina Fontaine are:

News articles were qualified and gathered based on a Factiva keyword search, redundancies were removed and duplicate articles accounted for, providing an initial sample base from which to draw out an analysis. Articles were sorted by news source (Globe and Mail vs. National Post) and arranged chronologically to allow a timeline driven narrative to emerge.

Initial review for frames included headline language/wording and article structure. Preselected keywords drove this review. How many times did the keywords appear? Did they appear at the beginning of the article? Did they appear in the headline? Were they often preceding or proceeding another keyword? Did they appear in longer articles or shorter articles?

Frames were then analysed and assessed from this initial structural and keyword analysis. The frames between the Globe and Mail and the National Post were compared for similarities and differences.

A similar process was taken for the frame analysis conducted on community initiatives surrounding MMIWG. Using the framework for bearing witness, documents and organized events were evaluated as efforts to combat social denial, and contrasted with the frames analysed in the media.

Works were selected and a frame analysis was carried out in the same fashion for the frames of both the Globe and Mail and the National Post.

Community events were analysed through Kurasawa's framework of bearing witness, both its registers and mechanisms. Guiding questions were: How are these events garnering empathy? Are they successful? How can they be considered successful? How do they interact with the frames of denial?

Bearing witness is an attempt to counter social denial. A comparative discussion of the frame of social denial within the news media and the attempts of community initiatives to combat this denial is the culmination of a comprehensive review of media representation of MMIWG.

### **Shortcomings to research**

While it goes without saying that no research exists without limitations and bias, there are some notable ones worth mentioning here. From a personal perspective, I am an American raised and living in English Canada, and I am not a person of colour. As I begin to analyze frames of media discourse, which aim to highlight factors such as non-dominant race and ethnicity, I would be remiss not to admit my background and bias as one benefiting from dominant factors. Also, in part due to discomfort with language, and in part due to scope, this analysis does not include a

news source from French Canada. While attempting to find an appropriate French Canadian news source to include I could not pinpoint two newspapers accessed widely enough, and showing political balance, that I felt comfortable introducing to the analysis. It is the hope of this research that more discussion is generated, and more research produced surrounding this issue, so that someone in the future is able to overcome these limitations.

### **Chapter 3: Framework Analysis and Review of MMIWG**

The story of MMIWG is reflected in narratives of community, government, NGO, and academic responses. The reports and publications discussed in this chapter show that ample evidence exists regarding the scope and severity of MMIWG. Using the language of the theoretical framework it is clear that important efforts have been made to bear witness. Despite this, as we will see in the analysis of the media representation of the murder of Tina Fontaine, such bearing witness is silenced through mechanisms of denial. This chapter explores community initiatives, government reports, and international perspectives by highlighting the techniques and tactics used by these reports to enhance or combat the existing denial surrounding MMIWG in their effort to bear witness.

This chapter provides an overview of a sample of published reports that address MMIWG. Included are both government agencies and community/grass-roots initiatives. Government reports are provided to give contrast and context to the reports coming from non-governmental actors such as Amnesty International or NWAC. The texts used in this thesis are woven throughout this chapter. Table 1 provides an overview of the texts and where they can be found in this chapter. The chapter begins by providing context and comment on the reports separately. It then concludes with an analysis of the community driven and academic scholarship as constructing the frame 'live victims' in an effort to combat victim erasure and denial.

Table 1

<b>Author and Publication Date</b> (listed alphabetically)	<b>Report Title</b>	<b>In-Chapter Location</b> (Content and Context, Analysis)
Amnesty International (2004, 2009)	Stolen Sisters: A human rights response to discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada	Content and Context: NGO Response, Amnesty International: Stolen Sisters 2004 and Human Rights Watch  Analysis:  Frame Analysis: Bearing Witness, NGO Response
	Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada, a summary of amnesty international’s concerns	
	No More Stolen Sisters: The need for a comprehensive response to discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada	
Highway of Tears Symposium (2006)	The highway of tears symposium recommendations report	Content and Context:  Community Response, Symposium on Highway of Tears  Analysis:  Frame Analysis: Bearing Witness, Community Response
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	Content and Context:  Academic Scholarship, Amnesty International: Stolen Sisters 2004 and Human Rights Watch  Analysis:  Frame Analysis: Bearing Witness, Academic Response

<p>Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Commissioner Honourable Wally T Oppal (2012)</p>	<p>Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry</p> <p>Vol I “The Women, Their Lives and the Framework of Inquiry: Setting the Context for Understanding and Change”</p> <p>Vol IIA “Nobodies: How and Why We failed the Missing and Murdered Women Part 1 and 2”</p> <p>Vol IIB “Nobodies: How and Why We failed the Missing and Murdered Women Part 3, 4, and 5”</p> <p>Vol III “Gone, but not Forgotten: Building the Women’s Legacy of Safety Together”</p> <p>Vol IV “The Commission’s Process”</p>	<p>Content and Context:</p> <p>Government of Canada, Forsaken</p>
<p>Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2014)</p>	<p>Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A national operational overview</p>	<p>Content and Context:</p> <p>Government of Canada: RCMP and Police: Reports, Projects, and Criticisms, RCMP Report</p>
<p>Sisters in Spirit</p>	<p>What Their Stories Tell Us</p>	<p>Content and Context:</p> <p>Community Response, Sisters in Spirit (SIS)”</p> <p>Analysis:</p> <p>Frame Analysis: Bearing Witness, Community Response</p>

A key point emerging from these reports is that it would be nearly impossible to claim ignorance of the violence against aboriginal women as a driving factor in the MMIWG crisis. All

but one report mentioned in this chapter discuss MMIWG with reference to colonialism, sexism, racism, and abuse within Canadian society. Eberts (2014) makes the argument that these issues of marginalization have always existed in public fora. She draws on the popularity of theatrical plays in the 1960s and 1970s which displayed violence against aboriginal women in Canada. She writes:

Canadians knew what was going on. These works were not obscure; they were at the forefront of artistic production as Canada was coming of age at the turn of its first century. They provide a map of what was happening then to Indigenous women, a map that might have helped us move forward in a way that addressed the violence and discrimination affecting them if only we had let it guide us at that time (Eberts, 2014, p.71).

There is no question that violence against aboriginal women in Canada is an ongoing phenomenon. The issue emerging from this sentiment is *how* is this violence still topical? Still a question at all? When such evidence of mistreatment is publicly knowable the public deems the discrimination of those peoples acceptable (Olsen-Harper, 2006). It knows and does not know.

The MMIWG is a prime example of this acceptable discrimination. And while it would be easy to point to the most recent federal government as primarily responsible, the reality is that the issues plaguing aboriginal women existed long before Harper's conservative government, and arguably will continue after. Taking steps to combat these socially and culturally entrenched points of discrimination against aboriginal women will help to reframe the violence they experience, and draw attention to the issue of repair. Oppal's commissioned report "Forsaken" (2012) takes a small step towards drawing attention to the urgency of the situation by exploring the rhetorical consequences of the central frame in the context of MMIWG: "missing women". It is a terrible misnomer. 'Missing' is a gentle euphemism for the stark, cruel reality that most of the missing women were murdered. 'Missing' does not come close to capturing the horror and

brutality of the murders that befell most of the women, nor the depth of the continuous grieving caused by either certain knowledge of some of the women's terrible fate or the ambiguity of the unknown fate of the others (Oppal, *Forsaken*, Vol I., 2012, p.4).

For Oppal these aboriginal women should not be framed as missing, they are forsaken, abandoned. As discussed in earlier sections of this thesis, aboriginal women are more likely to experience violence than their non-aboriginal counterparts. And, as will be shown later in this chapter, they are less likely to have their homicide cases solved and investigated than their non-aboriginal counterparts. These women are overlooked by society both when there are present as well as when they are missing. Advocating on behalf of vanished women has fallen to families and friends left behind. The scholarship on MMIWG offers suggestions to lessen this burden, it's time settler and non-settler communities alike participate in this discussion and provide it with a national stage.

## **Community Response**

### **Sisters in Spirit (SIS)**

In 2005, Sisters in Spirit (SIS) was created as a joint initiative between the Government of Canada and NWAC whose mandate was to conduct a five-year qualitative study of MMIWG from 1980 through the 2000s (Eberts, 2014; Harper Olsen, 2006; Oppal, *Forsaken* Vol I, 2012). In 2002, the National Coalition for our Stolen Sisters (a project under NWAC) successfully garnered enough outcry for awareness and action against the “racially-motivated attacks on Aboriginal women” (Olsen Harper, 2006, 36) to prompt the joint NWAC and Government of Canada<sup>11</sup> creation of SIS (Olsen Harper, 2006).

---

<sup>11</sup> Specifically, the following government agencies lent support to SIS: “Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Department of Justice, Canadian International Development Agency, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (part of which is the Royal Canadian Mounted Police), Foreign Affairs Canada and

The report from SIS focused on girls or women (both gender born or transgender) who went missing or died by being murdered, through negligence, or under suspicious circumstances. Multiple qualitative strategies and approaches to data collection and analysis were undertaken such as analysing information from newspaper/magazine articles, online news media, data from the RCMP, data from provincial and municipal web sources, data from trial transcripts and public court decisions, and interviews conducted with families and communities of MMIWG. Despite these methods being quite broad, and different from approaches taken by government and police,<sup>12</sup> they produced results in the form of more than 740 cases identified with 582 qualifying for inclusion (NWAC, 2010, p. 39; Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012). The data collected by SIS was almost all publically accessible through online public forums and government publications. This is significant because it begs further scrutiny over why these public facts and figures were never connected and concluded as belonging to the larger issue of MMIWG.

The result<sup>13</sup> of the SIS report contributed to the building of databases of MMIWG. In summary, 582 cases of MMIWG identified over approximately 20 years were catalogued by SIS. At the end of their funding in 2010, SIS was in the process of researching and identifying an additional 20 cases for the database, had this work been completed before the funding expired the total number of identified cases would have reached over 600 (Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012).

---

Status of Women Canada (SWC)” (Olsen Harper, 2006, 36). Only SWC made a formal agreement with NWAC to provide funding for SIS.

<sup>12</sup> Notable differences, the SIS database included: historical cases not vetted by police; cases deemed ‘natural’ deaths by police (despite lingering concerns from family and friends of the deceased); ‘unknown’ cases, where the circumstances of death, murder, or disappearance were unclear; cases where the identity of the woman was unclear (i.e. was this woman aboriginal?) was it was strongly suggested she was of aboriginal identity (Forsaken Vol I, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Some results: More than 67% of the cases identified by SIS were in the western Canadian provinces; of identified disappearances 70% of cases were in urban areas; or identified homicides 60% of cases were found in urban areas; 55% of the cases involved women and girls under 31 years old; 17% of the cases involved girls 18 years old or younger; 88% of the cases were mothers (Forsaken Vol I, 2012).

In 2010, the request for more funding was denied by the Harper government and SIS retired (Kubik & Bourassa, 2016).

### **Symposium on Highway of Tears**

Highway 16 in British Columbia, a main artery spanning 724 kilometres connecting Prince Rupert and Prince George, has come to be known as the Highway of Tears ([www.highwayoftears.ca](http://www.highwayoftears.ca)). In the mid 1990s, uncovered murders and suspected disappearances of aboriginal women along this highway came to light.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, the separate discoveries of three murdered teenage girls in Prince George and Smithers along highway 16 sparked serious concern for communities who used the highway as a primary route (Olsen Harper, 2006; Smiley et al, 2015). Many reserves located along highway 16 experience high levels of unemployment and economic marginalization. Often, people hitchhike along highway 16 as their only means of travel. There are few owned cars for travel, and no affordable public transportation (Smiley et al, 2015).<sup>15</sup> Even those with cars are nervous about using the highway in case their car should stall and they become stranded on the side of the highway (Welsh et al, 2006). The highway is not well maintained, poorly lit, and stretches without public rest spaces, making it unsafe for pedestrian travel (Smiley et al, 2015). The communities relying on the highway are put in a desperate position: either live in isolation, or leave their communities and reserves at their own risk.

There has been suggestion that highway 16 only received media attention with the disappearance of Nicole Hoar, a 25-year-old woman from Alberta working in Prince George;

---

<sup>14</sup> The Highway of Tears is thought to be associated with more than 30 murders and disappearances since 1970 (Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> As of early 2017, British Columbia Transit and various First Nations communities residing along the Highway of Tears co-funded accessible public transit for highway 16. This public transit includes the regular service of two separate bus lines (Lindsay, 2017).

Ms. Hoar was not aboriginal (HTSRR, 2006; Smiley et al 2015; Welsh et al, 2006). She was last seen hitchhiking along highway 16 and she remains missing, her whereabouts and the circumstances of her disappearance remain unknown (HTSRR, 2006; Smiley et al 2015). The discussion surrounding race and newsworthiness has a history with the Highway of Tears. Would the Highway of Tears ever have received attention if not for Nicole Hoar? Although this research will not delve into this question it is worth mentioning and drawing out. The experience of Ms. Hoar's family was drastically different than the families of missing aboriginal women (Smiley et al, 2015). The Hoars were met by police politely, experiencing heartfelt sympathy and extension of help and care. These experiences were not shared among the families of aboriginal victims (Smiley et al, 2015).

As we will see in more depth, the Highway of Tears provokes ‘victim blaming’ from law enforcement agencies because the victims along the highway are often hitchhiking, willingly putting themselves in harm’s way. This type of denial leads law enforcement to believe they need not intervene, because the victim deserves their victimhood. Due to types of inaction like this by the police and RCMP, the aboriginal communities took it upon themselves to address the dangers of highway 16 and held the Highway of Tears Symposium in 2006.

This symposium, held in March 2006, sought to bring validation to nine families of the victims of the highway as well as recommendations to address this rising issue of MMIWG (HTSRR, 2006; Olsen Harper, 2006). The symposium made a total of 33 recommendations: 15 recommendations based on ‘victim prevention’; 6 recommendations based on ‘emergency planning and team response’; 6 recommendations based on ‘victim family counselling and support’; and 6 recommendations based on ‘community development/support strategy’. Most of

the symposium's recommendations were concerned with preventing the creation of more victims by keeping aboriginal women and girls off the highway and away from high-risk activities.

## **Government of Canada Response**

### **Forsaken**

“Forsaken” is a four-volume report commissioned by the Government of Canada to “inquire and make findings of fact concerning the police investigations conducted between January 23, 1997 and February 5, 2002, by police forces in British Columbia regarding women reported missing from the Downtown Eastside of the City of Vancouver” (Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012, 4). Oppal (2012) believes MMIWG have been forsaken, abandoned, and forgotten. “[He] found that the missing and murdered women were forsaken twice: once by society at large and again by the police...” (Forsaken Vol I, 2012, 216). The report aims to make recommendations for improvement of the police and RCMP conduct towards MMIWG for future investigations as well as cross departmental investigations. The commission’s mandate was four-fold: to investigate the disappearances and murders from the DTES between January 23, 1997 and February 5, 2002; to inquire into the legal decisions made by the Criminal Justice Branch in the Robert Pickton trial; to recommend necessary changes to the action and conduct of investigations into MMIWG; and to recommend necessary changes for cross-departmental investigations into MMIWG (Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012). The report makes 63 recommendations in total<sup>16</sup> grouped into themes of ‘equality’, ‘community engagement’, ‘collaboration’, and ‘accountability’.

The report uses language with a tone that fluctuates between neutral and apologetic as well as strategically blurring the lines between communities. For example, Oppal writes: “By

---

<sup>16</sup> For full list of recommendations see “Appendix C”.

acknowledging **our collective responsibility**, this report aspires to contribute, in some measure, to the eradication of **this indifference** and to a renewed commitment to meeting the needs of the vulnerable and marginalized members of **our community**<sup>17</sup>” (Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012, 6). ‘Our collective responsibility’ and ‘our community’ reflects Canadian communities without distinction (as if to include settler and non-settler alike), glossing over the lines that separate aboriginal victims and their families from non-aboriginal victims and their families. This tactful language simultaneously apologizes for Canadian indifference and apathy towards marginalized aboriginal peoples, and accepts this very apology on behalf of marginalized aboriginal peoples. These techniques flow through the volumes of the report positioning the report as making the government as responsible for inaction on violence against aboriginal women and girls as they seem willing to be.

### **RCMP and Police: Reports, Projects, and Criticisms**

The RCMP have come under a great deal of criticism and scrutiny with respect to their work on MMIWG. Before exploring these issues, it is important to note that while the RCMP and police departments engaged with MMIWG have reported histories of being careless and unkind towards aboriginal victims and their families<sup>18</sup> there are many reasons for this behaviour and its perception. These causal factors will not be discussed. The criticisms that follow are drawn from published works and testimonials, and are provided here with the hope that better behaviour and structure be carried forward in place of past precedent. For example, the Vancouver Police Department’s (VPD) Project Amelia faced issues and criticism. On the one hand within media and community opinions there was overall satisfaction with the work of the

---

<sup>17</sup> Bolded emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> For example: “A \$100,000 reward had been offered by [the] Vancouver Police Board in a spate of home invasions that put homeowners at risk of violence. When a similar reward was requested by family members for the missing women of the DTES, the reaction was not favourable” (Pearce, 2013, p. 383). All the meanwhile, women continued to disappear.

individual officers on the project, while on the other there was general dissatisfaction and criticism for “inaction and indifference [towards] families and the media” (Pearce, 2013, p. 383).

Criticisms of the RCMP and police draw attention to the lack of communication regarding reporting and success in finding missing indigenous women. Some of these challenges are outlined by Pearce (2013) as: “unknown time and location of when and where the victim was last seen” (p.522); “delays in reporting missing [persons]” (p.524); “Lack of crime scenes, bodies or evidence of a crime” (p.530); “Police refusal to believe in the possibility of a serial offender” (p.533); “Jurisdictional issues” (p. 539); “Lack of understanding of the lives of vulnerable people” (p.541); “Lack of [a] national DNA database for Missing Persons and Unidentified remains (p.550); “Issues with DNA and Physical Evidence” (p.556); “Living survivors” (p.558); “Race, Class, Ethnicity and Prejudice against Vulnerable Victims” (p.562); and a lack of “Police Resources” (p.571). These are recurring themes within the criticisms and recommendations made by various communities, groups, and scholars and will be reviewed in sections that follow.

Also, the police are not without admitting fault. Oppal (Forsaken, Vol I, 2012) notes that the VPD openly admits that they should have acted quicker with investigating Robert Pickton and disappearances of aboriginal women from the DTES. Oppal’s report (Forsaken, Vol II(B)) identifies seven police failures in the missing women investigations and proposes explanatory factors for these failings:

[Police Failings]

- I. Poor report taking and follow up on reports of missing women;
- II. Faulty risk analysis and risk assessments;
- III. Inadequate proactive strategy to prevent further harm to women in the DTES;
- IV. Failure to consider and properly pursue all investigative strategies;
- V. Failure to follow Major Case Management practices and policies;

- VI. Failure to address cross-jurisdictional issues and ineffective co-ordination between police forces and agencies; and
- VII. Failure of internal review and external accountability mechanisms (p.2).

[Explanatory Factors]

- I. “... [T]hat systemic bias against the women who went missing from the DTES contributed to the critical police failures in the missing women investigations” (p.217);
- II. An overall lack of leadership, supervision, and management for issues of missing persons or serial homicide investigations;
- III. “...[F]ragmentation of policing in the Lower Mainland and the inadequacy of structures to overcome this fragmentation. The failure to take all necessary measures required by multi-jurisdictional crime resulted in serious communication failures, linkage blindness, [uncoordinated] parallel investigations, and lack of sharing of key evidence” (p.258); and
- IV. A lack of prioritization within the Police departments leading to perceived ‘inadequate resources’. This lack of prioritization stems from numbers I, II, and III on this list.

These failing and factors act as a guide for discussions of action and inaction by the RCMP and local police departments as well as the recommendations made from various other reports in the sections that follow.

### **RCMP Report**

The RCMP commissioned their own report to investigate the disappearances and murders of indigenous women in Canada between 1980 and 2012. The report’s aim was to create ties between aboriginal communities and RCMP to foster “more targeted crime prevention, better community engagement and enhanced accountability for criminal investigations” (RCMP, 2014, p.3). The report found through its research and analysis that “Aboriginal women are over-represented among Canada’s murdered and missing women” (RCMP, 2014, p.3). Using the

Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics Homicide Survey data and police reviews the report compiled 1,017 aboriginal female homicide cases (RCMP, 2014). In addition to the homicide cases, 164 cases were identified as aboriginal female disappearances (RCMP, 2014). The report concludes that next steps for the RCMP are “enhancing efforts on unresolved cases”, “focusing [on] prevention efforts”, and “increasing public awareness” (RCMP, 2014, p.18).

Attached to this chapter is the “Appendix A” highlighting findings from the RCMP report. There is a problem with the overall tone used in the report as well as the explanation and analysis of data. The overall tone of the report is best described as stubbornly apologetic; ‘if I have to be sorry, then I’ll be sorry’. Examples of this can be seen in the analysis of data, for example, when reviewing aboriginal overrepresentation in female homicide, the report makes note that this overrepresentation is simply a result of statistical manipulation: “The number of Aboriginal female victims of homicide has remained relatively constant while the number of non-Aboriginal female victims has been declining ... The growing proportion of Aboriginal female homicides is a direct reflection of a decrease in non-Aboriginal female homicides” (RCMP, 2014, p.10). The language is not noteworthy, it is a matter-of-fact description of statistical data that makes this statement seem harmless; it’s not that aboriginal women are victims more often, it is that other women are victims less often, therefore, the question of aboriginal victimhood is less of an issue than once thought to be. This sentiment leads the reader to conclude that the group in which women are victims more often is inherently flawed because it has not overcome the cycle of violence in the same way the group in which women are victims less often has. Furthermore, it falsely leads the reader away from a core question: why is one racial group’s homicide rate decreasing while another is not?

In addition to skirting issues, the report lacks a focus on race or ethnicity as relevant markers in crime statistics. It seems counter-intuitive to write about a certain racial and ethnic group but never really address the social and cultural concerns that arise by virtue of being a part of that group. The only notable social marker picked up on in the report is explicit mention of drug use, socio-economic factors, and participation in the sex trade as making the pursuit of action on those cases particularly difficult. The problem with this focus is not ‘inaccuracy’ or ‘emphasis’. Yes, rule of thumb would suggest that if someone works or lives in high-risk places then the likelihood of experiencing violence increases. And yes, the more risk factors one intertwines with criminal investigations the harder that investigation will be.<sup>19</sup> The RCMP toes the line of victim blaming – and they recognize it:

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 as opposed to the cases of murdered non-Aboriginal women may help provide some descriptive statistics to inform future social interventions or operational crime prevention planning. It should also emphasize the need to engage not just police tools, but broader response options (social services, health, education, etc.) (RCMP, 2014, p. 17).

This excerpt is quite telling. Simply put, this is an example of the ‘stubbornly apologetic’ tone that reads throughout the report. It comes in the final section of the report just before suggestions for ‘next steps’, allowing the report to conclude that the RCMP is sorry that the situation for aboriginal female victims is so bad, but it’s bad because that group is involved in high risk activity, so we should all look to future initiatives and social support options to remove the

---

<sup>19</sup> This is like saying the more pieces you have in a puzzle the harder the puzzle could be to solve. The emphasis placed on this logic by the RCMP report is bizarre. The expectation that police and RCMP help solve and investigation cross-jurisdictional homicide and disappearances is a reasonable one. Just because a case may be more difficult or have more considerations does not excuse inaction from government institutions.

burden of the high-risk behaviour on criminal investigation. The RCMP is not reflecting on its own shortcomings in investigating aboriginal female homicide and disappearances. Here again we see a glossing over of a core question and issue. Drawing from the excerpt above, the RCMP is pointing to crime prevention and social intervention to ease the burden of criminal investigation. But where is the mention of police and RCMP action and proactive investigating as a future step? Put plainly it seems as though the RCMP is saying ‘our job is hard enough, let’s lessen the burden on us by implementing procedures that bring fewer cases to our desks’.

The report excuses RCMP inaction and places emphasis on the difficulty of criminal investigation with regard to MMIWG. The report states: “Thousands of people are missing in Canada on any given day. The whereabouts of many are established quickly. As a result, there is a certain challenge in arriving at an accurate count of what is a moving picture.” (RCMP, 2014, p.8). In this quote the RCMP is drawing out the difference between aboriginal and non-aboriginal crime with regard to involvement in high-risk activities. The RCMP’s note is not ground breaking, and is phrased in a diminutive way towards aboriginal victims; as if to say ‘Lots of people go missing, and it’s hard to find them when they do high risk things like sex work and drug use’. Quite frankly this reflects poorly on the RCMP. The report is clever because it is not necessarily saying untrue things, but it is omitting core issues and placing unnecessary emphasis on secondary and periphery concerns. The report does not mention or humanize the victims themselves but rather draws out points which excuse the RCMP’s inaction.

### **Project Amelia**

Originally called the Missing Women Review Team, Project Amelia was assembled in 1999 by the VPD in the attempt to respond to the homicides and disappearances coming out of the downtown east side of Vancouver (DTES) (Pearce, 2013). The DTES, a 21-block area of

Vancouver, is known as an area of extreme poverty, drug retail and use, and access to the sex trade and sex work (Olsen Harper 2006; Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012; Pearce 2013).

Appropriately described, the DTES is

...often depicted as a place of chaos and criminality. It is the site of epidemic illicit drug use and infectious disease including HIV and HCV. An open drug market and street-level sex trade typifies a few areas in the DTES, other areas are simply home to low-income families, and still others are now in the process of redevelopment and gentrification. We must keep in mind that the majority of people living in the DTES have little connection to illicit activity; many are simply too poor to live elsewhere in the city or have chosen to live there for valid reasons (Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012, 79).

It is also known as a high-risk area for aboriginal women, as many women from the DTES have been reported as murdered or missing (Finding Dawn, 2006; Highway of Tears, 2015). The DTES garnered a lot of media attention and local concern in the late 1990s when many of its sex trade workers began to go missing. The DTES seems to attract negative labels (e.g. ‘the last frontier for Vancouver Police’ (Pearce, 2013), or “Canada’s poorest postal code” (Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012, 79)) and is known for collecting disenfranchised people suffering from lingering effects of colonialism, the welfare state, mental illness and a lack of public mental health care, and addiction (Oppal, *Forsaken Vol I*, 2012, 80). To say that the victims of disappearance and murder from the DTES were marginalized is an understatement.

Pearce (2013) highlights Project Amelia in her doctoral thesis as ‘lip service’ paid to the families of victims from the DTES from the VPD. She notes that Project Amelia was initially implemented to establish whether the missing persons from the DTES were ‘really missing’ (meaning disappeared or left by their choice). This is notable because there was no policy at the time requiring confirmation of the reason for disappearance before investigations could begin

(Pearce, 2013). Sufficed to say, Project Amelia was off to a bumpy beginning with regard to victim-family management as well as missing persons and homicide investigations.

However, the project was also up against both logistical and administrative obstacles. Families and friends of DTES missing women were often reluctant to bring cases forward to the VPD (Pearce, 2013). This delay caused problems in identifying key missing person case factors, such as who last interacted with the missing person, and their last known whereabouts. Project Amelia also faced barriers from within the VPD. Their requests for additional funding and personnel were often denied; the project floundered (Pearce, 2013). All the meanwhile, women from the DTES continued to go missing, and it appears as though the VPD were only marginally looking for them (Pearce, 2013).

Finally, in May 2000, the staffers of Project Amelia were notified that the project would be ‘winding down’ and would come to a complete close by the end of 2000 (Pearce, 2013). The failure of Project Amelia was not caused by one thing alone. It was the combination of poor resources, lack of funding and “[r]acism, apathy and blatant disdain for the marginalized women whose life circumstances were anathema to police management [that] led to inaction. These Women were not afforded the same protection before they disappeared and the same concern, time and resources after they had gone missing, that would have been afforded to citizens deemed more worthy” (Pearce, 2013, p. 503). Despite best efforts by the individuals working the project, the project itself was never set up for success; its failure was inevitable.

## **Academic Scholarship Forever Loved**

The most recent published scholarship on MMIWG mentioned in this thesis is *Forever Loved* (2016). The book’s aim is to approach academic scholarship towards MMIWG through a

compilation of articles that promote healing and education about “the hidden crisis” (Lavell-Harvard & Brant, 2016, p. 12) of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Canada. “Simply put, [*Forever Loved*] demands the value of Indigenous women and girls as [Canada] come[s] together to work towards effective and immediate action” (Lavell-Harvard & Brant, 2016, p.7). A compilation of multiple authors and topics, editors Lavell-Harvard and Brant have assembled a work touching on key points such as: sociological factors (including a timeline of reports and government funding), reviews of violence against aboriginal women and girls, police failings with the missing persons cases from the DTES and Pickton investigation, approaches of MMIWG through film, and grass roots campaigns and initiatives. The book frames MMIWG as a sociological issue of violence “buried under layers of colonial abuses that continue to directly target Indigenous women and girls” (Lavell-Harvard & Brant, 2016, p. 5).

## **NGO Response**

### **Amnesty International**

#### **Stolen Sisters 2004 and No More Stolen Sisters 2009**

In 2004, AI released two reports on MMIWG: a summary and full report. Both reports discuss the factors causing aboriginal women to experience violence (such as Canada’s colonial history and risk factors for Canadian aboriginal women), and make recommendations to the government of Canada and its law enforcement agencies to prevent crime and foster proactive response to missing persons and aboriginal female homicide (see “Appendix B”). The reports highlight the “widespread and entrenched racism, poverty and marginalization [as] critical factors exposing Indigenous women to a heightened risk of violence while denying them adequate protection by police and government services” (Amnesty International, 2009). The reports were well received at the international level and were acknowledged by a Canadian

representative to the United Nations (UN) before the UN General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (Amnesty International, 2009).

In 2009, as an update to their 2004 reports on MMIWG, Amnesty International published a third report. This report aimed to highlight the marginalization of Canadian aboriginal women as a continuous theme. The report used five themes to explore this continued marginalization: “the role of racism and misogyny in perpetuating violence against Indigenous women” (Amnesty International, 2009, p. 4) a lack of protection of aboriginal women's economic, social, political, and cultural rights, the forced removal of children from aboriginal homes by the state, the high proportion of indigenous women in Canadian prisons, and “inadequate police response to violence against Indigenous women as illustrated by the handling of missing persons cases” (Amnesty International, 2009, p. 4). In the 5 years between reports the recommendations remain mostly the same, as if time had not touched the issue of MMIWG.

### **Human Rights Watch Report: Those who take us away**

This report places strong emphasis on police abuse, RCMP abuse, and abuse by the executive branch of the Canadian government. With a critical eye on police failing to protect aboriginal women and girls, the HRW report “Those who take us away” angles that the Canadian criminal justice system has fallen short to the point of negligence with regard to Canadian aboriginal women.

### **General Recommendations Made**

The scholarship on MMIWG all pull on the same foundational elements of entrenched colonialism, sexism, and racism. The recommendations made vary from broad sweeping statements to narrow and actionable. Table 2 synthesizes the recommendations most commonly

appearing in the reports and articles highlighted in this chapter. Generally, the reports placed greater emphasis on both ‘crime prevention’ and steps the government and its agencies should be taking to ensure at risk aboriginal women and girls don’t face violence. These recommendations engage in a conversation of acknowledgement of the violence faced by aboriginal women and rebut the idea that there is a lack of knowledge on MMIWG that allows one to deny the issue of MMIWG by saying ‘I had no idea’. Eberts (2014) writes: “Settlers knew [of the violence against aboriginal women], and then [they] unknew, about that violence. Unknowing what we once knew not only shields us from the unhappy reality of Indigenous women, it allows us to avoid confronting our own role in what has been happening to them and to continue to think well of ourselves” (p.72). The selected reports highlight the steady and ongoing discussion on MMIWG from 2004 through to 2016. These issues were being discussed and whatever remained unknown by the government of Canada, police, or RCMP was unknown by choice.

Recommendation	Stolen Sisters (2004)	Highway of Tears Symposium (2006)	No More Stolen Sisters (2009)	Forsaken (2012)	Those Who Take Us Away (2013)	Forever Loved (2016)
<b>Crime Prevention</b>						
Government provided transportation along Hwy 16		O		O		
Government provided safe homes for at risk aboriginal women and girls	O	O	O		O	
Public education about high-risk activity, associated dangers, and causal factors	O	O	O			
Promote police and RCMP engagement with aboriginal communities		O		O	O	
Promote media campaigns of awareness of MMIWG		O		O		
<b>Action &amp; Response</b>						
Improved procedure for opening a missing persons case	O	O	O			
Inclusion of civilian action and emergency response in tandem with RCMP and police	O	O	O		O	
Support civilian reports of missing persons and reports				O	O	
<b>Victim/Family Support</b>						
Social support/healing be provided to families of victims		O		O		
<b>Community Building</b>						
Funding: Management, Procurement, and Application	O	O	O	O		
Establish an inquiry		O	O		O	
Create safe protocol for civilian and professional reports of violence committed by police and RCMP	O		O	O	O	
Better training of police and RCMP for sensitivity to aboriginal issues	O		O	O	O	O
Notes: (1) “O” marks that the selected recommendation was made in the report/article. (2) “More Stolen Sisters” was a report built as an extension to “Stolen Sisters”, for that reason they show identical responses to recommendations made in “Stolen Sisters”.						

The importance of these reports, and the present Trudeau government inquiry, is the reports’ promotion of the concrete over the rhetorical. These reports call upon community building and action, and it is time to follow through and see some of these recommendations realized. “We must understand, challenge, and disavow, the attitudes ... that give rise to the violence, ask what concrete steps are necessary to repair that violence, and take them. The

rhetoric of apology may come as a first step, but the practical action of repair must necessarily follow; before repair must come an acceptance of responsibility...” (Eberts, 2014, p.104). The current inquiry into MMIWG will produce its own recommendations, likely they will fall into similar line with the reports and commissions and that have come before it. It is with great hope that this time the recommendations be taken seriously and give cause to action and change.

### **Frame Analysis: Bearing Witness**

The texts outlined above work through Kurasawa’s framework of bearing witness to reframe victimized and missing aboriginal women as ‘live victims’. The frame ‘live victims’ will be broken down through a discussion of the registers and mechanisms of bearing witness. The purpose of this frame is to connect the themes emerging from the literature and the efforts of the campaigns outlined in this chapter by framing the MMIWG as still relevant, a ‘live’ issue. In an effort to remain precise throughout this discussion, the word ‘live’ is preferred to the word ‘living’ because, unfortunately, some of the women discussed in this thesis and other works are found dead. By remembering these women as ‘live’ victims we ensure their memories remain relevant and drive actions combating the denial of their victimhood.

*Table 3*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Register</b>	<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Frame (ii)</b>
Sisters in Spirit	Interpretation	Remembrance	Live Victims
Symposium on Highway of Tears	Prevention	Empathy	
“Forever Loved”	Voice and Interpretation	Empathy	
Amnesty International: Stolen Sisters	Prevention	Remembrance	
Human Rights Watch: Those who take us away	Interpretation	Empathy	

## **Community Response**

The SIS created the frame ‘live victims’ through its use of interpretation and remembrance. The report “What Their Stories Tell Us” re-categorized MMIWG. They reinterpreted the issue as an inclusive one as opposed to the narrow conception of victimhood used in reports by government agencies. This categorization was done by including all aboriginal women and girls affected by violence in the study. This interpretation clarified what was happening and who it was happening to when investigating MMIWG. Furthermore, the SIS was more than a commissioned report, it also acted as a community support emphasizing awareness and combative efforts against violence against aboriginal women. The SIS supported large community events such as the Highway of Tears Symposium and the February 14 memorial walks, while also providing more intimate community support such as access to justice and counseling for the families of MMIWG (Olsen Harper, 2006). In short, the SIS strived to “eliminate the objectification and dehumanizing activities that Aboriginal women have been subjected to since European contact” (Olsen Harper, 2006, 38). SIS helped untangle the aftermath a family experiences when a loved one goes missing or is found murdered. Exploring the causes, and navigating the fallout of these crimes, registers as ‘interpretation’. This interpretation is a signifier of combative attitudes towards the denial of the disappearance or murder. When authorities take a narrow approach to wide scale investigation the individuals excluded by technicality become erased. SIS fought against this erasure.

The report released identified cases that were not included by authorities. This report made the inclusion of MMIWG cases public, formalizing their inclusion and validity. The compiling of data and release of reports stands apart from those who act to diminish the issue and erase the victims. By formalizing the findings, SIS uses the mechanism of ‘remembrance’ to

construct the frame of ‘live victims’. Further, the public nature of the report combats social forgetting. Finally, the marriage of government funding and broad scope inclusion of MMIWG cases creates an atmosphere that weakens an argument for denial.

The Symposium on the Highway of Tears constructs the frame ‘live victims’ through prevention and empathy building. The symposium itself registered ‘prevention’ as its main approach to combatting denial. The focus of the symposium was to proactively address the unsafe nature of highway 16. The organizers and community members involved wanted to stop women and girls from going missing off the highway. The recommendations made by the symposium point towards challenging the status-quo of unsafe practice on the highway and putting the responsibility on authorities to protect hitchhikers along the highway (HTSRR, 2006). The symposium framed the issue of disappearances on the highway with the tone that ‘this could happen to anyone’ – for example, the disappearance of Nicole Hoar. By using ‘empathy’ to fight indifference to the issue of MMIWG the symposium created the frame ‘live victim’ as victims of the past and the future; this issue is relevant and has implications for future women and girls.

### **Academic Response**

*Forever Loved* constructs the frame ‘live victim’ through the registers of both ‘voice’ and ‘interpretation’ and the mechanism of ‘empathy’. The variety of contributors (some being exclusively academic, some more campaign oriented, and others members of the aboriginal community) helped ‘voice’ the issue of MMIWG as one deserving formal recognition. The work as a whole aims to uncover the sociological and systemic factors contributing to the perpetuation of MMIWG as a phenomenon. The articles also ‘interpret’ the issue of violence against aboriginal women as those worthy of academic exploration. By expanding the study of these

issues beyond criminology, the complex and interdisciplinary nature of systemic violence, colonialism, and MMIWG can take root in a public discussion.

*Forever Loved* as a whole builds ‘empathy’ through its use of alternative approaches to persuasive writing. It engages its reader as a possible instrument towards action – for example, the editors elected to omit a conclusion to the book in the hopes that the reader understand the work of action against issues of violence and aboriginal women and girls is incomplete. This kind of technique connects the reader to the issue and fights against the habit to move past a topic once a book is put down. It calls the reader to action through its balanced roster of contributors, its inclusion of social discussion, and its ability to connect with its reader. All of these factors work towards the frame of ‘live victims’.

## **NGO Response**

Other contributions constructing the frame ‘live victims’ are reports released by AI and HRW. AI’s reports on Stolen Sisters frames ‘live victims’ as a product of ‘prevention’ and ‘remembrance’. Similar to the recommendations made from the symposium about highway 16, these reports made ‘prevention’ oriented recommendations. The reports aim to actively stop targeted violence of aboriginal women leading to their disappearances and murders. Interestingly, they use the mechanism of ‘remembrance’ to accomplish the connection between the report and the reader.

The use of profiles of selected MMIWG woven throughout the report acted as ‘remembrance’ in the face of social forgetting. This technique was also used in subsequent reports and projects, documentary films “Highway of Tears” and “Finding Dawn”, and the commissioned report “Forsaken”. For example:

Daleen Kay Bosse, a 27-year-old university student and mother from the Onion Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan, went missing on the night of 18 May 2004. Her remains were found in August 2008. The Saskatoon Police Service has charged one man in connection with her murder. The case is expected to go to trial in 2010.

Daleen Kay Bosse's parents, Pauline and Herb Muskego, say Saskatoon police initially discouraged them from filing a missing persons report. Even when days and then weeks went by, police continued to insist that their daughter would probably return home soon. The major crimes unit did not take up the case until January 2005 after she failed to return home at Christmas.

Although Pauline and Herb Muskego have spoken positively of the investigation that was eventually undertaken, they remain frustrated that eight months passed before their concerns were taken seriously (Amnesty International, 2009, p. 20).

This is the profile of Daleen Kay Bosse, a murdered woman from Saskatchewan. The profile highlights Daleen Bosse as a student, a mother, and a daughter. This profile is effective because it is simple and clear: Daleen Bosse was a family member; she had children, and she had parents. Her parents were concerned when she disappeared. Police improperly advised her parents. Because of this, Daleen Bosse's case was neglected. In spite of this neglect Mr. and Mrs. Muskego (Daleen Bosse's parents) remained positive towards police response. This story allows the reader to emotionally and concretely connect with the profile through remembrance of the victim. The emotional component connects with the humanization of this murdered woman and the concrete connection comes with the mention of inaction from the police. In contrast, the RCMP did not use this technique in their 2014 report.

HRW used their report "Those who take us away" to build the frame 'live victims' through 'interpretation' and 'empathy'. The register and mechanism are accomplished through the use of provocative language and tone throughout the report. The report calls out the police and RCMP for poor management of the relationships with indigenous communities:

Human Rights Watch researchers were struck when carrying out this research by the high levels of fear of police among the [Indigenous] women interviewed, levels of fear that Human Rights Watch normally finds in communities in post-conflict or post-transition countries such as Iraq where security forces have played an integral role in state abuses and enforcement of authoritarian policies. The palpable fear of the police was accompanied with a notable matter of fact manner when mentioning mistreatment by police, reflecting a normalized expectation that if one was an indigenous woman or girl police mistreatment is to be anticipated (Human Rights Watch, 2013, p. 34).

The tone here is clearly accusatory, as seen by HRW comparing Canadian police to authoritarian Iraqi state-sanctioned abusers. Even the title of the report “Those who take us away” refers to a colloquialism with First Nations communities for governmental agencies forcibly removing indigenous children from their family and home communities. The report is clear, the police and government of Canada have a lot of repair to do between indigenous and settler communities.

The ‘interpretation’ and the ‘empathy’ construction happen almost simultaneously through the report’s use of analogy. By drawing analogy between the relationship of aboriginal communities and the state authority with similar relationship structures in notorious settings (e.g. tyranny) the issue of MMIWG is interpreted as clear and uncomplicated: this issue is not just bad, it’s very bad. While this language and approach may seem diminishing, it is actually making a complicated issue easily understandable and accessible to an audience. By making this issue accessible, the reader is engaged through ‘empathy’.

Both the reports by AI and HRW aim to combat denial by connecting with the audience, i.e. the reader. This connection is achieved differently by each group. By having a diverse pool of reports available to fight social denial and bear witness to the realities of MMIWG, there is a better chance of reaching an often elusive audience. Unfortunately, social denial is pervasive and

hard to combat. An analysis of social denial perpetuated through news media sources follows in chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Framework Analysis Continued: Media Frame Analysis of Selected News Media Sources and Tina Fontaine

At the research proposal stage, this chapter was intended to provide an analysis of the media discourse surrounding MMIWG on three levels: individual (the story of Tina Fontaine), community (explorations of grass roots communities such as SIS, Missing Justice, and Missing Sisters), and government (the government inquiry of MMIWG). As the research began to fall into place it became apparent that this wide scope was not feasible. It produced too many conflicting frames and analyses muddling the analysis considerably. The proposed analysis also relied on assumptions that denial is always bad, as we will see in the following analysis, this turned out not to be the case. Lastly, the separation of individual, community, and government, created redundant results: repetitious frames emerged in slightly different contextual backdrops.

The analysis, outlined below, provides a clear view of frames placed on MMIWG in the media through a focused look at one case, the murder of an aboriginal teenager, Tina Fontaine. The following analysis reveals three tiers of frames, frames on the individual narrative of Tina, frames on the significance Tina plays within community perspectives, and frames within the national implications Tina’s narrative points towards (specific emphasis placed on the government inquiry into MMIWG). Factiva was used to generate the news media samples for this analysis. All articles are from the National Post and Globe and Mail, dated between August 1, 2014 – October 19, 2015 and are read in chronological sequence.

<i>Table 4 - Overview of article sample</i>				
	<b>Keyword – “Tina Fontaine”</b>	<b>Results Included*</b>	<b>Duplicates**</b>	<b>Articles caught by frames</b>
Globe and Mail	In text: “Tina Fontaine”	76	35	57
National Post	In text: “Tina Fontaine”	34	19	23
* All results are narrowed to promote accuracy and remove redundancy.				
** Duplicates include articles reproduced within a single publication date and articles duplicated in research on the government inquiry into MMIWG.				

## **Tina Fontaine**

Tina Fontaine was a 15-year-old teenager. A member of the Sagkeeng First Nation, Tina lived most of her young life under the supervision of her great-aunt Thelma Favel, first on Sagkeeng First Nation Reserve and then in Powerview-Pine Falls, MB. Tina's home life was riddled with tragedy. Her mother, Tina Duck, was unable to care for either Tina or her younger sister. Tina's father, Eugene Fontaine, became ill and turned his daughters' care over to his aunt Thelma Favel. In 2011, Eugene Fontaine was the victim of assault and died from his injuries. On more than one occasion, Tina would leave Thelma Favel's care. It is not known why she chose to do so. Thelma Favel felt she could no longer adequately care for Tina or her younger sister and turned to Child and Family Services (CFS) for help.

While in CFS care, Tina was housed in a Best Western Hotel in Winnipeg. Unknowing to CFS, Tina left this Best Western, and on August 9, 2014 was reported missing. Subsequent investigations revealed that Tina was both spotted by police and in the care of paramedics between the time she left the Best Western and August 17, 2014 when her body appeared wrapped in plastic in Manitoba's Red River. On August 8, 2014, after being found unconscious in an alley in Winnipeg's west end, Tina was brought into the care of paramedics and hospital emergency room staff. Police also report spotting Tina on August 8, 2014 sitting passenger side with a man in a car pulled over for a traffic stop. The police did not take notice that the girl in the car was the missing Tina Fontaine. As of August 15, 2014 Tina Fontaine had been missing from CFS for 2 weeks.

This narrative is constructed out of published news articles from both the National Post and Globe and Mail. It is provided to contextualise the frame analysis to follow. It is written without exaggeration and hyperbole: just bare facts. When reviewing the frames outlined,

remember what is known about Tina, and what is not known. The framing of Tina Fontaine's story is: Tina Fontaine, the 'culpable victim', Tina Fontaine, the 'poster child', and Tina Fontaine, 'the extra'.

## **Culpable Victim**

Tina Fontaine was a victim of murder, her body found discarded in the Red River. The events leading up to her disappearance, and the circumstances of the investigation surrounding her murder, are picked up by news media and broadcast through a lens where Tina is a 'culpable victim'; she is responsible for her murder. This claim is not meant to sit radically. There is no suggestion that Tina played an active role in the circumstances leading to and causing her death. However, the reports surrounding Tina's story insinuate culpability on Tina's part. There is a nuance to making someone a 'culpable victim' which is not present in 'victim blaming'. When one draws attention to behavior without outwardly connecting that behavior to consequential action they are implying the connection be made. In turn, when one draws attention to a victim's behavior, then draws attention to acts leading to victimization, they are labeling the victim as responsible without accusing them of negligence. This is what happened to Tina Fontaine.

For the purposes of this thesis, the National Post and the Globe and Mail both frame Tina Fontaine's story either through social denial or bearing witness. This chapter will reveal that the National Post illustrates Cohen's framework of denial to tell a story that faults the witness while the Globe and Mail's framework can be understood as an instance of what we can describe, using Kurasawa's framework, as bearing witness to draw attention to societal responsibility for Tina Fontaine's murder.

I am breaking down the frame 'culpable victim' with sub frames 'the run-away' and 'alcohol, drugs, and violence'. Of the 34 articles the National Post published which mentioned

Tina Fontaine, 8 explicitly mentioned Tina as a run-away, and 2 pointed to alcohol, drug use, and violence. The significance of these frames does not lie in their frequency, but in their contextual use within the article. These articles were not about Tina's habit of running away, but the inclusion of 'a ran away' to Tina's name became commonplace within the articles of the National Post.

Shortly after Tina's body was found, the National Post released an article providing vague details of Tina's disappearance and discovery. Some examples:

"Investigations are underway to determine whether Manitoba's social services failed a 15-year-old aboriginal girl who ran away from foster care and was found dead in the Red River."

(Puxley, 2014a)

"The death of the teen [Tina Fontaine], who had run away from foster care, touched a nerve across the country, ..." (Puxley, 2014b)

What is the purpose of stating that Tina had 'run-away'? Is it imperative to the narrative? Is it helpful to solving her murder? I believe this is a tactic to label Tina as a 'culpable victim', not blameworthy, but not innocent. I further challenge the use of 'run-away' and ask: how is it known that Tina did in fact run-away? If someone runs away once does that mean any subsequent time they leave supervision they are running-away?

It is not coincidental that after publication of Rinelle Harper's assaults Tina's label of 'run-away' seemed to disappear.<sup>20</sup> Instead of 'Tina Fontaine the run-away': "Tina's body was

---

<sup>20</sup> Rinelle Harper is an aboriginal woman who in 2014 was physically and sexually assaulted by 2 men, then left for dead along the Assiniboine River in Winnipeg. The attack on Rinelle Harper happened several months after Tina Fontaine's body was discovered. The two incidents are often reported together as both being attacks on teenage aboriginal girls in Winnipeg with their bodies left along (or inside) rivers. One National Post article

found on Sunday wrapped in a bag in the Red River after she ran away from her Winnipeg foster home where she had been for less than a month” (Puxley, 2014a), the articles began to read: “Tina had disappeared from a temporary foster home in early August and her body, wrapped in plastic was later found in the river” (Kennedy, 2014). The trend in the Tina Fontaine narrative, which emerged from the Rinelle Harper narrative, lent to a softer tone in describing Tina’s leaving of foster care. Either ‘ran away’ was replaced with less culpable language (like ‘disappeared’ as quoted above) or the circumstances of her leaving foster care are omitted altogether. For example: “... as police continue to look for 15-year-old Tina Fontaine’s killer. Her body was wrapped in plastic and dumped in the Red River in August” (Puxley, 2014c). Where it was once appropriate to include ‘run-away’ it is suddenly no longer appropriate. The frequency with which the term ‘run-away’ is used lessens in articles published after the attack on Rinelle Harper.

Notable differences between the attacks on Rinelle Harper and Tina Fontaine include Rinelle having survived her attack whereas Tina did not. Tina does not have a voice, and her silence created space for the news media to depict her whichever way they saw fit (in this instance as a run-away). Rinelle survived, and spoke openly about her attack and its role in the narrative of MMIWG. When Rinelle went public nothing changed in the facts of Tina’s case, but she somehow became less culpable.

Similarly, the mentioning of alcohol, drugs, and violence, in Tina’s story often serves only to paint a picture of a stereotypical aboriginal experience. On August 27, 2014 the National Post published an article with heavy emphasis on the role (or seeming role) alcohol, drugs, and violence played in Tina’s disappearance and murder.

---

highlights the similarities in a headline that reads “Fontaine-like sex attack shakes Winnipeg anew; Aboriginal girl, 16, dumped in Assiniboine River” (Humphreys, 2014).

Because the killing of Tina Fontaine has not yet been solved, we don't know the circumstances of her death (aside from the fact that her clothes were found on a riverbank near syringes and empty alcoholic cooler bottles). What we do know is that her life's downward trajectory was set in motion, in part at least, by a familiar cocktail of alcohol and violence.

Tina's mother, Valentina Duck, struggled with alcoholism. Her father Eugene was killed in 2011: ... His killing was equally senseless: blunt-force trauma to the head during a violent fight at a party on the Sagkeeng First nation reserve. (*National Post Editorial*, 2014)

The story of Tina Fontaine does not have to be this story. But the National Post is presenting a narrative filled with stereotypes.

Let's break down this passage and pull out the frames used: "...we don't know the circumstances of her death (aside from the fact that her clothes were found on a riverbank near syringes and empty alcoholic cooler bottles)" (*National Post Editorial*, 2014). Tina's body was found in the Red River— a public space. Syringes and alcoholic cooler bottles could have been left by anyone. Also, 'alcoholic cooler bottles' insinuates a party atmosphere — something festive. And even if drugs and alcohol had been used by Tina in this instance, does that validate her murder as being undeserved? Again, there is a suggestion of culpability in the face of reason to the contrary. This narrative is not blaming Tina, but it is not promoting her innocence either.

The second part of the passage reads: "Tina's mother, Valentina [Tina] Duck, struggled with alcoholism. Her father Eugene was killed... blunt-force trauma to the head during a violent fight at a party on the Sagkeeng First nation reserve" (*National Post Editorial*, 2014). Tina Duck was an alcoholic. Eugene Fontaine was killed at a party on a Native reserve. This passage promotes the stereotypes that aboriginal people are alcoholics, aboriginal men are violent, and Native reserves are dangerous. Again, the question remains, what does this lend to Tina's story?

The narrative provided at the beginning of the section communicated all the relevant points of Tina's story without the mention of alcohol, drugs, or violence, and remained effective in telling the story of murder of an aboriginal teenager. Is the effort of the National Post to be sensationalist? To produce articles of tragic loss amongst an already tragic First Nation? It doesn't matter. For our purposes, the intent of the author and publication are irrelevant. Only the published product contributes to the understanding of social denial and its role within the issue of MMIWG.

These frames are frames of social denial constructed through the use of registers and mechanisms as outlined by Cohen (2001) and explained in chapters 1 and 2. 'Culpable victim' is a frame perched on micro-denials (the making of an event routine). What happened to Tina Fontaine is not routine, but in the narrative of MMIWG it is being framed as par for the course. Another aboriginal teenager from a broken home, involved in drugs and alcohol, with a penchant for running-away, winds up dead. This should not be a classic version of a cautionary tale, but in some sense it is being framed that way through the use of micro-denials.

The denials woven through the frame 'culpable victim' are 'cultural denial' aided with the rhetorical device of 'denial of the victim'. To reiterate the definition from chapter 1, 'cultural denial' is the unacknowledged agreement of societies about what can be remembered. In this instance, what is being remembered is an aboriginal stereotype. This directly feeds the frame of 'culpable victim'. On its face, Tina Fontaine is not being blamed for her murder. The connection between her actions and her murder are implied. This connection is not obviously drawn out in the text because if it were then the publication could be accused of 'victim blaming'. Instead of 'victim blaming', the implication of connection between Tina's actions and her subsequent murder imbed the frame 'culpable victim' in her narrative. Furthermore, with respect to 'denial

of the victim', there is a clear sense of deserved victimization within the above-mentioned frames. The denial here is not one of the issue existing, it is of the issue in action. When an aboriginal woman (or girl) is murdered, does society follow through on its moral promises for empathy and action, or does it deny the relevancy of the application of MMIWG to a murdered aboriginal girl? The frame 'culpable victim' reveals the latter.

The Globe and Mail offers a competing frame to Tina Fontaine as a 'culpable victim'. At the same time the National Post was publishing articles framing Tina as a 'culpable victim', the Globe and Mail was creating a narrative where Tina is framed as an 'honourable victim'; someone who was strong of character and worth remembering. Using Kurasawa's framework of 'Bearing Witness' the analysis of the Globe and Mail sample will now be presented.

As discussed in chapter 2, 'Bearing Witness' is a framework used to promote social justice and fight societal trends like social denial. The Globe and Mail interprets Tina Fontaine's narrative through articles that use 'interpretation' and 'empathy'. For example, on August 20, 2014 the Globe and Mail published an article mentioning Tina Fontaine: "Prior to her death, Tina had run away from her group home placement – a demonstration of resistance to a notoriously broken national child welfare system" (*The Globe and Mail Breaking News*, 2014a). The claim that Tina's leaving foster care was an act in protest is an exaggeration. The truth is, no one but Tina knows why she left; there are no reported reasons or testimony to explain why Tina frequently left supervised care.

By claiming that Tina's actions were symbolic as actions of protest (an interpretation offered by the Globe and Mail) the article is eliciting sympathy and creating a frame around Tina as someone honourable. The Globe and Mail can be understood as presenting Tina's story to combat 'incomprehensibility' and make sense of Tina's experience. By giving a reason for her

actions, the Globe and Mail makes it possible to empathize with Tina and find fault in her death with the social systems that failed her. Through ‘interpretation’ and ‘empathy’ the work of Bearing Witness produces a frame that combats denial, the ‘honourable victim’ versus the ‘culpable victim’. The Globe and Mail mentions Tina’s running-away as either positive or neutral in 5 different articles from the sample. The National Post either mentioned Tina as a run-away in a negative light or omitted it altogether. The construction of a narrative particular to Tina as an individual is clear in both newspapers, one perpetuates denial, while the other combats it.

### **The Poster Child**

Tina Fontaine was killed at 15-years-old. This age poses an interpretive issue for the news media: was Tina a child or an adult? There is a clear trend in the sample of selected news articles that Tina is either a child or a woman depending on the context of the article itself. For example, the Globe and Mail ran two contextual backdrops to Tina Fontaine’s story, the inquiry into MMIWG and criticism of CFS. Tina’s life touches both stories. Tina’s being a teenager leaves her in a social space where she is old enough to be considered one of Canada’s missing or murdered indigenous women (MMIW) but still young enough to be an example of failed state child care through CFS.

A prime example of this interpretive practice is found in a Globe and Mail article published August 22, 2014. The headline reads, “What unites these slain native women? An inquiry might tell us; The federal government must not be allowed to close its eyes to the deaths of aboriginal women” (Renzetti, 2014). This headline is not cryptic, clearly the article to follow is about politics and MMIW. The article’s opening line reads: “This month’s toll: A 15-year-old-girl is pulled from the Red River in Winnipeg, her body wrapped in plastic;...” (Renzetti, 2014).

This is clearly a depiction of Tina Fontaine. Tina is listed alongside Samantha Paul (aged 25) and Loretta Saunders (aged 26) as recently identified murdered indigenous women. This article is framing Tina as an adult, interpreting her age to aid the discussion of MMIW. The article ends with this sentiment: “An inquiry [into MMIW] would be a way of honouring the women whose futures are lost. Ms. Saunders, 26, was a university student... Ms. Paul, 25, wanted to be a hairdresser... I don’t know what Tina Fontaine wanted to be; who has any clue, at 15?” (Renzetti, 2014). The author offers little more than a hint towards Tina’s stage of life. This hint is at the end of the article, and still situates Tina in the same vein as Loretta Saunders and Samantha Paul.

From the sample of Globe and Mail articles which search for uses of Tina Fontaine by name in the text of the article, 25 of the 76 articles produced primarily discussed failures of foster care and CFS. In the context of these articles Tina is a child let down by a system designed to protect her. These articles appear as the largest grouping of a topic within the sample.

Article headlines like: “Tina Fontaine and the calamity of native child welfare” (*The Globe and Mail Breaking News, 2014d*); “Parents wanted, not custodians, for native children” (*The Globe and Mail Breaking News, 2014e*); “In Manitoba, hotels shelter the province’s most vulnerable wards; In a province where nearly 90 per cent of the more than 10,000 children in care are aboriginal, hotel placements are also a reminder of the ill fate of the most unfortunate of the unfortunate” (Blaze Carlson, 2014c), all angle Tina as a child in foster care, not a victimized woman.

Sometimes, the articles are more direct with their framing of Tina as either an adult or a child. Typically, shortly after Tina’s name is mentioned for the first time in the article, the cause the article is writing about will follow. Here are two examples taken from the Globe and Mail

sample: October 20, 2014: "... the high-profile death of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine, whose August killing has also prompted fresh scrutiny of the child welfare system" (Blaze Carlson, 2014b). October 31, 2014: "... Tina Fontaine, the Sagkeeng First Nation teen whose August killing in Winnipeg prompted renewed calls for a national inquiry into Canada's more than 1,181 murdered and missing aboriginal women" (Blaze Carlson, 2014c). In the article about child welfare, Tina is explicitly noted as being 15-years-old, a teenager – but a young teenager. In the article about women Tina is noted as a teenager without specification. She could be 18, or 19, pulling her firmly into the MMIWG category. There is no question that Tina Fontaine is one of the MMIWG in Canada and was let down by CFS; an ailing child welfare system. But the construction of her identity in these articles to tailor her as the face for a cause leads us to the second frame: Tina Fontaine, the 'poster child'.

This frame is created by the framework of social denial, the use of macro-denials, the use of the register 'interpretive denial', and the mechanism of 'rhetoric: collusion and cover up'. As seen in the frame 'culpable victim', micro-denials work to deny aspects of the individual narrative by making an event seemingly routine and ordinary. By denying the unique quality of an event one is denying the narrative of the individual. Macro-denials function by denying truth on a societal level. The truth of an event is transformed and hidden in plain sight. For the frame 'poster child' this is achieved through undoing the intersection of Tina's age by interpreting Tina as either an adult or a child. In doing this, the facts of Tina's narrative move away from her individual identity and she becomes exemplar of another issue.

Tina Fontaine's identity is intersectional. The frame 'poster child' pivots on the interpretation of Tina's age as being either child or adult, but not a teenager. The teenage stage of life is located between childhood and adulthood, and through an intersectional lens is the

combination of stages (i.e. child x adult = teen). By combining childhood and adulthood to create the teenage stage of life, a multidimensional understanding of Tina's age and social location by virtue of age emerges. By being 15, Tina is not at an age of consent or majority; society understands her to be more a child than an adult. On the other hand, by being 15, Tina is able to make self-determinative decisions; decisions she acted upon by leaving the supervised care of her aunt and CFS. This analysis does not engage with discussion and research surrounding life stages and psyche, but it does reflect the tension within the news media with respect to labeling Tina as either an adult or a child. By splitting Tina's age into two categories the complexity of her identity as a teenager in news discourse is muted.

Applying this analysis with the articles from the Globe and Mail, it is clear that when Tina is interpreted as being either an adult or a child for the purposes of providing evidence to the point at issue in the article (either MMIWG or CFS) then the rhetoric of 'collusion and cover up' is found. As described in Chapter 2, 'collusion and cover up' is the coming together of multiple parties to reinterpret an event as routine, thereby denying it. The routinization here is the interpretation of Tina's identity as an adult or a child. By creating a fork in Tina's identity, and denying the intersectionality of childhood and adulthood, the news media is hiding Tina in plain sight. Because Tina does not have her own voice, the articles written about her are unopposed. The reader of the article will see Tina's age followed by a statement of MMIWG or CFS and then understands the implication of Tina's identity. This collusion with the publication covers up Tina's identity. Tina becomes a flat symbol of a larger issue and stops being a real individual. By removing Tina from the MMIW category and placing her within the CFS frame, the publication is reframing Tina's murder as one of neglect within child welfare. Pointing to

systemic problems with CFS removes the question of violence against women from Tina's story and denies that aspect of her murder.

### **The Extra**

Of the 76 articles sourced from the Globe and Mail, 20 of them had Tina Fontaine's name in some form (either in full, or just her last name) in the headline. Of those 20 articles, 11 of them were focused on Tina's narrative, while the other 9 were focused on either politics in Canada, foster care in Canada, or something else altogether (see Table 5.a for further detail). The National Post had similar proportional results. Of the 34 articles sourced from the National Post, 3 of them had Tina's name in the headline, and only one of those articles was actually about Tina (see Table 5.b). Tina's name in the headline of an article is significant because it shows her name being used as a lure for some other topic. For example, for every time the Globe and Mail used Tina's name in the headline of a story about Tina's life and death there was another story with Tina's name in the headline about something else.

*Table 5.a: Globe and Mail - Sample Overview*

Culpable Victim		Poster Child		Extra		
Running Away	Alcohol, Drugs, and Violence	Foster Care Failures	Government Inquiry	Politics	Name in headline	Tina Fontaine
1	9	1	1	1	2	3
2	14	4	2	2	3	7
3	24	14	3	4	9	9
11		27	4	5	11	22
22		28	10	6	14	24
32		33	12	8	20	26
34		35	13	10	22	40
37		38	16	12	24	49
53		46	23	14	26	53
		47	27	45	29	59
		50	28		30	70
		51	42		40	72
		52	45		46	
		56	55		47	
		57	68		49	
		58	73		50	
		60			53	
		61			59	
		63			70	
		65			72	
		66				
		69				
		73				
		75				
		76				

Each sourced article was number 1-76 to reflect duplication, cross indexing, and chronological order.

*Table 5.b: National Post - Sample Overview*

Culpable Victim		Poster Child		Extra		
Running Away	Alcohol, Drugs, and Violence	Foster Care Failures	Government Inquiry	Politics	Name in headline	Tina Fontaine
1	4	20	3	2	10	1
7	10	21	4	6	11	10
8		24	6	16	19	30
9		31	17	29		
10		34	18			
11			28			
24			32			
34						

Each sourced article was number 1-34 to reflect duplication, cross indexing, and chronological order.

Framing Tina as support to other issues denies Tina’s narrative altogether. This framing registers through ‘interpretive’ and ‘cultural’ denial, and acts through the mechanism of ‘rhetoric: appeal to higher loyalties’. As we’ve seen in previous frames, ‘interpretive denial’ registers an event as normal and ordinary. By placing Tina’s narrative in the background to other issues the events of her life and death become routine. For example, on August 25, 2014 the *Globe and Mail* published an article with the headline: “Premiers to press Ottawa on inquiry into missing, murdered aboriginal women; Provincial leaders meeting in Charlottetown expected to propose alternative that would see federal ministers sit down with aboriginal leaders” (*The Globe and Mail Breaking News*, 2014c). This article mentions Tina amidst political criticism as well as promotion of a government led inquiry in MMIWG:

But with Prime Minister Stephen Harper continuing to reject the idea, national aboriginal leaders meeting with premiers this week will push for an alternative that would see key federal ministers sit down with aboriginal leaders to discuss the issue and potential courses of action,

Debate over the merits of a public inquiry heated up last week in the wake of another violent death, after the body of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine was discovered wrapped in plastic in Winnipeg’s Red River. The RCMP reported earlier this year that more than

1,000 aboriginal women were homicide victims between 1980 and 2013, and a further 164 were missing.

Prince Edward Island Premier Robert Ghiz, who will host this week's Council of the Federation meeting, confirmed a national inquiry – which premiers called for last year – will be back on the agenda (*The Globe and Mail Breaking News*, 2014c).

Tina is 'another violent death' amongst many violent deaths of aboriginal women. Her narrative is diminished to one of a murdered aboriginal woman, joining the ranks of numerous other murdered aboriginal women, providing evidence for the need of a government inquiry in the face of federal opposition. What this 'interpretative denial' register presents to us is that Tina's story is framed as not unique within recent occurrences of violence against aboriginal women. This framing hides the narrative of systemic violence against aboriginal women rooted in colonialism.

Throughout the sample taken from the *Globe and Mail* colonialism is only included in the discussion twice, once on August 21, 2014 and again on August 22, 2014. In the first article colonialism is listed at the suggestion of Claudette Dumont-Smith, the executive director for NWAC (Blaze Carlson, 2014a). Her comment is not contextualized or explored, and is followed by a sentence leading to discussion of what Tina's death can tell us about CFS and the problems of child based investigations (Blaze Carlson, 2014a). In the second article titled "How to stop an epidemic of native deaths" colonialism is offered in a list of items with no direct relation to MMIWG: "Many of those calling for an inquiry seem to imagine that all can be neatly laid at the feet of Ottawa, plus racism, sexism and 'colonialism.'" (*The Globe and Mail Breaking News*, 2014b). That an article presented to discuss native deaths does not focus on colonialism and merely lists it in bulk highlights denial's thread through the publications.

Similarly, the *National Post* constructs the same frame around Tina's narrative; using the narrative as support for another issue. On August 22, 2014 the *National Post* published an article

with the headline: “PM brings the heat on Arctic; Harper defends record of action for North” (Den Tandt, 2014). This article reviews the Harper Government’s initiatives and their impacts on Northern Canada. Tina Fontaine is mentioned at the end of the article in the following passage:

On the subject of missing and murdered aboriginal women, a discussion renewed in the aftermath of the murder of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine, Mr. Harper said he views the question as one of crime, not sociology. In other words: Find the guilty, punish the guilty, prevent further violence against aboriginal women but also all other Canadian women. But do not ‘appear to be doing something’ by convening expensive, exhaustive inquiries during which people talk a lot, but do not solve problems. That will be disagreeable to many, but it is consistent with a philosophically conservative approach to governance (Den Tandt, 2014).

The role of Tina Fontaine in this passage is to support that MMIWG exist in Canada. The passage is clearly not about Tina, yet her name is mentioned explicitly. Her narrative is lost in a discussion of politics. This passage further reveals denial, but in the form of ‘implicatory denial’.

As outlined in chapter 1, ‘implicatory denial’ is the minimizing of psychological, political, or moral implications of an event. This passage discusses then Prime Minister Harper’s stance on MMIWG as an issue of inaction due to poor categorization. By saying MMIWG is not ‘sociology’ but is instead ‘crime’ is the same unwinding seen earlier between intersections within Tina’s age. Mr. Harper is taking something multidimensional and laying it flat. Further, he is denying the systemic roots of violence against aboriginal women and MMIWG by categorizing violence strictly as crime. In this National Post article, Tina’s narrative is situated as evidence to a passage of rhetoric denying the systemic patterns which have been outlined in the Literature Review of this project.

These registers of denials are located through the rhetorical mechanism: ‘appeal to higher loyalties’. This rhetoric is seen through the newsworthiness of other issues over Tina’s story.

Who does the news owe a story to? The subject of their story? The audience receiving the story? Some higher moral obligation to a story? It is clear that some news media sources are more balanced in their portrayal of subjects than others (see Tables 5.a and 5.b), but both sources appeal to a higher loyalty thereby denying Tina's narrative. The topic of politics, foster care, or an inquiry seem to come at the expense of Tina's individuality and identity portrayed in the news media. Tina is a supporting role to a larger story about violence and aboriginal women, and in being so is lost in the process.

### **Summary of Findings**

The frames 'culpable victim', 'honourable victim', 'poster child', and 'the extra', have been identified for the depiction of Tina Fontaine in the news media by using frameworks of denial and bearing witness. In short, the general finding is that the truth of Tina Fontaine's story is being denied. Either for the promotion of denial or bearing witness, Tina's story is constructed and interpreted by the media to create an image that serves a greater purpose – whether it be discouragement of stagnant political process (through criticism of political inaction with respect to the inquiry on MMIWG) or humanizing publically shamed victims (by creating human interest stories about victims, like Rinelle Harper, who can speak for themselves). This leaves the question of justification on the table: Is the denial of Tina Fontaine justified so long as it seemingly promotes good and justice?

The analysis and review of the sample articles reveal that the moral implications of denial extend both ways: denials that promote falsehood, and denials that promote justice. Denials that promote falsehood exist to erase the victim. As seen in the analysis above, overshadowing pieces of the victim's narrative with other issues erases the victim and denies them their victimhood. A denial that promotes justice is a denial that hides under the guise it is working towards a

resolution or for the betterment of an ill. In this case, the denial promoting justice is the government inquiry into MMIWG.

Chapter 1 reviewed colonialism as it applies to violence against aboriginal women and aboriginal peoples in general. Colonialism structures the relationship between settler and aboriginal communities in Canada, and any discussion about systemic issues facing aboriginal communities within Canada must explore colonial roots. Colonialism is founded on acts of violence and domination (King, 2014; Logan, 2015), it is not surprising that aboriginal women face violence and domination in present day Canada. This power imbalance and history of violence leaves aboriginal women highly susceptible to violence and contributes to their disappearances and murders. If there are clear lines connecting colonialism to present day violence, then what is the purpose of the inquiry?

It makes sense that aboriginal groups would call for an inquiry into MMIWG as it surely contributes to public awareness and discussion of a long ignored issue. Theoretically, the inquiry would trigger an analysis of root causes to violence against aboriginal women, helping formulate paths towards resolution and prevention. For example, if we understand why certain groups are targeted we can address the targeting practices of predators, and if we understand why certain groups become victims then we can prevent their likelihood of being victims to certain crimes. This type of analysis is helpful, but arguably already exists in the form of academic study and inquiry into colonialism. Furthermore, the TRC and exploration into residential schools in Canada and its ties to colonialism is an example of connecting links of violence to current social instability. Therefore, there is enough support to suggest that any study in MMIWG is a study in colonialism.

That being said, what is the interaction between the inquiry into MMIWG and social denial? And, if MMIWG links to colonialism, then why is that not part of the discussion emerging in the publications calling for the inquiry? As we've seen, 'colonialism' is used in publications as padding to already full articles instead of as persuasive support to a call to action. It is as if Canadian society has forgotten about its own history and is treating MMIWG as a new phenomenon instead of one entrenched in a colonial history of violence. The texts reviewed in chapter 3 brought forward by aboriginal communities discuss colonialism, but the publications reviewed by the National Post and the Globe and Mail do not. This discrepancy points towards an intense 'normalization' surrounding colonialism. Cohen (2001) suggests that 'normalization' is the process by which an event is interpreted over-and-over until it becomes valid; stripped of its uniqueness and consequence. This normalization of colonialism leads to a 'cultural denial' surrounding colonialism's links to violence against aboriginal women. Pulling on Cohen's (2001) definition of 'cultural denial', it is as if Canada as a settler community has decided to remember colonialism, but not remember it as something still existing and manifesting itself as violence against aboriginal women. The inquiry into MMIWG is an exercise in cultural denial and social amnesia. What will be invariably discovered are the ties of colonialism to violence against aboriginal women both historically and presently. The discovery to be made is how fickle society's memory seems to be when it comes to ugly parts of history. This denial serves no one and jeopardizes the safety of those it leaves most vulnerable.

News media's call for an inquiry into MMIWG brings together the frameworks of denial and bearing witness to create the cultural denial of colonialism and violence against aboriginal women. News media appears to fight against their own participation in social denial by bearing witness to violence against aboriginal women and calling for an inquiry. But by not connecting

the violence and systemic problem of MMIWG to colonial roots, the news media are engaging in social denial veiled by bearing witness. This is denial for the promotion of justice. Said plainly, the effort to do good is set up to fail from its outset because one cannot combat something they do not see their own participation in. This kind of denial that promotes justice is a good attempt at repair, but fails when it does not see its own complicity with the very thing it sets out to fight; denial of its own role in the issue.

## **Conclusion**

The National Post and the Globe and Mail have constructed frames of denial surrounding Tina Fontaine. Denying the truth of Tina's story in the news denies her identity. Is the media erasing Tina by using her narrative to support other topics? Said another way, does Tina disappear beneath frames of victimhood? In searching for these answers, the analysis of articles surrounding the inquiry of MMIWG become relevant. When searching Factiva using the keywords "All of these words: inquiry missing murdered" and "At least one of these words: native aboriginal indigenous", the National Post produced 57 results, with 21 articles duplicated (and 36 unique articles) in the Tina Fontaine sample, and the Globe and Mail produced 83 articles, with 40 duplicates and 43 unique articles. In both sample pools, the majority of the unique articles focused on the inquiry into MMIWG as a contentious issue between the NDP, the Liberal, and the Conservative parties. In essence, what was happening to Tina's story was happening to the hundreds of women who are pooled into the MMIWG statistics cited in these articles. Their stories and identities were being washed into a larger discussion of politics as opposed to a discussion about the issue itself.

The frames ‘culpable victim’, ‘the poster child’, and ‘the extra’ reveal the role of social denial in constructing narratives to tell a certain story. Reviewing Tina Fontaine’s story from 3 perspectives allows a larger picture to be drawn on the ways social denial acts as a social practice within news media discourse. On the individual level, the National Post reveals Tina to be a ‘culpable victim’ while the Globe and Mail presents her as an ‘honourable victim’, two different perspectives and frames drawn from one set of facts. The Globe and Mail constructs the frame of ‘honourable victim’ in attempt to combat Tina’s image as responsible for her own murder.

Both the Globe and Mail and the National Post contributed to the frames ‘the poster child’ and ‘the extra’. ‘The poster child’ reveals the malleability of Tina’s narratives to fit into issues that erase part of her identity. Tina becomes polarized as either a child or an adult. Because of this split her person is never fully realized. Furthermore, when Tina is discussed under the category of CFS failure her murder becomes a failure of child welfare and not of colonial violence. The frame ‘the extra’ emerges when Tina’s story is reviewed through a wide lens. Tina becomes background to other issues, her name and unfortunate celebrity used as lures for other stories, particularly the story of calls for an inquiry into MMIWG.

The call for an inquiry into MMIWG pulls together social denial and bearing witness. The inquiry itself is a contradiction of social practice, contributing to the problem it wants to solve. There is a forgetfulness to society’s review of colonialism that hides its deep roots. Furthermore, issues cannot be viewed as superficial wounds in need of dressing, the entire system upon which an issue rests must be reviewed, and repair must come from within the system itself.

## Concluding Thoughts

This thesis has reviewed the literature surrounding the history of colonialism and aboriginal peoples in Canada, residential schools, historic and intergenerational trauma within the aboriginal community, and the history of the relationship between aboriginal peoples and the media. The literature has been reviewed with an emphasis on connections to MMIWG. The research and analysis conducted in this thesis focus on the implications of a sociology of denial (as a practice ‘social denial’), and the acts of bearing witness in the context of news media representation of an instance of MMIWG. These two frameworks, social denial and bearing witness, were constructed to help explore the role social denial plays in perpetuating colonial attitudes surrounding MMIWG and the combative effort of bearing witness to help uncover social denial.

The findings of this thesis emerge from the analysis in chapters 3 and 4. The frames identified suggest a continuation of colonial attitudes towards aboriginal women. In other words, MMIWG are viewed as victims of self-imposed, or societal, circumstances (i.e. self-imposed circumstances manifest as victim blaming while societal circumstances exist by virtue of social and physical location: ‘wrong place, wrong time’). By extension, social denial is enacted when the news media, or society in general, views MMIWG as not stemming from colonialism. As discussed in chapter 1, there are undeniable roots that trace back from MMIWG to colonial practices in Canada. When the news media frames MMIWG as something other than the product of colonialism they are participating in a practice of social denial.

As demonstrated through the literature review in chapters 1 and 2, the scholarship surrounding the sociology of denial is primarily theoretical. This thesis constructs a framework, founded in Cohen’s theory of social denial that works to reveal social denial in action. By

applying these theories to a topic like MMIWG, this thesis has contributed an empirical application of a broad theory.

Moreover, the findings of this thesis contribute broadly to society by adding a perspective on colonialism in Canada as it exists today, its application to MMIWG, and its relationship with social denial. Presently, colonialism can be understood abstractly as an idea without actions, that what is left of colonialism is an attitude of paternalistic superiority held by those who uphold a European traditional moral standard. It could seem that this colonial attitude should be easily identified and critiqued. Anecdotally, for example, the changes made to the Indian Act signify society's acknowledgment of the Act's problematic approach and language as being colonial by nature. The analysis in chapter 4 revealed that when discussing MMIWG the frames emerging were not ones that identified the historic trends of violence against aboriginal women, the connection of trauma intergenerationally, land dispossession, or even the relationship between MMIWG and colonialism. Instead, the frames identified were used to deny some of the larger systemic issues surrounding MMIWG. Social denial is explored in this thesis in the hopes that by uncovering the mechanisms and registers through which social denial becomes a social practice individuals can begin to see the denial in action. This thesis has suggested that one combats social denial through bearing witness. To bear witness one must recognize the layers of the issue itself, as well as the ways the issue is suppressed and invalidated. Lastly, the overall goal of this thesis is to promote attitudes of social justice. Social denial exists to erase aboriginal women and the violence they face. Chapter 3 highlighted some efforts to combat this erasure.

The group Drag the Red and the AI report "Out of Sight Out of Mind" are two examples of current combative attempts; fighting against denial. Drag the Red is a community led initiative aimed to combat police and government inaction surrounding MMIWG in Winnipeg. The group

drags the Red River searching for human remains and evidence to help solve disappearances and murders of “ALL Missing Men, Women, Two-Spirited People and Children” (Drag the Red!, n.d.). The group came together after the discovery of Tina Fontaine’s body in the Red River. Drag the Red’s Facebook page (the only official page associated with the group) states the impetus for dragging the red as: “With all the people that are missing in our city it got a lot of people wondering if maybe they are in our river” (Drag the Red!, n.d.). 2017 will be the fourth year the group has actively arranged volunteers and boats to ‘drag the Red’. Founded by Bernadette Smith and Kyle Kematch, Drag the Red continues to coordinate volunteers and has gained community support through donations and fundraising. For example, in July, 2016, Kayleen McKay ran 420km from Duck Bay, MB, to Winnipeg raising \$16,000.00 for Drag the Red to buy a new boat (Hoffman, 2016). Drag the Red is action emerging from Tina Fontaine’s narrative and role in MMIWG discourse.

“Out of Sight, Out of Mind” is an AI report from 2016 that reviews the issue of violence against aboriginal women in relation to industrial development in areas geographically surrounding aboriginal communities. This report approaches the issue of violence against aboriginal women and girls head on with appropriate reference to the roles of colonialism, residential schools, and police enforcement in the present day aboriginal community. The general thesis driving the report is that when natural resources are exploited by industry, there is a swell of workers that move into that community, driving up the cost of living, increasing population, and thusly increasing the likelihood for violence. The report focuses on the impact of resource development on violence against aboriginal women by reviewing the systemic threads that weave together creating the complex problem surrounding power imbalance, colonialism, aboriginal communities, and women. Emphasizing MMIWG, the report speaks out against

erasure of aboriginal women and girls as victims of violence. Similar to the reports reviewed in chapter 3, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind” concludes with recommendations to combat the effects of systemic violence.

Another positive step, taken by the Government of Canada, is the launch of a national inquiry into MMIWG (“the Inquiry”). The Inquiry is headed by a Chief Commissioner, the Honourable Marion Buller (Mistawasis First Nation, Saskatchewan), and three Commissioners: Michèle Audette, Former President of Femmes autochtones du Québec (Québec native Women’s Association) (Mani Utenam, Quebec); Qajaq Robinson, Associate at Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (Iqaluit, Nunavut); and Brian Eyolfson, Acting Deputy Director, Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, Legal Services (Couchiching First Nation, Ontario). The Inquiry’s mandate is to build on existing knowledge (such as the reports discussed in this thesis) and examine the systemic causes of violence against indigenous women and girls in Canada (Government of Canada, November 2016). The Inquiry should conclude with formal recommendations of “concrete actions to remove systemic causes of violence and increase safety of Indigenous women and girls in Canada” (Government of Canada, November 2016) and “ways to honour and commemorate [MMIWG]” (Government of Canada, November 2016). An interim report is expected November 1, 2017 and a final report is due November 1, 2018.

Despite the qualifications and goals of the current Inquiry Commissioners, there is some skepticism towards the effectiveness of the Inquiry. For example, Pamela Palmater cautions that “[the Inquiry] must look not only at the individual instances of [MMIWG] but also at the root causes like child welfare rates, chronic poverty and homelessness, incarceration rates, domestic abuse, the residential school legacy, inter-generational trauma, the impacts of ongoing colonization and oppression, and systemic discrimination within Canada’s laws and policies...”

(Palmater, 2016). The Inquiry's mandate seems to address Palmater's concerns, however, the work of this thesis suggests that through a framework of denial and bearing witness the systemic issue plaguing MMIWG could be identified and remedied. Even more so, the very need to ask the question of what systemic factors contribute to MMIWG raises questions of where social denial lies in the processes of the Inquiry, and how social denial may impact their recommendations. As demonstrated in this thesis, there is a lot of thought and scholarship surrounding the topic of MMIWG which touches on nuances of trauma and colonialism. The Inquiry is not tasked with reinventing the wheel, they are however being asked to confront a topic – namely, colonialism – which is so often denied.

Unfortunately, this thesis could not tackle the topic of the Inquiry, or various other offshoots associated with MMIWG. The scope of this research was intentionally kept small to provide a more comprehensive analysis. However, by keeping the scope narrow, this thesis touches on issues that it could not discuss. Firstly, it does not incorporate French speaking Canadian publications. It would be worth exploring how French Canada explores MMIWG through news media and, if the frameworks of social denial or bearing witness do the same work, how these publications frame violence against aboriginal women (i.e. is a French-Canadian publication framing MMIWG in a similar way that English Canada does?).

Lastly, could the framework of social denial be used to identify denial-in-action and the framework of bearing witness be used to combat this denial? Kurasawa (2007) identifies corresponding social-factors that identify appropriate social justice responses to certain social injustices. For example, Kurasawa labels this correspondence as “Perils and Tasks”, promotion of injustice vs. promotion of justice. The ‘tasks’ are familiar, they are highlighted in the bearing

witness framework, but the ‘perils’ are subtler and nuanced. The framework of denial helps uncover these ‘perils’.

*Diagram 7 – Practice of global justice*<sup>21</sup>

Practices	Perils and Tasks		
Bearing Witness	silence incomprehensibility indifference forgetting repetition	vs	voice interpretation empathy remembrance prevention
Forgiveness	forgetting ‘deresponsibilization’ impunity and vigilantism vengeance	vs	remembrance responsibility exercise of justice reconciliation
Foresight	inscrutability of the future presentism alarmism and resignation	vs	capacity for anticipation farsightedness public judgement and autonomy
Aid	status asymmetries socio-economic and oral domination global segregation	vs	symmetrical reciprocity egalitarian cooperation structural transformation of the world order
Solidarity	cultural assimilation political fragmentation social thinness	vs	recognition of pluralism networked affinities creativity of action

Once a problem is identified it is more likely that it might be solved. The works in chapter 3 speak out against the erasure of MMIWG, but do so in a general sense. Thematically, these works approach bearing witness in similar ways: e.g. putting a face to the victim, making the aboriginal woman personable, making recommendations to stop further victimization of aboriginal women, etc.

Restitution, redress, forgiveness, responsibility, and punishment can emerge from the work of bearing witness. These steps articulate what happens after we bear witness and cast social denial aside. In a sense, bearing witness restores validity to an event, and in doing so reimagines a victim as a stronger version of themselves. For example, when a woman or girl goes missing social denial acts to erase that person, and when we bear witness to the issue of

<sup>21</sup> This table originates from Kurasawa’s “Introduction: Theorizing the work of global justice” (p.16). The font and colouration of the table have been changed for enhanced clarity and emphasis within this thesis project. The content of the table has remained unchanged.

MMIWG – and *do the work* – we combat that social denial. By doing so we are offering restitution; restoring the identity of this missing or murdered person. By restoring the identity of this person, the doors for redress, forgiveness, responsibility, and punishment potentially open. By validating an event and defusing social denial we reincorporate said event and its victims back into our social discourse of justice vs. injustice (i.e. redress, forgiveness, responsibility, and punishment).

Kurasawa does articulate a larger framework for a work of global justice – bearing witness is only the first step. Following bearing witness is forgiveness, foresight, aid, and solidarity. These steps are different from restitution, redress, forgiveness, responsibility, and punishment. Kurasawa’s framework views fighting injustice as a larger transnational labour in which individuals must participate. Here I am suggesting a smaller, more national view. With respect to MMIWG in a Canadian context, redress, forgiveness, responsibility, and punishment, connect to a colonial history of denial and injustice. The path forward from bearing witness is one of correspondence between Canadians (both settler and Indigenous peoples) and their government. In essence, how we will reconcile our colonial past with the present workings of denial is an ongoing work holding redress, forgiveness, responsibility, and punishment in the balance. With respect to reconciliation, there is still a great deal of work to be done.

Even still a question remains: if more work on social denial was done could society be better armed to fight denial? This is the larger question this thesis is unable to answer. Fighting against injustice does not always mean finding new answers, sometimes it is simply pulling back the curtain to reveal society as it really is: flawed. The framework of social denial helps reveal events society cannot – or wishes not to – acknowledge. It is time to stop keeping MMIWG

hidden in plain sight. It is time to recognize this issue for all it is. Only then can the potential for appropriate solutions materialize.

## Work Cited:

Abella, R. (2010, January 26). *The Instructive Power of Outrage: Remembering Nuremberg*. Speech presented at McGill Law Journal Annual Lecture at the Faculty of Law in McGill University, Montreal. In *International Law and Human Rights: The Power and the Pity* (Vol. 55, pp. 871-877). (2010). Montreal, Q: McGill Law Journal.

American Psychological Association (APA) (2017). *Trauma*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>

Amnesty International. (2004). *Canada stolen sisters: A human rights response to discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada*. Amnesty International Publications.

Amnesty International. (2004). *Canada stolen sisters: Discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada, a summary of amnesty international's concerns*. Amnesty International Publications.

Amnesty International, (2009). *No more stolen sisters: The need for a comprehensive response to discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada*. Amnesty International Publications.

Amnesty International, (2016). *Out of sight, out of mind*. Amnesty International Publications.

Anderson, M., & Robertson, C. L. (2011). *Seeing red: A history of Natives in Canadian newspapers*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Bickford, L. (2002). States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering [Review of the book *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*]. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 24(4), 1054-1057.

Blaze Carlson, K. (2014, August 21a). Harper rejects calls for aboriginal women inquiry; Prime Minister says cases are a matter for law enforcement, spurs condemnation from First Nations leaders. *The Globe and Mail*.

Blaze Carlson, K. (2014, October 20b). Native leaders, politicians work to build national forum on missing women. *The Globe and Mail*.

Blaze Carlson, K. (2014, October 31c). In Manitoba, hotels shelter the province's most vulnerable wards; In a province where nearly 90 per cent of the more than 10,000 children in care are aboriginal, hotel placements are also a reminder of the ill fate of the most unfortunate of the unfortunate. *The Globe and Mail*.

Boltanski, L. (1999). *Distant suffering: Morality, media, and politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Butler, J. (2010). Survivability, vulnerability, affect. *Frames of war: When is life grievable?* (pp. 33-62). New York: Verso.

"Canada's #1 national newspaper", The Globe and Mail, (2016). Retrieved from <http://globelink.ca/platforms/newspaper/>

Capitaine, B., & Vanthuyne, K. (2016). Introduction (B. Capitaine & K. Vanthuyne, Eds.). In *Re-storying Indian residential schools in the age of reconciliation in Canada* (pp. 11-47). Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Chrisjohn, R. D., & Young, S. (1997). *The circle game: Shadows and substance in the Indian residential school experience in Canada*. Penticton: Thetus Books.

Cohen, S. (2001). *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide, U.N. G.A., Dec. 9, 1948, 78 Treaty Series. 277.

Crawford, A. (2014). "The trauma experienced by generations past having an effect in their descendants": Narrative and historical trauma among Inuit in Nunavut, Canada. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 51(3), 339-369. doi: 10.1177/1363461512467161

Cross-platform engagement fuels growth in newspaper readership. (2016, May 31). *Vividata Reports and Newsletters*. Retrieved from <https://vividata.ca/news/vivintel-reports-newsletters/>

Den Tandt, M. (2014, August 22). PM brings the heat on Arctic; Harper defends record of action for North. *The National Post*.

Drag the Red!. (n.d.). In *Facebook* [Public group]. Retrieved October 24, 2016, from <https://www.facebook.com/groups/556842211083726/>

Eberts, M. (2014). Knowing and Unknowing: Settler Reflections on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. *Saskatchewan Law Review*, 77, 69-104.

Entman, R. S. (2003). Cascading activation: Contesting the white house's frame after 9/11. *Political Communication*, 20, 415-432. doi: 10.1080/10584600390244176

Evans-Campbell, T. (2008, March). Historical trauma in American Indian/Native Alaska communities: A multilevel framework for exploring impacts on individuals, families, and communities. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 23(3), 316-338. doi: 10.1177/0886260507312290

Fassin, D., & Rechtman, R. (2009). *The empire of trauma: An inquiry into the condition of victimhood* (R. Gomme, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

García-Del Moral, P. (2011). Representation as a technology of violence: On the representation of the murders and disappearances of aboriginal women in Canada and women in Ciudad Juarez. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 36(72), 33-62. doi: 10.1080/08263663.2011.10817014

Gilchrist, K. (2010). “Newsworthy” victims? Exploring differences in Canadian local press coverage of missing/murdered aboriginal and white women. *Feminist Media Studies*, 10(4), 373-390. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2010.514110

Gillespie, L. K., Richards, T. N., Givens, E. M., & Smith, M. D. (2013). Framing deadly domestic violence: Why the media's spin matters in newspaper coverage of feticide. *Violence Against Women*, 19(2), 222-245. doi:10.1177/1077801213476457

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. USA: Northeastern University Press.

Government of Canada (2016, April 22). Background on the Inquiry. Retrieved from <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1449240606362/1449240634871>

Government of Canada (2016, October 11). About the Independent Inquiry. Retrieved from <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1470140972428/1470141043933>

*The Globe and Mail Breaking News* (2014, August 20a). Tina Fontaine’s death shows how little is being done for indigenous women; Treating our deaths as unremarkable is a form of violence that needs to stop along with the murders themselves. Taking steps to end the violence now is the only route to justice. *The Globe and Mail*.

*The Globe and Mail Breaking News* (2014, August 22b). How to stop an epidemic of native deaths. *The Globe and Mail*.

*The Globe and Mail Breaking News* (2014, August 25c). Premiers to press Ottawa on inquiry into missing, murdered aboriginal women; Provincial leaders meeting in Charlottetown expected to propose alternative that would see federal ministers sit down with aboriginal leaders. *The Globe and Mail*.

*The Globe and Mail Breaking News* (2014, August 29d). Tina Fontaine and the calamity of native child welfare. *The Globe and Mail*.

*The Globe and Mail Breaking News* (2014, October 12e). Parents wanted, not custodians, for native children. *The Globe and Mail*.

Harding, R. (2006). Historical representations of aboriginal people in the Canadian news media. *Discourse & Society*, 17(2), 205-235. doi: 10.1177/0957926506058059

Harper, A. O. (2006). Is Canada peaceful and safe for aboriginal women?. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 25(1-2), 33-38. Retrieved from <http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA153050899&v=2.1&u=ottawa77973&it=r&p=AONE&sw=w&asid=9b5352ddb717daa7fb92299586bcc544>

Highway of Tears. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.highwayoftears.ca/about-us/highway-of-tears>

Hoffman, K. (2016, July 18). Drag the Red sets out on new boat to search fast-moving waters; Kayleen McKay, 18, raised nearly \$16K to purchase the boat for the volunteer search. *CBC News*.

(HTSRR) *The highway of tears symposium recommendations report* (Symposium). (2006). Retrieved from <http://www.turtleisland.org/healing/highwayoftears.pdf>

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*. Human Rights Watch.

Humphreys, A. (2014, November 12). Fontaine-like sex attack shakes Winnipeg anew; Aboriginal girl, 16, dumped in Assiniboine River. *The National Post*.

Jiwani, Y. (1999). Erasing race: The story of Reena Virk. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 19(3), 178-184.

Jiwani, Y., & Young, M. L. (2006). Missing and murdered women: Reproducing marginality in news discourse. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31(4), 895-917.

Jung, C. (2011). Canada and the legacy of the Indian residential schools: Transitional justice for indigenous people in a nontransitional society (P. Arthur, Ed.). In *Identities in transition: Challenges for transitional justice in divided societies* (pp.217-250). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Katz, J. (1987). What makes crime news? *Media, Culture and Society*, 9, 47-75.  
doi:10.1177/016344387009001004

Kennedy, M. (2014, December 9). Rinelle Harper to speak to AFN chiefs at key meeting; Assaulted girl to lend impetus to call for aboriginal inquiry. *The National Post*.

King, A. D. (2014). Colonialism. *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Web: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from  
<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T018767>

Krebs, A. T. (2010). *Producing the Whitestream: Micropolitics and the Persistence of Colonialism in Canada*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Ottawa, 2010). Ottawa: Andreas Krebs.

Kubik, W., & Bourassa, C. (2016) Stolen Sisters: The politics, policies, and travesty of missing and murdered women in Canada (D.M. Lavell-Harvard & J. Brant Eds.). In *Forever Loved: Exposing the hidden crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada* (pp. 17-33). Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

Kurasawa, F. (2007). A message in a bottle: On bearing witness. In *The work of global justice: Human rights as practices* (pp. 23-55). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LaCapra, D. (2001). *Writing history, writing trauma*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Lavell-Harvard, D. M., & Brant, J. (2016). Introduction (D.M. Lavell-Harvard & J. Brant Eds.). In *Forever Loved: Exposing the hidden crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada* (pp. 1-13). Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

Lindsay, B. (2017, June 19). 'A long time coming': Highway of Tears gets 2 new bus routes. *CBC News*.

Llewellyn, J. J. (2002). Dealing with the legacy of Native residential school abuse in Canada: Litigation, ADR, and restorative justice. *The University of Toronto Law Journal*, 52(3), 253-300. doi:10.2307/825996

Logan, T. (2015, October). Settler colonialism in Canada and the Metis. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 17 (4), 433-452. doi: 10.1080/14623528.2015.1096589

Manzano-Munguia, M.C. (2011, December). Indian policy and legislation: Aboriginal identity survival in Canada. *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 11(3), 404-426. doi: 10.1111/j.1754-9469.2011.01145.x

Marinetto, M. (2003, November). States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering [Review of the book *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*]. *Sociology*, 37(4), 811-812.

Miller, J. R. (1996). *Shingwauk's vision a history of Native residential schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Million, D. (2013). *Therapeutic nations: Healing in the age of indigenous human rights*. Arizona: The University of Arizona Press.

Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Mitton, P (Writer), & Barth, W. (Senior Producer/Studio Director). (2017). How Senator Murray Sinclair responds to why don't residential school survivors just 'get over it' [radio series episode]. In Goldhar, K. (Executive Producer), *The Current*. Gatineau, Quebec: CBC.

Muftic, L. R., & Baumann, M. L. (2012). Female versus male perpetrated feticide: An exploratory analysis of whether offender gender matters. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(14), 2824-2844. doi:10.1177/0886260512438282

Mullaly, B. (2009). The 'web': The multiplicity, intersectionality, and heterogeneity of oppression. In *Challenging oppression and confronting privilege* (pp. 188-219). Don Mills: Oxford University Press.

National Center for PTSD. (2013). *Understand PTSD* [Brochure]. Department of Veteran Affairs. Retrieved from [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov)

Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). (2010). *What their stories tell us: Research findings from the Sisters In Spirit initiative*. NWAC.

*The National Post Editorial* (2014, August 27). Why native women suffer. *The National Post*.

Nelson, T. E., Clawson, R. A., & Oxley, Z. M. (1997, September). Media framing of a civil liberties conflict and its effect on tolerance. *The American Political Science Review*, 91(3), 567-583. doi:10.2307/2952075

“Newspaper Topline Readership”, Vividata 2015 Q4, (2015). *Readership and Product Database*.

Niezen, R. (2010). *Public justice and the anthropology of law*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Niezen, R. (2013). *Truth and indignation: Canada's truth and reconciliation commission on Indian residential schools*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

O'Reilly, P. & Fleming, T. (2016) Only the silence remains: Aboriginal women as victims in the case of the lower eastside (Pickton) murders, investigative flaws, and the aftermath of violence in Vancouver (D.M. Lavell-Harvard & J. Brant Eds.). In *Forever Loved: Exposing the hidden crisis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada* (pp. 47-78). Bradford, ON: Demeter Press.

Olick, J. (2002, January). States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering [Review of the book *States of denial: Knowing about atrocities and suffering*]. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 107(4), 1134-1135.

Olsen Harper, A. (2006). Is Canada peaceful and safe for aboriginal women? *Canadian Women Studies*, 25 (1-2), 33-38.

“Reaching your audience”, National Post Media Kit, (2016). Retrieved from <http://mediakit.nationalpost.com/newspaper/reaching-your-audience/>

Oppal, W.T. (2012). *Forsaken: Vol. I. The women, their lives and the framework of inquiry, setting the context for understanding and change* (4 vols.). BC: Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

Oppal, W.T. (2012). *Forsaken: Vol. II.B. Nobodies: How and why we failed the missing and murdered women part 3, 5 and 5* (4 vols.). BC: Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

Oppal, W.T. (2012). *Forsaken: Vol. III. Gone, but not forgotten: Building the women's legacy of safety together* (4 vols.). BC: Missing Women Commission of Inquiry.

Palmater, P. (2016) Shining light on the dark places: Addressing police racism and sexualized violence against indigenous women and girls in the national inquiry. *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law*, 28(2), 253-284. doi: 10.3138/cjwl.28.2.253

Pearce, M. (2013). *An awkward silence: Missing and murdered vulnerable women and the Canadian justice system* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Ottawa.

Puxley, C. (2014, August 21a). Report in aboriginal girl's death won't be made public; Slain in Winnipeg. *The National Post*.

Puxley, C. (2014, September 18b). 'Drag the Red' movement searches for missing women. *The National Post*.

Puxley, C. (2014, November 13c). Two men charged in Winnipeg sex attacks; Teen left for dead. *The National Post*.

Renzetti, E. (2014, August 22). What unites these slain native women? An inquiry might tell us; The federal government must not be allowed to close its eyes to the deaths of aboriginal women. *The Globe and Mail*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2014). *Missing and murdered aboriginal women: A national operational overview*. Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/mmaw-faapd-eng.pdf>

Seu, I. (2010). 'Doing denial': Audience reaction to human rights appeals. *Discourse & Society*, 21(4), 438-457. doi:10.1177/0957926510366199

Seu, I. (2013). *Passivity generation: Human rights and everyday morality*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simpson, A. (2009, Fall). Captivating Eunice: Membership, colonialism, and gendered citizenships of grief. *Native Feminism*, 24(2), 105-129. doi: 10.1353/wic.0.0031

Simpson, A. (2016). The state is a man: Theresa Spence, Loretta Saunders and the gender of settler sovereignty. *Theory & Event*, 19(4).

Smiley, M. (Director), & Smiley, M., Pope, C., Felipe Fernandez-Salvador y Campodonico, L., & Teegee, M. (Producers). (2015). *Highway of Tears* [Video file]. Canada: Finesse Films. Retrieved from <http://highwayoftearsfilm.com>

Stanton, G. (n.d.). The cost of denial. *Genocide Watch*. Retrieved from <http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutus/thecostofdenial.html>

Statistics Canada. (2016). Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2014. (Catalogue number 11-001-X).

Stevenson, W. (2005). Colonial and First Nations women in Canada (A. Robertson, Ed.). In E. Dua (Ed.), *Scratching the surface: Canadian anti-racist feminist thought* (pp. 49-80). Toronto: Women's Press.

Switlo, J. G.A.E. (2002, January). Modern day colonialism – Canada’s continuing attempts to conquer aboriginal peoples. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, 9(2), 103-141. doi: 10.1163/157181102761163082

Taylor, R., & Jasinski, J. L. (2011). Femicide and the feminist perspective. *Homicide Studies*, 15(4), 341-362. doi:10.1177/1088767911424541

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) (2016). *Holocaust Denial Timeline*. Retrieved from <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008003>

Welsh, C. (Director), Eriksen, S. (Producer), & Welsh, C. (Writer). (2006). *Finding Dawn* [Video file]. Canada. Retrieved from [https://www.nfb.ca/film/finding\\_dawn/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/finding_dawn/)

## Appendix A

### Findings – RCMP Report

#### General

- Unresolved “[p]olice-recorded incidents of Aboriginal female homicides and unresolved missing Aboriginal females in [the] review total 1,181 – 164 missing and 1,017 homicide victims” (RCMP, 2014, p. 3).
- “There are 225 unsolved cases of either missing or murdered Aboriginal females: 105 missing for more than 30 days as of November 4, 2013, whose cause of disappearance was categorized at the time as ‘unknown’ or ‘foul play suspected’ and 120 unsolved homicides...” (RCMP, 2014, p. 3).
- “There are similarities across all female homicides. Most homicides were committed by men and most of the perpetrators knew their victims – whether as an acquaintance or a spouse” (RCMP, 2014, p. 3).
- “Preliminary analysis suggests there is not enough data for meaningful community-by-community analysis” (RCMP, 2014, p. 7).
- “...there were 164 missing Aboriginal females as of November 4, 2013. They make up approximately 11.3% of the total number of missing females (1,455 total). The most recent was reported in September 2013.” (RCMP, 2014, p. 8)

#### Aboriginal female victims vs. Non-aboriginal female victims

- For further statistical consideration, the RCMP report also found that “...approximately one-third (32%) [of aboriginal female homicide victims] died as a result of a physical beating. This was the most frequent cause of death among Aboriginal female victims and was reported almost twice as often as it was for non-Aboriginal female victims (17%). Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal female victims of homicide were similarly likely to be victims of stabbing (31% Aboriginal versus 27% non-Aboriginal). Non-Aboriginal female victims were more likely to have died as a result of a shooting (26% versus 16%) and were also more likely to have been strangled, suffocated or drowned (22% versus 13%)” (RCMP, 2014, p. 10-11).
- Intent to kill with association to other crimes was only present in one third of all aboriginal female homicides. This rate is higher than non-aboriginal female homicide with intent and associated crimes: 39% of aboriginal female homicide had intent with related crimes whereas 31% of non-aboriginal female homicide had intent with associated crimes (RCMP, 2014). “The two most frequent associated offence types were ‘other assault’ and ‘sexual assault’ and both were more likely to occur in Aboriginal female homicides. ‘Other assault’ was the precursor in 18% of Aboriginal female homicides (compared to 8% of non-Aboriginal female homicides); ‘sexual

assault' was the precursor to 10% of Aboriginal female homicides (compared to 6% of non-Aboriginal female homicides)" (RCMP, 2014, p. 11-12).

- Approximately 16% of all female homicides are aboriginal women indicating "...that Aboriginal women are over-represented among Canada's murdered and missing women" (RCMP, 2014, p. 3).
- "The majority of all female homicides are solved (close to 90%) and there is little difference in solve rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal victims" (RCMP, 2014, p. 3). Approximately "...9 for every 10 female homicides, regardless of victim origin (88% for Aboriginal female homicides, 89% for non-Aboriginal female homicides) ..." (RCMP, 2014, p. 14).
- "Aboriginal female victims were more often murdered by an acquaintance [than non-aboriginal female victims] (30% compared to 19%). Breaking this down further, Aboriginal females were more likely to be murdered by a casual acquaintance (17% compared to 9%) or by someone with whom they had a criminal relationship [than non-aboriginal female victims] (7% compared to 3%)" (RCMP, 2014, p. 12).

'Employment Status', 'Use of Intoxicants', and 'Involvement in the Sex Trade'

- "...[H]omicides involving women who were reported to be employed as prostitutes were solved at a significantly lower rate than homicides overall; for Aboriginal victims in the sex trade, the solve rate was 60% whereas for non-Aboriginals it was 65%" (RCMP, 2014, p. 15-16).
- "...[H]omicides involving female victims employed in other illegal activities were cleared at a lower rate than the overall; Aboriginal victims had their cases solved 65% of the time and non-Aboriginal victims 60%" (RCMP, 2014, p. 15-16).

## Appendix B

Full list of recommendations, both the abbreviated and full report versions - AI, Stolen Sisters

Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada, a summary of amnesty international's concerns

Canadian officials should:

- (1) "Identify and implement appropriate and effective protocols for action on missing person cases consistent with the specific risks to Indigenous women and girls" (p. 15).
- (2) "Provide adequate, sustained, multi-year funding to culturally appropriate services, such as shelters and counselling for Indigenous women and girls, needed to prevent violence against Indigenous women. The design and implementation of these programs must be responsive to the needs of Indigenous women" (p. 15).
- (3) "Expand programs which provide advocates to assist Indigenous people in their contacts with police and with courts" (p. 15).
- (4) "Ensure that all police forces in Canada are subject to the jurisdiction of independent civilian bodies able to investigate allegations of wrongdoing by police" (p. 15).
- (5) "Increase recruitment of Indigenous police officers, particularly Indigenous women. As well, ensure adequate training for all police, prosecutors and judges on issues of violence against Indigenous women in a range of settings including family violence, child sexual exploitation and violence against women in the sex trade" (p. 15).
- (6) "As part of ongoing review and implementation of laws regarding the sex trade in Canada, give police clear instructions to ensure that the fundamental rights of women involved in the sex trade are protected in the course of all law enforcement activities" (p. 15).
- (7) "Provide funding for comprehensive national research on violence against Indigenous women, including the creation of a national registry to collect and analyze statistical information from all jurisdictions" (p. 16).
- (8) "Request the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people and Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, to jointly study and document patterns of violence against Indigenous women, including in Canada. Clearly outline the measures taken to address the problem of violence against Indigenous women in Canada in reports to relevant UN human rights bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Committee" (p. 16).
- (9) "Implement outstanding recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples which address poverty and social marginalization of Indigenous people in Canada, as has repeatedly been urged by United Nations human rights treaty bodies" (p. 16).
- (10) "Strengthen and expand public education programs, including those within the formal school system, that acknowledge and address the history of dispossession and marginalization of Indigenous peoples and the present reality of racism in Canadian

- society” (p. 16).
- (11) “Take measures to ensure mandatory and meaningful consultation with Indigenous women in the formulation and implementation of all policies affecting their welfare” (p. 16).
  - (12) “Ratify and uphold international human rights instruments relevant to the prevention of violence against women, including the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará)” (p. 16).

## Stolen Sisters: Discrimination and violence against indigenous women in Canada

### Recommendations

#### 1. *“Acknowledge the seriousness of the problem*

All levels of government, including Indigenous governance structures, should:

- publicly condemn the high rates of violence against Indigenous women – whether within Indigenous communities and society as whole – and make public their plans to address the crisis.
- undertake a review of outstanding recommendations from Canadian commissions, inquiries and inquests pertaining to the safety and welfare of Indigenous people with a view to ensuring their timely implementation.
- clearly outline the measures taken to address the problem of violence against Indigenous women in Canada in reports to relevant UN human rights bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Human Rights Committee” (p. 35).

#### 2. *“Support research into the extent and causes of violence against Indigenous women*

The federal government should ensure adequate funding for comprehensive national research on violence against Indigenous women, including the creation of a national registry to collect and analyze statistical information from all jurisdictions.

In consultation with Indigenous peoples’ organizations and organizations representing ethnic minorities, protocols should be developed to ensure that police consistently record and appropriately use data on the ethnicity of the victims and perpetrators of violent crimes.

The federal government should request the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people and Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, to jointly study and document patterns of violence against Indigenous women, including in Canada” (p. 35).

#### 3. *“Take immediate action to protect women at greatest risk*

Federal, provincial and territorial governments should ensure adequate, sustained, multi-year funding to ensure the provision of culturally appropriate services such as shelters

and counseling for Indigenous women and girls.

Police should work closely with Indigenous women's organizations and other frontline groups to identify and implement appropriate and effective protocols for action on missing persons cases, with a view to developing standards for police response in keeping with the risks to Indigenous women and girls.

Police forces should provide specialized staffing to review and coordinate responses to missing persons cases.

As part of ongoing review and implementation of laws regarding the sex trade in Canada, give police clear instructions to ensure that the fundamental rights of women involved in the sex trade are protected in the course of all law enforcement activities" (p. 35).

4. *"Provide training and resources for police to make prevention of violence against Indigenous women a genuine priority*

All police officers should receive adequate training to ensure an understanding of violence against women in a range of settings including family violence, child sexual exploitation and violence against women in the sex trade.

The scenarios used in police training should incorporate issues of cultural sensitivity and violence against women.

Meetings with Indigenous women leaders and other community members should be organized to build understanding of the specific risks to Indigenous women in Canadian society and establish and strengthen relationships of trust between police and Indigenous communities.

All police departments should review issues of workload, staffing levels and job rotation to ensure officers have the opportunity to become familiar with and can develop relations of trust with the specific communities they are intended to serve and protect.

The actions of police, including compliance with policies on the investigation of missing persons cases, should be subject to independent civilian oversight.

Funding should also be provided for the creation of independent advocates and liaison workers for Indigenous people in contact with police.

Officers found to have failed to act on reports of missing women, or to have carried out biased or inadequate investigation of violence against women, should be subject to appropriate discipline.

Clear policies [sic] and practices should be established with respect to the timely provision of information, including autopsy results and coroners reports, to the families of missing and murdered persons" (p.36).

5. *“Address the social and economic factors that lead to Indigenous women’s extreme vulnerability to violence*

The federal government should provide adequate, sustained, multi-year funding for initiatives to deal with the immediate and intergenerational impacts of both the physical and psychological abuse suffered at residential schools, including the loss of cultural identity.

Federal, provincial and municipal governments should subject all social programs to a periodic review to ensure the accessibility and resourcing of programs for Indigenous women and families is at least on a par with those available to non-Indigenous people in Canada.

Federal and provincial governments, with the full participation of Indigenous women, should organize a high level intergovernmental and interdepartmental meeting to ensure proper coordination and information sharing on initiatives to address the safety and welfare of Indigenous women and girls.

In collaboration with Indigenous representatives and organizations, the federal government should take urgent action to address the chronic unemployment and poverty faced by Indigenous women and men both on and off reserve.

The federal government should commit to fully implementing outstanding recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples which address poverty and social marginalization of Indigenous people in Canada, as has repeatedly been urged by United Nations treaty bodies” (p. 36).

6. *“End the marginalization on Indigenous women in Canadian society*

All levels of government should work with Indigenous peoples to strengthen and expand public education programs, including within the formal school system, that acknowledge and address the history of dispossession and marginalization of Indigenous peoples and the present reality of racism in Canadian society.

All levels of government should adopt such measures as are necessary to ensure that Indigenous women are consulted in the formulation and implementation of any policy that could affect their welfare and status” (p. 36).

## Appendix C

### Summary of Recommendations – Forsaken Vol III (2012)

#### Informal Immediate Recommendations to the Provincial Government of British Columbia

1. “To provide funding to existing centres that provide emergency services to women engaged in the sex trade to enable them to remain open 24 hours per day” (p. 216).
2. “To develop and implement an enhanced public transit system to provide a safer travel option connecting the Northern communities, particularly along Highway 16” (p. 216).
- 3.1 “That Provincial Government appoint two advisors, including one Aboriginal Elder, to consult with all affected parties regarding the form and content of the apologies and other forms of public acknowledgement required as a first step in the healing and reconciliation process” (p. 217).
- 3.2 “That Provincial Government establish a compensation fund for the children of the missing and murdered women” (p. 217).
- 3.3 “That Provincial Government establish a healing fund for families of the missing and murdered women. These funds should be accessed through an application process pursuant to established guidelines” (p. 217).
- 3.4 “That Provincial Government appoint two advisors, including one Aboriginal Elder, to consult with all affected parties regarding the structure and format of this facilitated reconciliation process and to consider mechanisms for funding it. These consultations and recommendations could be undertaken together with recommendation 3.1.” (p. 217).

#### Equality-Promoting Measures

- 4.1 “That the Minister of Justice direct the Director of Police Services to undertake equality audits of police forces in British Columbia with a focus on police duty to protect marginalized and Aboriginal women from violence. These audits should be carried out by an external agency *and* with meaningful community involvement” (p. 217).
- 4.2 “That Provincial Government set a provincial standard establishing that police officers have a general and binding duty to promote equality and to refrain from discriminatory policing” (p. 217).
- 4.3 “That Provincial Government amend the BC *Crown Policy Manual* to explicitly include equality as a fundamental principle to guide Crown Counsel in performing their functions” (p. 217).

- 4.4 “That Provincial Government develop and implement a Crown Vulnerable Women Assault Policy to provide guidance on the prosecution of crimes of violence against vulnerable women, including women engaged in the sex trade” (p. 217).
- 4.5 “That Provincial Government adopt a policy statement in the *BC Crown Policy Manual* requiring that a prosecutor’s evaluations of how strong the case is likely to be when presented at trial should be made on the assumption that the trier of fact will act impartially and according to the law” (p. 218).
- 4.6 “That Provincial Government direct the Director of Police Services to consult with the BC Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police, the RCMP and community representatives to recommend the wording of a statutory provision on the legal duty to warn and a protocol on how it should be interpreted and applied” (p. 218).
- 4.7 “That police forces work with local communities to develop communication strategies for the issuance of warnings that ensure the message is conveyed to community members who are most at risk of the specific threat” (p. 218).
- 4.8 “That Provincial Government fund three law reform research projects on aspects of the treatment of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses:
- The effects of drug and alcohol use on memory and how to support those experiencing dependency or addiction to provide testimony;
  - Police, counsel and the judiciary’s bias and perceptions of credibility of people with drug addictions or who are engaged in the survival sex trade; and
  - Potential changes to the law of evidence to better allow vulnerable witnesses, including those who have been sexually assaulted, those suffering from addictions, and those in the sex industry, to take part in court processes” (p. 218).
- 4.9 “That Provincial Government develop guidelines to facilitate and support vulnerable and intimidated witnesses by all actors within the criminal justice system based on the best practices identified by the Commission through its review of protocols and guidelines existing in other jurisdictions” (p. 218).
- 4.10 “That police forces integrate into training, performance standards, and performance measurement the ability of police officers to develop and maintain community relationships, particularly with vulnerable members of the community who are often at risk of being treated unequally in the delivery of public services” (p. 218).
- 4.11 “That the BC Association of Municipal Chiefs of Police and the RCMP establish a working group to develop a best practices guide for the establishment and implementation of formal discussion mechanisms to facilitate communication and collaboration that transcends the institutional hierarchy within a police agency” (p. 218).
- 4.12 “That police officers be required to undergo mandatory and ongoing experiential and interactive training concerning vulnerable community members:

- Active engagement in overcoming biases, rather than more passive sensitivity training (sometimes called anti-oppression training);
- More intensive and ongoing training in the history and current status of Aboriginal peoples in the province and in the specific community, particularly with respect to the ongoing effects of residential schools and the child welfare system;
- Training and resources to make prevention of violence against Aboriginal women a genuine priority;
- Training to ensure an understanding of violence against women in a range of settings including family violence, child sexual exploitation and violence against women in the sex trade; in particular, the scenarios used in police training should incorporate issues of cultural sensitivity and violence against women; and
- Training in recognizing the special needs of vulnerable individuals and how to meet those needs, including recognition of a higher standard of care owed by the police to these individuals” (p. 219).

4.13 “That the Police Complaint Commissioner, working with police forces across the Province, take steps to develop, promote and refine informal methods of police discipline, particularly in marginalized communities such as the DTES and with Aboriginal communities” (p. 219).

4.14 “That Provincial Government engage with the RCMP in order to bring them into the provincial complaints process” (p. 219).

#### Measures to Enhance the Safety of Vulnerable Urban Women

5.1 “That SisterWatch be evaluated to provide a basis for further refinements and with a view to establishing best practices for meaningful police-community partnerships; and that these best practices be shared with other police forces to encourage them to develop and maintain ongoing, collaborative community forums” (p. 219).

5.2 “That all entities with proposed responsibilities under the Living in Community Action Plan commit to these priority actions that together form a strong basis for enhancing the safety of women engaged in the survival sex trade” (p. 219).

5.3 “That other communities be encouraged to undertake the type of collaborative community engagement strategy employed by Living in Community to develop an integrated strategy for enhancing the safety of women engaged in the survival sex trade” (p. 219).

5.4 “That Provincial Government fund additional full-time Sex Trade Liaison Officer positions in the Lower Mainland” (p. 220).

5.5 “That the City of Vancouver create and fund two community-based liaison positions to be filled by individuals who have experience in the survival sex trade” (p. 220).

5.6 “That Provincial Government undertake a community consultation, needs assessment and feasibility study concerning the re- establishment of an independent society comparable to the former Vancouver Police Native Liaison Society (p. 220).

- 5.7 “That the VPD establish a position of Aboriginal Liaison Officer whose responsibilities would include assisting Aboriginal persons in their interactions with the Missing Persons Unit” (p. 220).
- 5.8 “That all police forces in British Columbia consider developing and implementing guidelines on the model of the Vancouver Police Department’s Sex Work Enforcement Guidelines in consultation with women engaged in the sex trade in their jurisdiction” (p. 220).
- 5.9 “That the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Police Department take proactive measures to reduce the number of court warrants issued for minor offences by:
- Reducing the number of tickets issued and charges laid for minor offences;
  - Developing guidelines to facilitate greater and more consistent use of police discretion not to lay charges; and
  - Increasing the ways in which failures to appear can be quashed early in the judicial process” (p. 220).
- 5.10 “That courts consider making increased use of diversionary or alternative measures to deal with bench warrants and breaches of conditions. This is in light of the barriers that outstanding warrants have on the ability of vulnerable women who are victims of violent crime to access police services. And that proactive steps be taken to assist women to clear outstanding warrants” (p. 220).
- 5.11 “That the Minister of Justice consult with the judiciary, police and community representatives to develop a protocol providing the police with the discretion not to enforce a warrant in a circumstance where a sex trade worker is attempting to report a violent crime” (p. 220).
- 5.12 “That the Minister of Justice establish a working group to develop options for enhanced legislative protection for exploited women. The working group should include representatives of sex workers, community-based organizations providing support to and advocacy for women engaged in the sex trade, Aboriginal women’s organizations, police agencies and the Crown Counsel Association” (p. 220).
- 5.13 “That the BC Association of Municipal Police Chiefs and the RCMP, with support from the Director of Police Services, should develop a protocol containing additional measures to monitor high-risk offenders, including recommendations for the efficient and timely sharing of information” (p. 221).

#### Measures to Prevent Violence Against Aboriginal and Rural Women

- 6.1 “That Provincial Government fully support the implementation of The Highway of Tears Symposium action plan, updated to the current situation and in a manner that ensures involvement of all affected communities along Highway 16” (p. 221).

- 6.2 “That Provincial Government fund a community consultation process led by Aboriginal organizations to develop and implement a pilot project designed to ensure the safety of vulnerable Aboriginal youth during the rural-urban transition” (p. 221).
- 6.3 “That Provincial Government provide additional funding to Aboriginal women’s organizations to create programs addressing violence on reserves, so that fewer women and youth are forced to escape to urban areas” (p. 221).
- 6.4 “That Provincial Government provide additional funding to Aboriginal women’s organizations to provide more safe houses and counselling programs run for and by Aboriginal women and youth” (p. 221).
- 6.5 “That Provincial Government fund a collaborative action research project on the entry of young women into the sex trade, especially Aboriginal women who are often homeless during the transition from reserves or foster homes to urban centres, and to develop an action plan to facilitate and support exiting the survival sex trade” (p. 221).

#### Improved Missing Person Policies and Practices

- 7.1 “That the provincial standards be developed by the Director of Police Services with the assistance of a committee consisting of representatives of the BC Association of Municipal Police Chiefs, the RCMP, representatives of community and Aboriginal groups, and representatives of families of the missing and murdered women” (p. 221).
- 7.2 “That proposed provincial missing persons standards include at least 15 components:
- Definition of ‘missing person;’
  - Criteria for the acceptance of reports;
  - Jurisdiction;
  - Missing Person Risk Assessment Tool;
  - Provincial Missing Person Reporting Form;
  - Standards related to interaction with family/reportees;
  - Initial steps – background information;
  - Supervisory responsibility/quality control;
  - Forensic evidence standards;
  - Coroners’ Liaison;
  - Monitoring outstanding missing person cases;
  - Automatic annual review of unsolved cases;
  - Closing missing person files;
  - Prevention and intervention; and
  - The role and authority of the BCPMPC” (p. 222).
- 7.3 “That the provincial standards require a proactive missing persons process whereby police must take prevention and intervention measures including “safe and well” checks when an individual is found” (p. 223).

- 7.4 “That best practice protocols be established for (1) enhanced victimology analysis of missing persons, (2) investigative steps in missing person cases, (3) collaborative missing person investigations collection, (4) storage and analysis of missing persons data, and (5) training specific to missing person investigations” (p. 223).
- 7.5 “That Provincial Government establish a provincial partnership committee on missing persons to facilitate the collaboration of key players in the ongoing development of best practice protocols for missing person cases. The committee should be chaired by a senior government official and include representatives of the missing and murdered women’s families, Aboriginal organizations, community groups, service providers, police, and Victim Services” (p. 223).
- 7.6 “That Provincial Government establish an agency independent of all police agencies with the purposes to include co-ordinating [sic] information, identifying patterns, establishing base rates, checking on police investigations, ensuring accountability for linked inter-jurisdictional series, and warning the public. It should provide oversight and analytic functions, but it should not be an investigating entity” (p. 223).
- 7.7 “That provincial authorities create and maintain a provincial missing person website aimed at educating the public about the missing persons process and engaging them in proactive approaches to prevention and investigation” (p. 222).
- 7.8 “That provincial authorities establish a provincial 1-800 phone number for the taking of missing person reports and accessing case information” (p. 223).
- 7.9 “That provincial authorities develop an enhanced, holistic, comprehensive approach for the provision of support to the families and friends of missing persons. This should be based on a needs assessment carried out in consultation with the provincial partnership committee on missing persons” (p. 223).
- 7.10 “That representatives of the media be invited to be members of the provincial partnership committee and that the committee should develop a protocol on issues related to the role of the media in missing person investigations” (p. 223).
- 7.11 “That the provincial partnership committee develop a proposal for either an enhanced BCPMPC to meet additional responsibilities relating to the needs of members of the public and, in particular, reporters; or to create an independent civilian-based agency for this purpose” (p. 223).

#### Enhanced Police Investigations

- 8.1 “That Provincial Government enact missing persons legislation to grant speedy access to personal information of missing persons without unduly infringing on privacy rights. I recommend the adoption of single purpose legislation, as in Alberta and Manitoba, with a provision for a comprehensive review of the operation of the Act after five years” (p. 223).

- 8.2 “That Provincial Government mandate the use of Major Case Management (MCM) for major crimes and that the Director of Police Services develop these MCM standards in consultation with the police community and through a review of best practices in other jurisdictions” (p. 223).
- 8.3 “That the Director of Police Services mandate accountability under the MCM standards by requiring that police forces:
- Provide an explanation as to why MCM was not used for a “major crime” in an annual report to the Director of Police Services;
  - Notify the Director of Police Services of all “major crime” investigations that are not under active investigation and have remained open for more than one year. Upon receipt of such notification, the Director will appoint another police department to conduct an independent audit of the prior investigation and conduct such additional investigatory steps as it deems necessary, and report its finding to the Director and the originating police agency; and
  - Conduct annual internal audits of a statistically valid random selection of MCM investigations to ensure proper compliance with the model” (p. 223).
- 8.4 “That issues related to a single electronic MCM system for British Columbia, as well as compatibility with cross-Canada systems, be reviewed as part of the consultation on MCM standards set out above” (p. 224).
- 8.5 “That Provincial Government take active steps to support the development of a National DNA Missing Persons Index and to assist in overcoming the impasse on outstanding concerns over its creation and operationalization” (p. 224).

#### Regional Police Force

- 9.1 “That Provincial Government commit to establishing a Greater Vancouver police force through a consultative process with all stakeholders” (p. 224).
- 9.2 “That Provincial Government establish an independent expert committee to develop a proposed model and implementation plan for a Greater Vancouver police force” (p. 224).

#### Effective Multi-Jurisdictional Policing

- 10.1 “That the Director of Police Services mandate provincial standards for multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency investigations to be incorporated into the provincial MCM standards referred to in recommendation 8.2” (p. 224).
- 10.2 “That the Director of Police Services consult with the BC Association of Police Chiefs and the RCMP to create a protocol or framework for multi-jurisdictional major case investigations to ensure the timely and seamless implementation of multi-agency teams, including a provision for an independent panel to resolve disputes regarding when the protocol should be triggered” (p. 224).

- 10.3 “That Provincial Government commit to moving expeditiously to implement a regional Real Time Crime Centre” (p. 224).

#### Increase Police Accountability to Communities

- 11.1 “That the accountability structure for the Greater Vancouver police force incorporate a holistic approach that provides oversight on both an individual and systemic level and is fully responsive and responsible to the communities it serves” (p. 225).
- 11.2 “That the *Police Act* be amended to provide that the Mayor is an *ex officio* member of the Board, but has no voting authority” (p. 225).
- 11.3 “That additional steps need to be taken to ensure representation of vulnerable and marginalized members and Aboriginal peoples on police boards” (p. 225).
- 11.4 “That police boards have access to greater resources from the Division of Police Services to gather and analyze information to enable them to better carry out their oversight functions” (p. 225).

#### Measures to Assure the Women’s Legacy

- 12.1 “That Provincial Government appoint an independent advisor to serve as a champion for the implementation of the Commission’s recommendations. This appointment should take effect within 12 weeks of release of the report” (p. 225).
- 12.2 “That the independent advisor work collaboratively with representatives of Aboriginal communities, the DTES, and the victims’ families in the implementation process” (p. 225).