

**CRITICAL DISCOURSE, CRITICAL ACTION: AN ANALYSIS OF FEDERAL
DISCOURSE AND ACTION IN RESPONSE TO THE FINAL REPORT OF THE
NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS
WOMEN AND GIRLS**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master's degree in Political Studies

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ABSTRACT

Violence against Indigenous women and girls is an unacceptable tragedy in Canada. The 2019 Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls concluded Canada is guilty of ‘a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples...which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQA people.’¹ Using an intersectional feminist research ethic, I undertake a critical discourse analysis to determine in what ways key concepts such as national myth, dismissals of harm against Indigenous peoples, and conceptualizations of genocide influenced the reactions of the five major federal political parties to the Final Report. I review the parties’ respective commitments to action by analyzing their 2021 electoral platforms and compare their discourse in the wake of the release of the Final Report with their official platform commitments. In essence, the research’s empirical contribution shows an enabling self-confirming relationship between the key concepts present in political discourse in response to the Final Report and a political party’s path forward when it comes to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls.

¹ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Reclaiming Power and Place - Executive Summary of the Final Report* (2019), 5. Note that 2SLGBTQQA stands for Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

*"Project Canada' is the realization of the colonial imagination...Project Canada is not yet, however, a realization of Indigenous imagination."*²

Joyce Green, 2007

The disproportionate violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada is well-documented³ and is recognized by the federal government as a 'national tragedy.'⁴ In response to years of advocacy and calls for action from families, loved ones, and activists⁵, the federal government established the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in 2015 to report on 'systemic causes of all forms of violence...contributing to the ongoing violence and particular vulnerabilities of Indigenous women and girls in Canada'⁶, as well as the responses of institutions to this violence.⁷ The Inquiry took on a vast undertaking, and by the completion of its mandate over 2,380 people had participated in the truth gathering process, which included community hearings, in-camera sessions, and statement gathering.⁸ The National Inquiry's Final Report, *Reclaiming Power and Place*, released in June 2019, concluded that:

The violence the National Inquiry heard about amounts to a race-based genocide of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis, which especially targets women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. This genocide has been empowered by colonial structures, evidenced notably by the Indian Act, the Sixties Scoop, residential schools and breaches of human and Indigenous rights, leading directly to the current increased rates of violence, death, and suicide in Indigenous populations.⁹

In addition to *Reclaiming Power and Place*, which spans more than 1,200 pages and details how the root causes for this violence are entrenched in colonialism and compounded by racism and

² Joyce Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (2007), 72.

³ Wendee Kubik and Carrie Bourassa, *Forever Loved* (2016), 17.

⁴ Government of Canada, *Budget 2021 - A Recovery Plan for Jobs Growth and Resilience* (2021), 23.

⁵ Lorimer Shehner, *Where Did That Come From* (2017), 15.

⁶ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 5.

⁷ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, Pg.5.

⁸ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, Pg.1.

⁹ National Inquiry. *Executive Summary*, 7.

sexism¹⁰, the Inquiry released a supplementary legal analysis that details its rationale for its finding of genocide.¹¹ Working closely with ‘international legal scholars and lawyers with expertise on genocide and international crime’¹², the Inquiry concluded that:

...the information and testimonies collected by the National Inquiry provide serious reasons to believe that Canada’s past and current policies, omissions, and actions towards First Nations Peoples, Inuit, and Métis amount to genocide, in breach of Canada’s international obligations, triggering its responsibility under international law.¹³

The report evaluates the standard definition of genocide and the lack of ‘Indigenous and gender perspectives’ in related international law¹⁴, the ‘material elements (*actus reus*) of genocide’¹⁵, genocidal intent and its application to state conduct¹⁶, and Canada’s failure to meet its obligations to Indigenous peoples.¹⁷ Pauline Wakeham (2021), writing on the attritional nature of some genocides, remarked that the Inquiry’s work was clearly ‘proactively anticipating objections.’¹⁸ While there was careful legal analysis, extensive research, and hundreds of stories of harm shared firsthand that informed and supported the conclusion, the finding of genocide was contested in the public sphere¹⁹ and resulted in what Indigenous journalist Tanya Talaga referred to as harmful ‘pushback.’²⁰

My literature review reveals a paucity of academic writing on matters relating to violence against Indigenous women and girls. Academics such as Alexander Hinton (2015) have highlighted the fact that ‘genocides in Indigenous North America have been hidden...a masking that is linked to the ways histories have been written, who has had the voice to write them, how the very

¹⁰ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 4.

¹¹ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide* (2019), 1.

¹² National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, Foreword (no page number).

¹³ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 1.

¹⁴ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 1.

¹⁵ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 2.

¹⁶ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 2.

¹⁷ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 2.

¹⁸ Pauline Wakeham. *The Slow Violence of Settler Colonialism: Genocide, Attrition, and the Long Emergency of Invasion* (2021), 3.

¹⁹ John Paul Tasker. *It Is 'Its Own Thing': Andrew Scheer Disagrees with Indigenous Inquiry's Genocide Finding* (2019).

²⁰ Tanya Talaga. *Blowback to the word genocide proves the national inquiry report was right* (2019).

acknowledgement of the violent past has much at stake'.²¹ As this masking focuses 'our attention on certain topics and away from others'²², this project insists on redirecting attention back to the historical and contemporary harm at the heart of this discourse. This project posits that identifying the role of genocide is necessary to understand the diversity of responses to the Final Report and violence against Indigenous women and girls more broadly, knowledge which could inform the action that is sorely required to address this violence. This empirical work both reduces the gap in regards to the scarcity of writing on this violence as well as looks forward to understand implications for action, all while weaving together theoretical and practical considerations.

My professional experience as a settler government employee working in Indigenous policy, with several years specifically in Indigenous women's initiatives, has informed the way I theorize potential policy ramifications. I employ an intersectional feminist research framework²³ and critical discourse analysis²⁴ to examine in what ways key concepts such as national myth²⁵, understandings of genocide²⁶, and dismissals of harm²⁷ motivated political discourse and reactions to the Final Report as well as its finding of genocide. Specifically, I examine in what ways these key concepts influence the reactions of federal political parties to the National Inquiry's Final Report and explore the implications that parties' discourse and these concepts have for the parties' respective commitments to action by using their 2021 electoral platforms as a metric for action to aim to determine what alignments, if any, are present. Dismissals of harm

²¹ Alexander Hinton, *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America* (2015), 327.

²² Hinton, 331.

²³ Lykke, 19.

²⁴ Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (2003), 12.

²⁵ Gerard Bouchard, *Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries* (2017), 24.

²⁶ Henry Theriault, *Genocidal Mutation and the Challenge of Definition* (2010), 396.

²⁷ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 4.

have implications²⁸, and I wish to consider in what ways and why certain types of dismissals could impede action that the National Inquiry emphasizes is necessary.²⁹

The structure of my thesis is thus: this chapter, Chapter One, contains my review of the literature, theoretical framework, and research questions. Chapter Two explains my methodology. Chapter Three contains my critical discourse analysis. Chapter Four contains my electoral platform analysis. Chapter Five draws together my findings to examine the relative influence of key concepts. Finally, in Chapter Six I summarize my research and identify implications for future research.

I will test several preliminary hypotheses during the course of my research. These hypotheses are derived from what I find in the literature, my review of which appears following this section. I believe the lack of literature on violence against Indigenous women and girls is further validation for this research, and my preliminary hypotheses may shed some light on some of the reasons why this absence exists. The substantial bodies of literature on genocide more broadly and national myth have also served to formulate hypotheses that test through the course of my work what I find in the literature. Firstly, I suggest that limited conceptualizations and restrictive definitions contribute to the inability to conceive of genocide as anything other than incidents of mass murder restricted to a specific time and space. For example, then-Conservative Party of Canada Leader Andrew Scheer acknowledged in June 2019 that while the violence was a tragedy, it was ‘its own thing’ and did not fit into the ‘category’ of genocide.³⁰ Scheer explicitly commented on the meaning imbued to the term while making his conclusion, confirming it is

²⁸ Ruth Amir, *Cultural Genocide in Canada? It Did Happen Here* (2018), 104.

²⁹ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 54.

³⁰ Tasker, online.

necessary to delve into the definitional debate at the heart of genocide scholarship³¹ in order to explore how this conceptual disagreement plays out in political discourse. Secondly, I posit that national myth contributes to what Woolford and Benvenuto refer to as patterns of ‘denial and disavowal’³² that hinder one’s ability to accept difficult truths about one’s own country and possible individual complicity. The myth of peaceful Western expansion has been identified as a fantasy³³, but it is one that erases the past and has ramifications for the future.³⁴ Thirdly, I hypothesize that dismissals of genocide allegations are part of a larger trend of diminishing the colonial harms wrought against Indigenous peoples in Canada.³⁵ I believe efforts to downgrade the degree of harm benefits both Canada’s colonial government³⁶ as well as individuals who may not wish to examine how they benefit from this system.³⁷ The need to explore these hypotheses will become increasingly evident given the findings of my literature review, explained below.

1.2 Literature Review

My research engaged with three main bodies of literature; violence against Indigenous women and girls, genocide, and national myth-making. The ever-present thread in these three bodies was the element of violence, which is why it appears first below, yet the concept of genocide intertwined with every body of literature in turn. I use my theoretical framework to untangle these concepts in response to the Final Report’s call for action, as discourse is intimately related to power, which enables action.

³¹ Theriault, 496.

³² Woolford and Benvenuto, 375.

³³ Razack, *Race, Space and the Law*, 2.

³⁴ Razack, *Race Space and the Law*, 5.

³⁵ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 10.

³⁶ Woolford and Benvenuto, 382.

³⁷ Amelia Kalant, *National Identity and the Conflict at Oka* (2004), 89.

1.2.1 Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls

*“The fact that this National Inquiry is happening now doesn’t mean that Indigenous Peoples waited this long to speak up; it means it took this long for Canada to listen.”*³⁸

Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard, President of the Ontario Native Women’s Association, and others, have repeatedly voiced concerns with the troubling lack of attention paid to this violence socially.³⁹ This lack of attention is also present academically, despite the presence of exceptions such as Pamela Palmater (2014), who has drawn attention to how legislation has enabled genocide and violence against Indigenous women and peoples more broadly.⁴⁰ As my literature review revealed a scarcity of works exploring this topic, the Final Report itself (2019) is an important contribution to an academic field that is in its infancy⁴¹, and despite its massive scope it prioritizes humanizing and cherishing the women and girls who have been taken by violence.⁴² Academics such as Joyce Green (2007) have played a crucial role in amplifying the voices of Indigenous feminists and activists and pushed back against institutional racism in order to bring awareness to issues such as violence against Indigenous women and girls.⁴³

Writers such as Green have highlighted how academia has marginalized Indigenous voices⁴⁴, and much of the work to highlight this violence has taken place through activism⁴⁵, but there are several key works that shine a light on this tragedy.⁴⁶ The literature is largely outwards-looking and authors interact little with each other and focus on colonial institutions. Green’s work, as well as those by Tina Beads and Rauna Kuokkanen (2007) were instrumental for understanding

³⁸ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 1.

³⁹ Dawn Lavell-Harvard and Jennifer Brant, *Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada* (2016), 5.

⁴⁰ Pamela Palmater, *Genocide, Indian Policy, and Legislated Elimination of Indians in Canada* (2014), 36.

⁴¹ Jessica Riel-Johns, *Understanding Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada* (2016), 42.

⁴² National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 5.

⁴³ Green, 18.

⁴⁴ Green, 22.

⁴⁵ Green, 22.

⁴⁶ National Inquiry, *Documents* (2019).

how colonial academic spaces and a lack of respect for the lived knowledge of Indigenous women has affected the broader literature.⁴⁷ Kim Anderson (2020) has explained how universities are not a ‘safe space for many’ and that there is an ‘invisible and inequitable service burden’ that marginalized faculty take on when they support marginalized students.⁴⁸ Patricia Monture (2008) has drawn attention to the fact that Indigenous stories are often excluded from what scholars refer to as ‘literature’⁴⁹ and that the growing number of ‘academic’ works by Indigenous women must be seen as ‘a small and recent piece of a much longer history.’⁵⁰ In essence, academia has not been hospitable to this avenue of inquiry.

Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz (2018) have highlighted the difficulties in ‘Indigenizing’ institutions that continue to be ‘invested in Indigenous erasure and marginalization.’⁵¹ Given that universities remain persistently colonial spaces, a number of the most well-known and accessible works⁵² on violence against Indigenous women and girls are written by settler women. *Forever Loved: Exposing the Hidden Crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Canada* (2016), one of the few compilations on this topic, provides the larger context of the ‘politics, policies, and travesty’ of this violence.⁵³ Sherene Razack’s (2000) work narrows in on the gendered and racialized spatiality of justice when it comes to Indigenous women.⁵⁴ This concept of spatiality is one that is helpful for understanding systemic violence given the fact that geography and land have been identified repeatedly by authors such as Shiri Pasternak (2017)⁵⁵,

⁴⁷ Green, 116.

⁴⁸ Kim Anderson, *On Seasons of an Indigenous Feminism, Kinship, and the Program of Home Management* (2020), 210.

⁴⁹ Patricia A. Monture, *Women’s words: power, identity, and indigenous sovereignty* (2008), 154.

⁵⁰ Monture, 154.

⁵¹ Adam Gaudry and Danielle Lorenz. *Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian Academy* (2018), 219.

⁵² Sherene Razack and Andrea Smith, for instance, are known for works relating to this topic.

⁵³ Kubik and Bourassa, 17.

⁵⁴ Sherene Razack, *Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice* (2000), 95.

⁵⁵ Shiri Pasternak, *Grounded Authority: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake against the State* (2017), 1.

Kiera Ladner (2014)⁵⁶, and the National Inquiry⁵⁷ as playing a role in violence against Indigenous peoples. Pasternak in particular unpacks how larger issues of contested land and sovereignty relate intimately to security and safety.⁵⁸ Academics such as Eve Tuck (2009) advocate for avoiding damage-based narratives⁵⁹, deeming it a ‘pathologizing approach’ that defines groups by oppression.⁶⁰ Similarly, Allison Hargreaves (2015) makes a compelling case for meaningful story-based methods to avoid dehumanizing women.⁶¹

1.2.2 Genocide against Indigenous Peoples in Canada

“Thus we forget - if we ever knew - what we do not want to know. Not seeing genocide is often a challenge, but human cognition is up to the task.”⁶²

The literature on genocide is vast, yet surprisingly sparse on genocide in the Canadian context. Woolford and Benvenuto (2015) examine the conceptual roadblocks that lead to dismissals of allegations of Canadian genocide⁶³, as well as explore the definitional debate at the heart of much of genocide scholarship.⁶⁴ William Connolly’s (1974) work on ‘essentially contested concepts’ helps provide context to these types of debates, as it illustrates how the language of politics is not neutral, and how contested concepts such as genocide are invariably ‘the subject of controversy and conflict’.⁶⁵ Simply, I agree with Dirk Moses’ (2010) condemnation of hierarchical rankings of atrocities.⁶⁶ However, the acknowledgment by academics such as Raymond Evans (2010)⁶⁷ that the accepted United Nations definition is a flawed one influenced

⁵⁶ Kiera Ladner, *Political Genocide: Killing Nations through Legislation and Slow-Moving Poison* (2014), 233.

⁵⁷ National Inquiry, *Executive Summary*, 4.

⁵⁸ Razack, 95.

⁵⁹ Eve Tuck, *Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities* (2009), 409.

⁶⁰ Tuck, 413.

⁶¹ Allison Hargreaves, *Finding Dawn and Missing Women in Canada* (2015), 106.

⁶² David Moshman, *Us and Them: Identity and Genocide* (2007), 130.

⁶³ Woolford and Benvenuto, 375.

⁶⁴ Woolford and Benvenuto, 387.

⁶⁵ William Connolly, *The Terms of Political Discourse* (1974), 3.

⁶⁶ Dirk Moses, *The Canadian Museum for Human Rights: the ‘uniqueness of the Holocaust’ and the question of genocide* (2012).

⁶⁷ Raymond Evans, *Crime Without a Name: Colonialism and the Case for ‘Indigenocide* (2010), 134.

by the interference of countries⁶⁸ does not remove the concern that persistent definitional debate can distract from the real-world need to end violence against Indigenous women and girls.⁶⁹

Ladner's (2014) writings on political genocide detail how the destruction of Indigenous institutions and sovereignty are hidden by Canada's 'mythologized exceptionalism'⁷⁰, which benefits the colonial power and disadvantages Indigenous women and girls further. This work, as well as David Moshman's (2007) work on genocide and identity⁷¹, highlights how my key concepts of violence, genocide, and myth-making are intertwined. A foundational understanding of these concepts is important in order to understand why there may be political gatekeeping around the definition of genocide and what actors benefit by keeping it restrictive. Green, for instance, has observed that colonization is partly about 'the appropriation of others' political authority'⁷², and this imposed colonial authority would understandably be further called into question should political actors acknowledge their country's historical and contemporary genocide and then do nothing to rectify it. Wakeham, identifying how norms of the genocide scholarship paradigm overshadow other work, builds on the Inquiry's examination of Canada's 'protracted, ongoing genocide against Indigenous nations'⁷³ to argue for greater consideration of genocide by attrition and a 'more nuanced, knowledge-based interpretation of intent.'⁷⁴

1.2.3 National Myth-making

*'Erasure is an elegant method of revising history.'*⁷⁵

⁶⁸ Evans, 136.

⁶⁹ Riels-Johns, 42.

⁷⁰ Ladner, *Gendering Decolonisation, Decolonising Gender*, 227.

⁷¹ David Moshman, *Us and Them: Identity and Genocide* (2007).

⁷² Green, 52.

⁷³ Wakeham, 2.

⁷⁴ Wakeham, 2.

⁷⁵ Tricia Logan, *Memory, Erasure, and National Myth* (2014), 149.

Examinations of myth often explore how myths are perpetuated⁷⁶, and academics have explored how the myth of Canada and peaceful Western expansion⁷⁷ is perpetuated in areas such as political discourse⁷⁸, classrooms⁷⁹, movie theatres⁸⁰, and museums.⁸¹ Gerald Vizenor (1993) has deemed the English language ‘the linear tongue of colonial discoveries’⁸², and cautions that ‘What is published and seen is not what is heard or remembered in oral stories.’⁸³ Per Gail Valaskakis (1999), depictions of the Western frontier and expansion are ‘grounded in a politics of difference’ that ‘erase Native histories and cultures.’⁸⁴ Razack (2002) deems the myth of Canada as nothing less than a ‘fantasy’, highlighting that the country has repeatedly glossed over past conquest and current colonialism.⁸⁵ These patterns of ‘denial and disavowal’⁸⁶ impede recognition of genocide and violence that Indigenous women and girls disproportionately face. Tricia Logan (2014) identifies the tendency of scholars such as Mark Levene (2005) to ignore Canada in their work on settler colonial genocide, and I agree with David MacDonald (2014) that this has implications for Canadian collective memory and how Indigenous peoples and settlers are able to move forward.⁸⁷ Of course, myth-making is not restricted to classrooms and political discourse, and is often perpetuated by a range of institutions.⁸⁸ Logan highlights how national memory and myth-making play out in the museum context, and Grace Kwan (2020) builds on Logan’s argument by incorporating Razack’s notion of racialized spatiality to demonstrate how

⁷⁶ Bouchard, 5.

⁷⁷ Woolford and Benvenuto, 375.

⁷⁸ Bouchard, 26.

⁷⁹ Stephanie Anderson, *The Stories Nations Tell: Sites of Pedagogy, Historical Consciousness, and National Narratives* (2017), 4.

⁸⁰ Jennifer L. Gauthier, *Embodying change: Cinematic representations of Indigenous women’s bodies, a cross-cultural comparison* (2015), 284.

⁸¹ Logan, 157.

⁸² Gerald Vizenor, *The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance* (1993), 27.

⁸³ Vizenor, 9.

⁸⁴ Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, *Sacajawea and Her Sisters: Images and Native Women*, 119.

⁸⁵ Sherene Razack, *Race, Space and the Law* (2002), 2.

⁸⁶ Woolford and Benvenuto, 375.

⁸⁷ David MacDonald, *Genocide in the Indian Residential Schools: Canadian History through the Lens of the UN Genocide Convention* (2014), 320.

⁸⁸ Anderson, 9.

misleading exhibits legitimize settler use of land.⁸⁹ Jennifer Gauthier (2015), in contrast, focuses on the role of cinema as part of ‘the history of empire building’⁹⁰, and how works by Indigenous women filmmakers such as Tracey Deer (*Beans*) that contradict established colonial narratives essentially challenge ‘the very foundations of the colonial nation state.’⁹¹

Hélène Pellerin (2019) and others have explored how national myth as it relates to Indigenous peoples presents itself in ‘Canada’s immigration history and migration narratives.’⁹² While a fulsome exploration of how national myth has influenced immigrants’ perspectives of Canada is outside of the scope of this thesis due to its breadth, I reviewed key works to understand how immigrants are exposed to myths that influence their perceptions of Canada, its history, and its relationship with Indigenous peoples.⁹³ Often this exposure to myths occurs before even entering Canada, and upon arrival these narratives are negatively reinforced by factors such as social media and compounded by ‘insufficient cross-cultural understandings.’⁹⁴ Numerous scholars have identified the ‘continuous marginalization and invisibility of Indigenous peoples’⁹⁵ in immigration policies and programs, which only serves to compound this issue.

Academics writing on myth often draw attention to how individuals in positions of power employ narratives to further their own agenda along with their own understanding of history and ‘what they deem to be significant.’⁹⁶ Paulette Regan’s work (2006) in particular was instrumental in explaining settler complicity in maintaining accepted histories and helping me understand my

⁸⁹ Kwan, 65.

⁹⁰ Gauthier, 284.

⁹¹ Gauthier, 284.

⁹² Helen Pellerin, *Indigenous Peoples in Canadian Migration Narratives: A Story of Marginalization* (2019), 4.

⁹³ Mathur et al., *Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation Through the Lens of Cultural Diversity* (2011), 301.

⁹⁴ Lin Ge and Douglas Durst, *Understanding Chinese Immigrants’ Perceptions and Attitudes on Indigenous People in Saskatchewan, Canada: A Mixed Methods Study* (2021), 424.

⁹⁵ Pellerin, 12.

⁹⁶ Anderson, 27.

own ‘historical and cultural blinders.’⁹⁷ I acknowledged and attempted to overcome these blinders by drawing upon my literature review to support my arguments, address possible counterpoints, and explore the research questions below in depth.

1.3 Research Questions

“Um it, it isn’t really high on our radar, to be honest...”

Then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper, when asked about establishing a national inquiry on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls⁹⁸

The National Inquiry’s Final Report generated significant headlines and discourse in the days that followed.⁹⁹ My central question is: *In what ways did concepts such as national myth, dismissals of harm against Indigenous peoples, and conceptualizations of genocide influence the reactions of federal political parties to the National Inquiry’s Final Report?* I examine the role of these concepts and how they interact with each other by establishing a set of standards that allows me to explore this question qualitatively. I parse out the relative presences of the different concepts in the reactions in order to explore my secondary question: *What implications did the parties’ discourse and these concepts have for the parties’ respective commitments to action?* This question was necessary in order to examine the alternately constraining or permitting power of elite political discourse on future action at the federal level.

My primary question is explanatory, as I intend to explore in which ways these key concepts motivated the federal parties’ reactions to the Final Report, particularly its finding of genocide. I expand on Moses’ (2012) work on the self-interest that underpins concepts such as national myth¹⁰⁰ by employing a discourse analysis to probe whether these interests can be identified in

⁹⁷ Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler within: Canada’s peacemaker myth, reconciliation, and transformative pathways to decolonization* (2006), 272.

⁹⁸ Tanya Kappo, *PM’s Comments about Missing, Murdered Aboriginal Women Show ‘lack of Respect* (2014), CBC News Online.

⁹⁹ Anna Sixsmith, *“Tough Truths”: The Importance of the use of “Genocide” in the MMIWG Final Report* (2020), online.

¹⁰⁰ Moses, 212.

some of the reactions to the Final Report. My secondary question takes more of an exploratory form, in that I rely on Moshman's (2007) work on how genocide discourse interacts with ideas, identities, and norms¹⁰¹ to explore possible implications for future federal action on violence against Indigenous women and girls. While exploratory, this question has an empirical and normative element aimed at public policy. As Dr. Dawn Lavell-Harvard and Jennifer Brant (2016) identify, there is a need to 'come together to work towards effective and immediate action'¹⁰²; how political parties responded to the Final Report could have direct implications for future action.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

I situate my work within an intersectional feminist research ethic as conceptualized by Lykke (2010) which allows me to consistently reflect upon my own positionality as a researcher.¹⁰³

Lykke highlights that inclusive feminist research is 'epistemologically...based on a politics of location and situated knowledges.'¹⁰⁴ My research was thus impossible to separate entirely from my specific positionality¹⁰⁵ as a settler government employee who works in Indigenous policy.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015), which brought widespread attention to 'colonial genocide' in Canada¹⁰⁶, challenged us all to reflect upon the role we play in Canada's colonial system.¹⁰⁷ I play my own part in contributing to the narrative of Canada and have an obligation to hold myself accountable for both my research and its potential implications.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Moshman, 127.

¹⁰² *Forever Loved*, foreword.

¹⁰³ Lykke, 54.

¹⁰⁴ Lykke, 165.

¹⁰⁵ Ackerly and True, *Reflexivity in Practice: Power and Ethics in Feminist Research on International Relations*, (2008), 694.

¹⁰⁶ Woolford and Benvenuto, 373.

¹⁰⁷ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future* (2015), vi.

¹⁰⁸ Tuck, 412.

Lykke highlights that a key theoretical component of feminist studies is the ‘theorization of intersections of gender and sex’¹⁰⁹, and the concept of intersectionality is further expounded upon by Indigenous authors such as Green who highlight the unique considerations and challenges that Indigenous women face as a result of the intersection of ‘racist and sexist oppression.’¹¹⁰ The concept of intersections is one that is crucial for answering my primary research question, as my chosen theoretical framework enables the holistic examination of how concepts such as the spatialization of justice contributes to and stems from violence. This framework is also relevant given its interdisciplinarity, as my research pulls from diverse bodies of literature, making use of academic texts, government reports, and writings by activists.

In order to further explore how intersectionality plays a role in violence against Indigenous women and girls I draw upon Young’s work on violence as a social practice (1990). I build upon this understanding of the unique interplay of identity factors that can result in groups being disproportionately affected by a variety of oppressions¹¹¹ by drawing from thinkers such as Pasternak (2017) and Audra Simpson (2014) to explore how jurisdictional authority of those in power can contribute to violence. These concepts are important for testing my preliminary hypotheses, as the literature demonstrates that Indigenous women and girls are impacted in specific and unique ways by government actions or lack thereof. I therefore make a contribution to the literature by exploring the discourse of those in power, as they and discourse itself are intimately connected to action, and I operationalize my analytical methods in Chapter Two in order to consider these diverse concepts in tandem.

¹⁰⁹ Lykke, 9.

¹¹⁰ Green, 22.

¹¹¹ Young, 48.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methods and Data Collection

2.1.1 Critical Discourse Analysis as Theory

I completed a critical discourse analysis (CDA) to answer my primary research question. Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak (2003) define CDA as a form of discourse analysis that highlights ‘the relationship between language and power.’¹¹² Numerous scholars have examined power’s role in violence¹¹³, genocide¹¹⁴, and myth¹¹⁵ as well as the discourse that can surround them.¹¹⁶ I argue that power is manifested in the language choices made in response to the Final Report as well. Scholars such as Wodak and Norman Fairclough’s understanding of ‘language as a social practice’¹¹⁷ were also valuable to explore given my interest in unpacking another ‘social practice’, that of violence as conceptualized by Young.¹¹⁸ As I explore a variety of concepts, the interdisciplinary nature of CDA makes it well suited for my research.

Critical discourse analysis has been criticized for ‘the political stance taken explicitly by the researchers’¹¹⁹, yet I strongly agree with Fairclough that there are benefits to a form of CDA that ‘oscillates between a focus on structure and a focus on action.’¹²⁰ The recognition that analysis does not take place in a vacuum dovetails nicely with my larger theoretical framework of intersectional feminist research, which highlights that an awareness of positionality is crucial.¹²¹ Michelle Lazar’s (2005) understanding of feminist critical discourse analysis slots neatly into my

¹¹² Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak, *Critical Discourse Analysis: Theory and Interdisciplinarity* (2003), 12.

¹¹³ Marianne Barker, *Exploring Canadian Integration through Critical Discourse Analysis of English Language Lesson Plans for Immigrant Learners*, 263.

¹¹⁴ Ladner, *Political Genocide*, 234.

¹¹⁵ Bouchard, 5.

¹¹⁶ Bouchard, 5.

¹¹⁷ Ruth Wodak and Norman Fairclough (1997), quoted in Weiss and Wodak's *Critical Discourse Analysis*.

¹¹⁸ Iris Marion Young, *Five Faces of Oppression* (1990), 62.

¹¹⁹ Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* (2001), 5.

¹²⁰ Wodak and Meyer, 22.

¹²¹ Lykke. 54.

theoretical framework, as it identifies how social transformation is required to address the ‘unequal social arrangements’ that can be reinforced and maintained through discourse.¹²² Using this theoretical basis, my analysis ultimately sought to explore whether political discourse and key concepts would reinforce and maintain Canada’s unequal violent colonial social reality.

2.1.2 Critical Discourse Analysis as Method

Prior to conducting my critical discourse analysis, I intimately familiarized myself with the National Inquiry’s supplementary report on genocide, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*. It was important to understand the intricacies of the National Inquiry’s conclusion of genocide in order to observe whether any dismissals of the genocide address the Inquiry’s rationale or appear to be rooted in my research’s key concepts. The 46 page legal analysis lays out the Inquiry’s rationale for concluding there is compelling evidence to ‘believe that Canada’s past and current policies, omissions, and actions’ towards Indigenous peoples ‘amount to genocide.’¹²³ The report highlights how colonial structures such as the *Indian Act*, residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and many breaches of Indigenous rights and human rights have ‘empowered’ this genocide.¹²⁴

In addition to the hundreds of interviews with families, loved ones, survivors of violence, experts, Elders, and knowledge-keepers that informed the Final Report, the Inquiry worked with academic and legal experts in the areas of international law, genocide, and international crimes to create this supplementary report.¹²⁵ My analysis focused on identifying key themes and arguments, and I paid careful attention to statements that illustrate core concepts, such as:

Genocide is a root cause of the violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and girls, not only because of the genocidal acts that were and still are perpetrated against them, but

¹²² Michelle Lazar, *Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis* (2005), 1.

¹²³ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 1.

¹²⁴ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 1.

¹²⁵ National Inquiry, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, foreword.

also because of all the societal vulnerabilities it fosters, which leads to deaths and disappearances and which permeates all aspects of Canadian society today.¹²⁶

This work was important to examine whether the key themes and reasoning employed by the Inquiry in the supplementary report can be identified in any reactions to Final Report. For my critical discourse analysis I reviewed official statements, Hansard transcripts, and newspaper articles to examine the discourse of Canada's major federal political parties in response to the Final Report and analyze if and how they address the finding of genocide. For the official statements, I primarily relied on the political parties' websites, but also made use of third-party websites for statements that were shared elsewhere, such as Twitter. For the Hansard transcripts I accessed the House of Commons' online official parliamentary debates records. I restricted my search to a 3 month time period, from June 1, 2019 to September 1, 2019, which resulted in 42 relevant comments for analysis (see Appendix D for details). For newspaper articles, I restricted my search to the three largest English-language print newspapers (in terms of circulation) in Canada: *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, and *Toronto Star*.¹²⁷ I accessed the articles using the ProQuest collection of databases, a reliable and well-known resource that the University of Ottawa provides access to.

2.1.3 Search Strategy

I designed a search strategy to guide my collection of data. The graphic below contains the central search terms that were combined with boolean operators (e.g. AND, OR, NOT, AND NOT) to provide more narrowed and relevant results.

¹²⁶ *National Inquiry, A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 8.

¹²⁷ Note: This choice likely impacted the coverage of the Bloc Québécois' discourse or lack thereof, but the other newspapers confirmed no public response had been released by the party.

SEARCH STRATEGY					
Central concepts were translated into key words and synonyms. A sample is below.					
	Concept 1	Concept 2	Concept 3	Concept 4	Concept 5
	National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls	National myth-making	Genocide	Dismissals of harm	Federal political response
OR	final report	Canad*	genocid*	tru* / lie*	[Party names]
OR	Mandate	narrativ*	United Nations	exaggeration	[leader names]
OR	finding*	reputation*	residential schoo*	history*	news release
OR	colonial*	nation*	Truth and Reconciliation Commission	fact / proof	statement
OR	Call* for justice	expansion / settlement	definition*	reconcil*	agree*/disagree*

My objective was to examine which themes were present, if any, in the potential interplay of the concepts of national myth, dismissals of harm, and conceptualizations of genocide. I employed several common tools of CDA, including analyzing headlines¹²⁸ (is genocide mentioned in the article title?), vocabulary¹²⁹ (does the word choice demonstrate a particular ideology?), topicality¹³⁰ (what is the main focus?), and presuppositions¹³¹ (are any assumptions present?). I analyzed whether the themes from the supplementary report are present in the discourse, and identified the relative presence of my research’s key concepts. Responses to the Final Report were examined for elements of national myth, limited conceptualizations of genocide, and whether the language served to diminish the harm wrought by the colonial state.

I focused on the discourse of political actors due to their power via state institutions that contribute to historical and contemporary violence¹³², both direct and indirect, against

¹²⁸ Wodak and Meyer, 55.

¹²⁹ Fairclough, 107.

¹³⁰ Fairclough, 235.

¹³¹ Fairclough, 60.

¹³² National Inquiry, Executive Summary, 4.

Indigenous peoples and Indigenous women and girls in particular.¹³³ Discourse plays a key role in legitimizing state actors¹³⁴, and given that scholars such as Kelly Aguirre (2015) have explained how Canada's colonial authority has been called into question through movements such as Idle No More¹³⁵, it is important to explore whether political parties were wary of compromising any perceived legitimacy through discourse choices. I linked myth making, genocide, and dismissals of harm to action (or lack thereof) by systematically examining the discourse in order to probe the concepts and narratives employed by federal political parties to help provide insight into how their subsequent campaign platforms addressed violence against Indigenous women and girls.

2.2 Key Themes

In order to explore my key concepts, their relative presence in pertinent discourse, and how they interacted with each other, a methodological approach to structure this analysis was necessary. I concluded that any codebook to facilitate this analysis should take its lead from the National Inquiry itself, as I was curious as to whether individuals who dismissed the Final Report's findings addressed the actual facts and arguments employed by the National Inquiry. With this aim, I conducted a textual analysis of the National Inquiry's supplementary report *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*. Four key themes were identified: Actions, Omissions, Colonialism, and State Responsibility. A mind map was designed to classify the most identifiable elements of each theme and sketch out the relationships between each theme and its core elements (Appendix A). For the purpose of this research, the key themes were understood as:

¹³³ National Inquiry, Executive Summary, 2.

¹³⁴ Weiss and Wodak, 88.

¹³⁵ Kelly Aguirre, *Telling Stories - Idle No More, Indigenous Resurgence, and Political Theory* (2015), 187.

- **Action(s):** A thing done; conduct. Often in pursuit of a desired outcome. One side of *actus reus*, along with Omissions.
 - Elements: Lethal and non-lethal acts committed historically or contemporarily that contribute to physical, social, or biological destruction, resulting in an overarching pattern of violence.
- **Omission(s):** A failure to act, provide, or take responsibility. Intent is not the determining factor. The other side of *actus reus*, along with Actions.
 - Elements: Failures to act and the violations of rights worsened by the lack of Indigenous and gender perspectives, contributing to physical, social, or biological destruction.
- **Colonialism:** A distinctive form of violence where one group exerts control over another, not considered in the standard international legal definition of genocide.
 - Elements: Structural violence of a systemic nature that can result in genocide as a composite act, harm by aggregate.
- **State Responsibility:** The accountability, liability, or answerability of the state in regards to, or contributing to, genocide.
 - Elements: The harm done by state policy or lack thereof, contributing to genocide as a composite act, in violation of international obligations.

Having identified and established the key themes and their central elements, I developed coding categories to operationalize the CDA, as detailed below. These coding categories are relevant to my research in that they organize political discourse using themes employed by the National Inquiry itself, allowing me to examine how my key concepts appear and interact in a meaningful way.

2.3.1 Coding Categories

Per Johnny Saldana's *The Coding Manual For Qualitative Researchers* (2013), a code is typically 'a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data.'¹³⁶ Coding allows for methodological rigour to identify how the key themes and central elements of the National Inquiry's *A Legal Analysis of Genocide* were present in federal political parties' discourse in response to the National Inquiry Final Report. As detailed below, each key theme was conceptualized as a category, with central elements designated as codes.

Category: Actions

Code: PATTERN OF VIOLENCE

Code: LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL ACTS

Code: PAST AND CURRENT

Code: PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL UNIT DESTRUCTION¹³⁷

Category: Omissions

Code: PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL UNIT DESTRUCTION

Code: FAILURES TO ACT

Code: LACK OF INDIGENOUS AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES

Code: VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS

Category: Colonialism

Code: SYSTEMIC NATURE

Code: STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Code: GENOCIDE AS A COMPOSITE ACT

Category: State Responsibility

Code: GENOCIDE AS A COMPOSITE ACT

Code: STATE POLICY

Code: INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

¹³⁶ Johnny Saldana, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (2012), 3.

¹³⁷ 'PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL UNIT DESTRUCTION' coding can fall under either the Actions or Omissions themes. Similarly, 'GENOCIDE AS A COMPOSITE ACT' coding can fall under either the Colonialism or State Responsibility themes.

2.3.2 CODEBOOK¹³⁸

CODEBOOK	
Description	A short description of the code’s qualities or properties
Inclusion criteria	Conditions of the discourse sample that merit the code
Exclusion criteria	Exceptions of the discourse sample that do not merit the code
Typical example	A discourse sample that represents the code
Atypical example	Atypical discourse sample that still represents the code
“Close, but no”	A discourse sample that could mistakenly be assigned the code

PATTERN OF VIOLENCE	
Description	Resulting effect of various actions and omissions, regardless of whether one specific genocidal policy can be identified. Specific intent for each policy is not required, as results are considered as a whole, such that ‘the ultimate goal of the policy of the state cannot but be that of destroying the targeted group as such.’ ¹³⁹ Not limited to physical violence.
Inclusion criteria	Perennial nature, recurring, enduring behaviour, continuing violence.
Exclusion criteria	Time-limited, one-off policies or actions that were not in place for a significant amount of time.
Typical example	‘Mr. Speaker, families told their truths. Sophie Merasty, who lost her sister Rose, said, “We have always known this was a genocide.... The violence we face happens in all aspects of our lives—at every level, in every institution, in every interaction.”’ (MP Jenny Kwan)
Atypical example	‘Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ending the ongoing national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.’ (MP Seamus O’Regan)
“Close, but no”	‘Will the Prime Minister join me in acknowledging this injustice against indigenous women and girls and the 2SLGBTQQIA community, and commit to working with the indigenous community in implementing these recommendations, including sweeping reforms to the justice system, health care, well-being and rural transit?’ (MP Jagmeet Singh)

LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL ACTS	
Description	Conduct including but going beyond acts of murder or extreme violence that are limited temporally and geographically, inclusive of non-physical but harmful acts that can take place over many years.
Inclusion criteria	Acts can fall into physical, biological, and social unit destruction categories of genocide.
Exclusion criteria	Holocaust prototype understanding of genocide that does not allow for longer, slower, colonial-style destruction of a group.
Typical example	‘Mr. Speaker, Canada committed deliberate race, identity and gender-based genocide against indigenous peoples and we can see the impact of this in every sphere of life: the violence, the loss of life, the child

¹³⁸ The code list below, referred to hereafter as a ‘codebook’, was based on a model from Saldana’s (2013) coding manual designed for qualitative research, and has been adapted by individuals such as Julie Depelteau for their own academic work.

¹³⁹ *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 19.

	apprehensions, the marginalization, the deliberate exclusion, the poverty, the homelessness rate, the lack of protection, the <i>Indian Act</i> , the sex-based discrimination, the racism and it goes on.’ (MP Jenny Kwan) ‘
Atypical example	‘We know that the actions and policies of past governments directly led to the loss and extinguishment of indigenous languages, culture and traditional practices.’ (MP Carolyn Bennett)
“Close, but no”	‘Informed by the testimony of the commissioners of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, the other place’s amendments 6 and 7 would strengthen these amendments to ensure that violence against indigenous women and girls would be treated all the more seriously at sentencing.’ (MP David Lametti)

PAST AND CURRENT	
Description	Historical and contemporary actions and omissions, in aggregate, that have resulted in genocide.
Inclusion criteria	Historical and present path of actions or lack thereof that have contributed to violence against Indigenous women and girls.
Exclusion criteria	Denial of or no reference to contemporary colonialism and actions.
Typical example	‘Green Party Leader Elizabeth May said today that she accepts the key findings of the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, including that the ongoing impacts of colonialism amount to a genocide.’ (Green Party Response to Final Report)
Atypical example	‘We have a duty to address this historic and intergenerational trauma, social and economic marginalization and the ongoing dismissal of their expertise.’ (MP Jenny Kwan)
“Close, but no”	‘Mr. Speaker, the final report of the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls talked about the roots of this violence, the misogyny, the racism and the social economic injustice. It calls on us to accept our history of a colonial past.’ (MP Jagmeet Singh)

PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL UNIT DESTRUCTION	
Description	The categories of genocide designed by Raphael Lemkin, the creator of the term, who believed that ‘...physical genocide consisted of the physical destruction of a group, biological genocide was the destruction of the group’s reproductive capacity, and cultural genocide yielded the destruction of structures and practices that allowed the group to keep living as a group.’ ¹⁴⁰
Inclusion criteria	Reference(s) to identifiable actions and omissions that clearly fall into one of the three categories and contribute in some way to the destruction of the group (such as the child welfare system or forced sterilizations).
Exclusion criteria	Government policies or actions that do not appear to have an identifiable impact(s).
Typical example	‘I started talking about missing and murdered indigenous women and girls because it is directly related to the legislation before us. Many of

¹⁴⁰ A Legal Analysis of Genocide, 6.

	the victims were part of the failed welfare system, maybe even the woman I was talking to this morning during the release of the report.’ (MP Kevin Waugh)
Atypical example	‘My hope is that this report will help us to realize that the issues affecting Indigenous peoples in Canada are complex and cannot be addressed without full recognition of the terrible violence of centuries of assault upon their traditional cultures and values.’ (Green Party Response to Final Report)
“Close, but no”	‘However, there are still serious problems with some of the legacies of residential schools and the sixties scoop that still need to be addressed.’ (MP Murray Rankin)

FAILURES TO ACT	
Description	Also referred to by the Inquiry as omissions, this absence of action is tied to violations of rights and failures to provide, and understood as potential genocidal conduct.
Inclusion criteria	Lack of protection, good governance, and action in regards to diverse areas such as trafficking, exploitation, institutional abuse, under resourcing of programs, services, and basic necessities.
Exclusion criteria	Action that would contravene larger intentional government goal.
Typical example	‘The tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women is one that the Liberal government has failed to adequately address over its three and half years in office.’ (MP Kevin Waugh)
Atypical example	‘I have asked the current Liberal government 18 times to provide safe and affordable transportation in Saskatchewan, following the closure of the STC and the Greyhound service cuts. Will the Liberals act now to ensure Indigenous women and girls have access to safe transportation options?’ (MP Sheri Benson)
“Close, but no”	‘One, a young woman, looked the PM in the eyes & said, in a call to action repeated far too often, “do something, please.’ (NDP Response to Final Report)

LACK OF INDIGENOUS AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES	
Description	The failure of the international community and states such as Canada to incorporate Indigenous and gender perspectives into applicable legislation (e.g. <i>Genocide Convention</i> , domestic legislation) as well as into decision-making, structures, and policies that affect Indigenous peoples and women.
Inclusion criteria	Reference(s) to Indigenous-led solutions, women-led solutions, the backfiring of decisions where Indigenous people were not meaningfully involved, exclusion, and marginalization.
Exclusion criteria	Denial of tendency to not include these perspectives.
Typical example	‘We will work with Indigenous partners to determine next steps, and we will include the perspectives and full participation of Indigenous women and girls.’ (Prime Minister’s Office Response to Final Report)

Atypical example	‘Our job is now to work with the survivors, families and our partners to develop a national action plan to implement those calls for justice.’ (MP Carolyn Bennett)
“Close, but no”	‘Conservatives will carefully review the details of this final report and continue to hold the Trudeau government to account to ensure that the Inquiry’s report results in closure, peace and solutions for the victims’ families.’ (Conservative Party Response to Final Report).

VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS	
Description	Direct or indirect action(s) by the state that contravenes or opposes the rights of Indigenous peoples. Also includes the failure of the state to protect and respect the rights of Indigenous peoples.
Inclusion criteria	Reference(s) to either historical action/failure to provide for rights or the need to protect and respect these rights in the future.
Exclusion criteria	Morally correct behaviour (‘what is right’).
Typical example	‘We must provide access to basic services and protect fundamental human rights.’ (MP Monique Pauze)
Atypical example	‘We call upon all governments, with the full participation of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, to immediately implement and fully comply with all relevant rights instruments...’ (MP Jenny Kwan)
“Close, but no”	‘Our country has had such a strong reputation for human rights and environmental good practices around the world. It gives us all a black eye when we hear of some of the horrible abuses that have taken place abroad, whether it be the genocide and suffering of people of Darfur...’ (MP Murray Rankin)

SYSTEMIC NATURE	
Description	An act or omission that is planned and implemented as part of a larger, comprehensive system, structure, or institution.
Inclusion criteria	Reference(s) or acknowledgments of actions or lack thereof in service of a larger system, elements of order and planning, methodical.
Exclusion criteria	Events or decisions that appear to be one-offs or isolated incidents.
Typical example	‘We thank the commission for its work in identifying systemic causes of violence against indigenous women and girls and for its substantive recommendations on a path forward.’ (MP Seamus O’Regan)
Atypical example	‘...we are working to reform the criminal justice system to make sure Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ and two-spirit people receive the full benefit and protection of the law. Measures like these help tackle the systemic causes of violence...’ (Prime Minister’s Office Response to Final Report)
“Close, but no”	‘If it were not for the voices of independent indigenous journalists screaming at us to pay attention, the voices of victims may never have reached Parliament Hill.’ (MP Adam Vaughan)

STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE	
Description	Term introduced by Johan Galtung (1969) referring to the type of violence that results when social institutions make it difficult or impossible for peoples' basic needs to be met. (Galtung: ' <i>Violence, Peace, and Peace Research</i> ')
Inclusion criteria	Reference(s) to colonial institutions/structures that contribute to/have contributed to genocide against Indigenous peoples in Canada.
Exclusion criteria	Simple reference(s) to social institutions/structures without further context provided or linkage referenced.
Typical example	'The report calls for powerful changes, including reforms to the legal system, social institutions, health and wellness and basic human rights. It is our duty to ensure this report doesn't sit on a shelf.' (MP Jagmeet Singh)
Atypical example	'That UN report recommends quite clearly the following: "To amend the <i>Indian Act</i> to eliminate discrimination against women".' (MP Jenny Kwan)
"Close, but no"	'I think this provides a real launching point to examining big-picture changes to social policy and programming. The prevalence and impact of diabetes in our society is far reaching and requires far-reaching actions.' (MP Jenny Kwan)

GENOCIDE AS A COMPOSITE ACT	
Description	Acts or omissions that in aggregate, constitute genocide, representing a failure or wrongful behaviour by the state.
Inclusion criteria	Reference(s) to multiple diverse actions that span years, which in aggregate, constitute a breach of Canada's international obligations and state responsibility and contribute to a pattern of violence.
Exclusion criteria	References to genocide as temporally and geographically limited.
Typical example	'With respect to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls genocide that was reported on this week, I would argue that we would not have that number of people, women in particular and two spirited individuals as well, if those individuals had safe and secure housing off reserve they could go to.' (MP Adam Vaughan)
Atypical example	'The issues are intertwined. I talked to a lady who, 27 years later, is still dealing with this. How we deal with child welfare going forward in this country, with 37 million of us today, is so important.' (MP Kevin Waugh)
"Close, but no"	'...no First Nation child, no child in this country, should go without protection, regardless of the time of night.' (MP Elizabeth May)

INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS	
Description	Canada's legal duty to adhere to the <i>Genocide Convention</i> , of which it is a signatory, international norms condemning genocide, and other applicable legislation.
Inclusion criteria	Explicit mention of <i>Genocide Convention</i> , United Nations, international court, international criminal court, international norms.

Exclusion criteria	Exclude references to international reputation.
Typical examples	‘...in breach of Canada’s international obligations, triggering its responsibility under international law.’ (<i>A Legal Analysis of Genocide</i>)
Atypical example	‘New Democrats will act to ensure full gender equality for First Nations status as a matter of priority, consistent with Canadian and international court rulings.’ (NDP Response to Final Report)
“Close, but no”	‘...the National Inquiry’s findings call for a broader examination of other international crimes, including in particular, crimes against humanity.’ (<i>A Legal Analysis of Genocide</i>)

STATE POLICY	
Description	The choices taken by the state in regards to, or contributing to, genocide. Seen as complementary to individual responsibility for genocide, ‘particularly in situations or organized, systemic and coordinated violence’. ¹⁴¹
Inclusion criteria	Reference(s) to the decisions, liability, accountability or responsibility of Canada in regards to genocide against Indigenous peoples within the country. Actions of provinces and territories are included, as this does not negate the responsibility of the Canadian state.
Exclusion criteria	Reference(s) to individual responsible for specific genocidal acts.
Typical example	‘Had the government taken the responsibility to act quickly, women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people would be on a more positive path, rather than one filled with systemic injustice.’ (NDP Response to Final Report)
Atypical example	‘But even if the definition is met, there are questions as to whether the state would bear responsibility...’ (<i>Globe and Mail</i>)
“Close, but no”	‘We all have a responsibility to act. I will be an ally—will you? Please read the report.’ (MP Jane Philpott)

2.4 Electoral Platform Analysis

I contrasted the five major federal political parties’¹⁴² discourse in response to the Final Report with their 2021 platform commitments to gauge responsiveness to address myth, harm, and genocide, as demonstrated in Appendix E. I examined how key concepts present in political discourse can be indicative of and contribute to a political party’s path forward when it comes to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls.

¹⁴¹ *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*, 5.

¹⁴² I.e. the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party, the New Democratic Party, the Bloc Québécois, and the Green Party of Canada.

CHAPTER THREE: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

3.1 Reiteration of CDA Approach

Discourse is a difficult concept to define in isolation, with Fairclough (2013) highlighting that ‘Discourse is not simply an entity we can define independently: we can only arrive at an understanding of it by analysing sets of relations.’¹⁴³ Discourse is tied to its relationship to power, which feeds into discourse, and vice versa¹⁴⁴, and political and institutional power were of particular interest given the subject area. For the purpose of this research, ‘discourse’ refers to the language used in response to the National Inquiry Final Report, regardless of whether the language appeared in a formal news release, parliamentary comment, or news article. The codebook below was designed to isolate themes and key elements from the National Inquiry’s supplementary report on genocide to cross-analyze their role in the responsive discourse.

3.2 Official Public Statements

Official public statements released on behalf of federal political parties and party leaders were identified. Each statement was analyzed to identify its primary and secondary themes and references to genocide were examined. Organizational tables were designed to establish conclusions that drew from concepts explored in the literature review. These tables, which are housed in Appendix C, should be reviewed before moving on to the word clouds below, which provide visual representations of the most common words used in the public statements.¹⁴⁵ As the Bloc Québécois did not release a public statement, there is no associated word cloud.

¹⁴³ Fairclough, 3.

¹⁴⁴ Fairclough, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Note: Words had to be used at least twice to appear in the word clouds.

3.2.6 Summary of Responses

The responses examined in Appendix C run the gamut in terms of breadth, yet are largely similar in tone. While the NDP response was in a less formal medium, the need to focus on clear and direct language arguably benefited the messaging. The Bloc Québécois response, while nonexistent, makes it possible to theorize that the Final Report was not something they deemed important enough to speak about or wished to avoid drawing attention to the Quebec-specific report, the sole province or territory to receive one. Chart 3.2.6A below provides an overview of central themes present in the statements, and how they were coded according to content:

Party	Main theme	Code	Secondary theme	Code
Liberal Party	State responsibility	State policy	Actions	Past and current
Conservative Party	State responsibility	State policy	N/A	N/A
New Democratic Party	Actions	Pattern of violence	State responsibility	State policy
Green Party	Actions	Past and current	Colonialism	Genocide as a composite act
Bloc Québécois	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

The clear and implied commitments from the four political parties that released statements appear in Chart 3.2.6B below.

Commitments to Examine in 2021 Electoral Platforms	LPC	CPC	NDP	GPC
Partner on and implement a National Action Plan	✓	✓		
Thorough review of Final Report	✓	✓	✓	✓
Investments in essential infrastructure, including housing	✓			
Eliminate boil water advisories	✓			
Support the jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples	✓			✓
Reform criminal justice and/or legal system	✓	✓	✓	✓
Close socio-economic gaps	✓			
Hold the Trudeau government to account in this area		✓		
Implement the 231 Calls for Justice			✓	✓
Reform social institutions			✓	✓
Invest in health and wellness / system reform			✓	✓
Recognize / protect/ provide for human rights			✓	✓

The word cloud below was created by analyzing the most common words that appeared in the public statements released by the parties.

3.2.7 Most common words across Liberal, Conservative, NDP, and Green statements¹⁴⁶



3.3 Hansard Statements

In addition to reviewing official public statements and newspaper articles, Hansard debate transcripts were analyzed to examine the discourse of Canada’s federal political parties in response to the Final Report. Comments were ultimately limited to June 2019 due to the release of the Final Report that month and Parliament largely sitting for the summer before being dissolved for the 2019 election. Using the search strategy outlined in Section 2.1.3, official transcripts were reviewed for key words pertaining to the National Inquiry, the Final Report, violence against Indigenous women and girls, and other related concepts. A total of 42 relevant comments were identified. A further 14 comments were deemed to not qualify due to their

¹⁴⁶ Note: Key words had to be used at least three times to be included. Identifying names were removed.

external focus but are still examined in brief at the end of this section due to their narratives around national myth and genocide external to Canada’s modern-day borders. These 14 comments referring to and often condemning international genocides dwarf the 6 comments in June 2019 where parliamentarians refer to genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada. A summary and analysis of each parties’ comments appears below.

Overview of Key Themes and Genocide References						
Party	Comments	Genocide references	Actions	Omissions	Colonialism	State responsibility
Independent	1	0	1	0	0	0
Liberal	15	2	5	2	1	7
Conservative	9	0	2	2	1	4
NDP	13	4	1	3	4	5
Green Party	3	0	0	1	0	2
Bloc	1	0	0	1	0	0

All Parties – Coding of Comments							
Theme	Coding	#	LP	CP	NDP	GP	BQ
Actions	PATTERN OF VIOLENCE	0	0	0	0	0	0
	LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL ACTS	2	2	0	0	0	0
	PAST AND CURRENT	4	2	1	0	0	0
	PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL UNIT DESTRUCTION	3	0	2	1	0	0
Omissions	PHYSICAL, BIOLOGICAL, AND SOCIAL UNIT DESTRUCTION	0	0	0	0	0	0
	FAILURES TO ACT	7	2	2	1	1	1
	LACK OF INDIGENOUS AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES	0	0	0	0	0	0
	VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS	2	0	0	2	0	0
Colonialism	SYSTEMIC NATURE	2	1	0	1	0	0
	STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE	2	0	1	1	0	0
	GENOCIDE AS A COMPOSITE ACT	2	0	0	2	0	0
State Responsibility	GENOCIDE AS A COMPOSITE ACT	4	1	0	3	0	0
	STATE POLICY	14	6	4	2	2	0
	INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS	0	0	0	0	0	0

3.3.1 Independent¹⁴⁷

Jane Philpott, a former Liberal, was the first person to speak in recognition of the release of the Final Report. Philpott's comments are succinct, acknowledging the powerful testimony present at the closing ceremony that she was in attendance for. Philpott highlights Calls for Justice that all Canadians can take up, including holding 'governments to account'. Philpott voices her determination to be an ally and the need for governments to 'recognize the rights of Indigenous peoples', the violation of which were a recurring theme in the supplementary report.

- Main Theme: Actions
- Code: Past and Current

3.3.2 Liberal Party

Of the 15 comments made by members of the Liberal Party following the release of the Final Report, 8 were in response to inquiries from opposition parties. Half of the Liberal Party's comments fell under the theme of State Responsibility, which is not surprising given that they were responsible for leading the implementation of the necessary changes to state policy. On June 4, 2019, Minister Carolyn Bennett confirmed the Prime Minister accepted the finding of genocide, but only after being directly asked to do so by NDP MP Jenny Kwan. This is the only time the term genocide is used to refer to a Canadian context by a Liberal Party member other than a June 6th reference by MP Adam Vaughn, who criticizes the inaction of past governments to provide housing for Indigenous women and girls as a contributing factor to the genocide. As with most Hansard-captured interactions between a governing party and opposition parties, many of the Liberal's comments are tinged with a defensive air.

¹⁴⁷ Note: A summary table of parliamentary comments for members of all parties appears in Appendix D.

In terms of key messages, comments often referred to the National Action Plan and the need for cooperation, as well as highlighting infrastructure investments the Liberal government had undertaken or planned to implement. Several high-profile pieces of legislation were discussed in tandem, with the legislation being described as addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. *Bill C-92: An Act respecting First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth and families*, is one such piece of legislation, with Liberal members speaking to the interrelated nature of the child welfare system and missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and the benefits the legislation will have in this area. A sample of comments illustrative of Liberal Party discourse appear below:

- *Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to ending the ongoing national tragedy of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. We thank the commission for its work in identifying systemic causes of violence against indigenous women and girls and for its substantive recommendations on a path forward. Our job now is to develop a national action plan to implement the recommendations, in partnership with First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments and organizations, survivors and families. We must all work together to end this ongoing national tragedy, and Canadians should expect no less.*¹⁴⁸
- *Mr. Speaker, the inquiry presented its final report, in which it found that the tragic violence that indigenous women and girls have experienced amounts to genocide. As the Prime Minister has said, we accept these findings. Our job now is to develop a national action plan, as called for by the inquiry to implement its recommendations, that is distinctions-based and flexible. The final report makes it clear that action is now required not just from governments and institutions but from all Canadians.*¹⁴⁹
- *Mr. Speaker, it was years ago, when I was in opposition as a Liberal member, that I personally called for a public inquiry in regard to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It was very frustrating, as we seemed to be going against a wall. One of the things that I really appreciate is that the Prime Minister has talked about reconciliation and how important it is to have a priority relationship with indigenous people. Today is a significant day, because we are going to pass historical legislation that will provide a great deal of hope for a lot of people...*¹⁵⁰ (re. Bill C-92)

¹⁴⁸ Seamus O'Regan. June 3 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

¹⁴⁹ Carolyn Bennett. June 4 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

¹⁵⁰ Kevin Lamoureux. June 3 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

3.3.3 Conservative Party

Nine comments from the Conservative Party were deemed relevant for analysis. Of the nine, the key themes of Actions, Omissions, Colonialism, and State Responsibility are all referenced, with the theme of State Responsibility and the subsequent code of State Policy the most common.

While the comments were assessed individually and as a whole, the broader context is also important – the prior Conservative government and its former leader Prime Minister Stephen Harper had disregarded calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls for years, stating that the violence was not a priority as well as refusing to recognize the systemic nature of the violence itself. A number of the areas that Conservative members advocated for action in over the course of June 2019 were areas deemed to not be priorities by their former government, and often refer to legislation such as the Criminal Code, which was made irreparably more harmful under the Harper government given their increase in mandatory minimum sentences, which have been identified as harmful for Indigenous peoples.

As the official opposition, their comments focused on direct questions for the ruling government and criticism regarding its lack of planning for budget allotments and the logistical difficulties that plagued the Inquiry itself. There were no references to genocide against Indigenous peoples in Canada made by Conservative caucus members. A sample of comments illustrative of

Conservative Party discourse appear below:

- *Mr. Speaker, today the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women released its report, and of course our hearts go out to those who have lost family and loved ones. This report calls attention to gaps in our Criminal Code that make it easier for vulnerable people to be exploited. Advocates have been calling for more action on human trafficking specifically, which also includes funding for survivor services and public awareness. Will the Prime Minister agree that more action needs to be taken to combat human trafficking and to protect those most vulnerable?*¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Andrew Scheer. June 3 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

- *This morning, the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls released its report, which is 1,200 pages with 231 recommendations. I do not think anyone has had the opportunity to really digest that report and the different recommendations. As I read through them, certainly there are some that jump out right away and make a lot of sense, around policing and our processes around protocols. Then there are other recommendations that one questions and wonders how they will work. However, it is incumbent upon us all to have a look at that report, look at the recommendations and consider what we need to do...*¹⁵²
- *...Yesterday was a very important day, because we saw the closure of the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls commission and we saw its report. The government knew that this day was coming, but did it put any money in the 2019 budget for that? There is nothing...*¹⁵³

3.3.4 New Democratic Party

After the Liberal Party, the most amount of comments relevant to the topics examined in this paper came from the New Democratic Party. Of the 42 total combined comments from all Parties, nearly 1 in 5, 17%, came from MP Jenny Kwan, Member for Vancouver East. Kwan repeatedly raised issues concerning violence against Indigenous women and girls and the National Inquiry in oral questions, members' statements, and private members' business. Kwan tried, and failed, to have the government pass a unanimous motion recognizing 'the genocide committed against Indigenous women and girls.' Given that her riding contains the 'Downtown Eastside', a neighbourhood where dozens of Indigenous women have gone missing or been murdered, the cause is clearly important to her. Kwan is also the only MP from any party to reference land in one of her comments, which authors such as Razack, Ladner, and Pasternak have identified as being intimately related to safe and security.

Across their comments, the NDP was the party most likely to call for sweeping reforms, and to reiterate the need to implement all of the 231 Calls for Justice, as opposed to cherry-picking

¹⁵² Cathy McLeod. June 3 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

¹⁵³ Todd Doherty. June 4 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

specific ones. While a number of their comments also focus on state policy, the NDP more so than any other party refers to and speaks of the unique nature of colonialism, demonstrating an understanding of genocide as a composite act in part due to colonialism's systemic nature and the structural violence it perpetuates. A sample of comments illustrative of New Democratic discourse appear below:

- *Mr. Speaker, it is utterly heartbreaking to think of the horrific violence that so many indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA people have suffered. Violence is still a reality for too many of them. This report cannot be left to gather dust on a shelf. We need to read it carefully and implement its recommendations. Working together with indigenous organizations and communities, will the government endeavour to answer the report's calls for justice by finding solutions that will advance social justice?*¹⁵⁴
- *... We have a humanitarian crisis, where so many indigenous women and girls have gone missing and are murdered. The impact of colonialism is so deep and so rooted in systemic racism and failures that the national inquiry on the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls has declared that is a genocide...*¹⁵⁵
- *Mr. Speaker, Canada committed deliberate race, identity and gender-based genocide against indigenous peoples and we can see the impact of this in every sphere of life: the violence, the loss of life, the child apprehensions, the marginalization, the deliberate exclusion, the poverty, the homelessness rate, the lack of protection, the Indian Act, the sex-based discrimination, the racism and it goes on. This is Canada's shame. If we are to show that we have actually heard family members and survivors, we must have an indigenous-led action plan, with a dedicated budget and a timeline for implementation that is publicly accountable. We must address indigenous land titles and indigenous people's right to self-sufficiency and self-governance. We have a duty to address this historic and intergenerational trauma, social and economic marginalization and the ongoing dismissal of their expertise. The calls for justice are not just recommendations, but are legal imperatives that must be implemented.*¹⁵⁶

3.3.5 Green Party of Canada

Of the three comments by Green Party members explored in this analysis, two pertained to a petition to have the House of Commons formally recognize the issue of violence against women in Canada and its disproportionate impacts on Indigenous women, along with making a

¹⁵⁴ Jagmeet Singh. June 3 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

¹⁵⁵ Jenny Kwan. June 4 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

¹⁵⁶ Jenny Kwan. June 5 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

commitment to pay equity and implementing structural changes to society and education. The remaining comment, made by Party Leader Elizabeth May, reflects on the closing ceremony of the National Inquiry and its ties to Bill C-92, a bill she continues to have misgivings about. May desires for the bill to go further, but acquiesces in order for the work to proceed, stating that an Indigenous child should always have somewhere safe to go should they be in need. Genocide is not referenced in any of the three comments from Party members. A sample of comments illustrative of Green Party discourse appear below:

- [Re. Bill C-92] ...*One of the key recommendations from the inquiry is that safe shelter for indigenous young people must be available 24 hours a day, because Tina sought help, and the doors were closed. I know it is a 1,200-page report. We cannot have read all of it. I know I have not, but I hope everyone in this place, in Tina's memory, will commit at least that no first nation child, no child in this country, should go without protection, regardless of the time of night.*¹⁵⁷
- *Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the House of Commons to recognize that violence against women remains a critical problem in Canada and that it disproportionately impacts indigenous women, as reflected in the crisis of missing and murdered aboriginal women and children; that striving for pay equity and equal participation for women in leadership roles must be a political priority for all members of Parliament; and that shifting cultural attitudes toward women and gender minorities in our society requires structural changes to education and socialization.*¹⁵⁸

3.3.6 Bloc Québécois

Only one Party member, MP Monique Pauzé, made a relevant comment in June, and only once. Pauzé's comment highlighted the fact that many of the findings from the Final Report have been seen before in both historical and contemporary commissions. Implied in this comment is the failure of government to act on prior recommendations in a significant manner, which is why this item has been coded as 'Failures to Act' under the Omissions theme. Pauzé is also the only MP to use the term 'nation-to-nation' in her comments, which goes beyond the more generic

¹⁵⁷ Elizabeth May. June 3 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

¹⁵⁸ Paul Manly. June 18 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

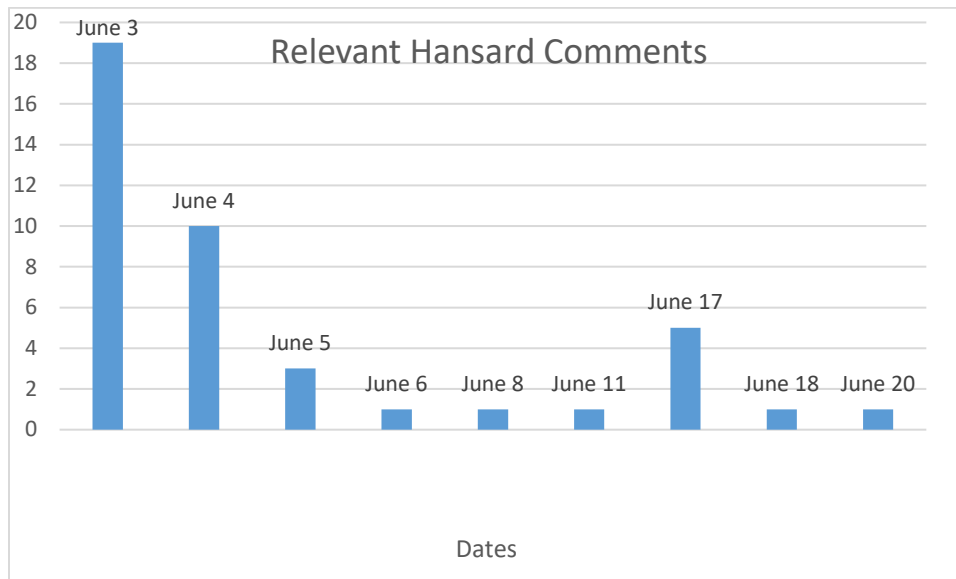
language used in other comments about the need to partner on initiatives. The presence of references to nation-to-nation relationships will be examined in the Bloc's 2021 electoral platform. The comment by Pauzé is captured below in its entirety:

- *Mr. Speaker, the findings of the report on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls are tragic and devastating. We must start by acknowledging the courage of the women and families who broke the silence and testified. The report's findings should come as no surprise to anyone. We must provide access to basic services and protect fundamental human rights. These findings are, for the most part, the same as those of the Erasmus-Dussault commission, which was held 25 years ago, and those of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The solutions are also very similar. The recent events in Val-d'Or, the cases of kidnapped indigenous children, and the revelations of sexual abuse, especially on the North Shore, have opened Quebeckers' eyes. The thousands of missing and murdered women must serve as a wake-up call for Canada. We must take real action to change our nation-to-nation relationships and, above all, to put an end to violence and discrimination.*¹⁵⁹

3.3.7 Summary of Hansard

The review of Hansard parliamentary transcripts was an opportunity to confirm whether party members would continue to toe the party line in terms of discourse used in the official statements. While there was little variation between the key messages of the formal statements and the responsive nature of comments captured in the Hansard, the analysis still proved valuable. What was not surprising but was still disappointing was the sheer drop-off of references to violence against Indigenous women and girls and related topics such as the Final Report. As seen in the chart below, nearly half (19) of the relevant comments came on the day of the release of the Final Report, and the number was halved (10) only a day later. The remaining 54% of comments were spread out throughout the rest of the month, with the exception of 5 comments on June 17th, 4 comments of which pertained to proposed Criminal Code amendments and their relationship to violence against Indigenous women and girls.

¹⁵⁹ Monique Pauzé. June 4 2019. See Appendix D for details.



Party members adeptly demonstrated an understanding of the interrelated nature of areas of government responsibility such as child welfare and violence against Indigenous women and girls. The systemic nature of this violence was referenced numerous times, and the need for state policy to change was a common refrain. The ‘Lack of Indigenous and Gender Perspectives’ code was not the dominant code for any comment, as potential usages were often overshadowed by a focus on state policy. Though there were a number of comments that referred to partnering with Indigenous peoples to move forward, very little comments reflected on how the absence of these perspectives may have been a contributing factor to this violence, at least in the limited comment time they had available during these debates and questions. In terms of change moving forward, of interest will be whether this change will be transformational in terms of respecting Indigenous sovereignty and jurisdiction in numerous areas, or perhaps more focused in select areas where socio-economic gaps are easier to quantify (e.g. boil water advisories).

Genocide was referenced in 6 of the 42 relevant comments, both by opposition parties and the sitting government. What is perhaps most interesting for the purposes of this paper is the number

of times that genocide was referenced when referring to other instances of genocide that did not involve Canada's actions or omissions against Indigenous peoples in Canada. International genocides were referenced a total of 14 times; 3 times by NDP members, 5 times by Conservative MPs, and 6 times by Liberal MPs. For comparison purposes, the Conservatives had referenced the Canadian genocide against Indigenous peoples a total of 0 times in the 42 comments reviewed, the Liberals twice, and the NDP four times. Comments ranged from petitioning Parliament to ask the United Nations to examine 'allegations of genocide against Tamils committed in Sri Lanka' or celebrating Canada's human rights reputation, which is compromised by 'horrible abuses that have taken place abroad', such as the genocide in Darfur. It was not apparent whether the speaker was aware of the irony of that statement, though the messaging aligns with findings by academics such as Woolford and Benvenuto as explored in the literature review. A sampling is below:

- [Re. Bill C-331] *...First on the list is "genocide", which everyone knows is a very serious crime. If we think about some of the genocides that have happened during this Parliament, the Yazidis come to mind. Yazidi women were brought to Canada after the genocide where those people were exterminated by ISIS terrorists. That is one. There are still outstanding actions to be taken on Rwanda. That is another genocide that could come our way...*¹⁶⁰
- [Re. Bill C-311] *Our country has had such a strong reputation for human rights and environmental good practices around the world. It gives us all a black eye when we hear of some of the horrible abuses that have taken place abroad, whether it be the genocide and suffering of people of Darfur or the murder of trade unionists at the hands of death squads in Colombia or the sexual violence that occurred in Papua New Guinea. I think it is critical that we fix it.*¹⁶¹

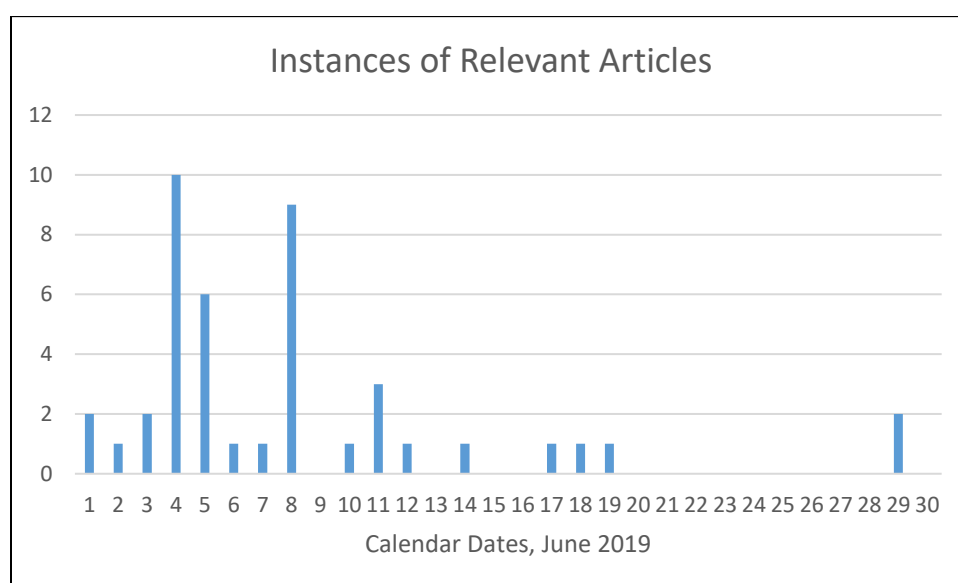
3.4 Newspaper Articles

The sample of articles was restricted to the three largest English-language print newspapers (in terms of circulation) in Canada: *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, and *Toronto Star*.

¹⁶⁰ Marilyn Gladu. Conservative Party of Canada. June 13 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

¹⁶¹ Murray Rankin. New Democratic Party. June 13 2019. See Appendix D for more details.

Articles were accessed using the ProQuest collection of databases. While the analysis of the official public statements and Hansard parliamentary transcripts were focused specifically on the comments from federal political figures and parties, the sampling of news articles helps provide the larger context within which this political discourse was taking place. After applying the search strategy outlined in Section 2.1.3, 45 relevant articles were identified and analyzed. Of the 45, 8 articles appeared in *The National Post*, 18 articles appeared in *The Globe and Mail*, and 19 appeared in the *Toronto Star*.



31 of the 45 articles referenced or examined the Inquiry’s finding of genocide, and 14 of these articles referred to genocide in the headlines. A sampling of these headlines¹⁶² appears below:

- **‘GENOCIDE: The final report from a tumultuous three-year inquiry concludes that thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls were victims of a Canadian genocide’**
- **‘Horrific Crimes, but no genocide’**
- **‘Ottawa 'accepts' genocide conclusion: 'We will move forward,' Trudeau says day after report on violence against Indigenous women, girls’**
- **‘The national inquiry's report was marred only by its inaccurate genocide charge’**
- **‘Scheer rejects inquiry's finding of 'genocide': Conservative Leader says missing, murdered Indigenous women and girls is 'its own tragedy’**

¹⁶² See Appendix E for further information on these articles.

The authors' responses to the genocide finding ranged from acceptance to dismissal to preferring to leave the analysis of the applicability of the term to other individuals, so as not to detract from the matter at hand of ending violence against Indigenous women and girls. National myth, dismissals of harm against Indigenous peoples, and conceptualizations of genocide were all present to certain degrees in various articles. For instance, certain authors examined the myth of western expansion (*'Only by dehumanizing Indigenous persons - especially Indigenous women, girls, trans, and two-spirit persons - could the land be seen as empty of humanity and open for extraction and exploitation.'*¹⁶³), while others reflected on whether Canada's reputation will make it harder to accept the finding (*'Many of the recommendations are wise, though not all. The urgency of its summons is justified. Yet its view that Canada is an immoral conspiracy driven by genocidal hatred simply does not comport with Canada's record, or how most Canadians understand our country.'*¹⁶⁴). Several of the more strident dismissals of the finding appear to take umbrage, rejecting not just the existence of genocide but interrelated harms such as systemic racism as well (*'We believe that although the treatment of Canada's Indigenous people has been wrong, negligent, even at times evil, our country today is not inherently racist, let alone genocidal. The morally outraged disagree.'*¹⁶⁵).

Reading some of the dissenting articles could be a difficult experience for those who believe the Inquiry's finding to be a truthful one or have lost someone to this violence. Certain articles dismiss the degree of harm experienced by Indigenous peoples but couch it in language that purports to be focused on definitional nuances. One author appeared flummoxed that an

¹⁶³ Beverley Jacobs and Julie Kaye. Toronto Star; Toronto, Ontario. June 5 2019.

¹⁶⁴ Raymond De Souza. National Post; Don Mills, Ontario. June 8 2019.

¹⁶⁵ Margaret Wentze. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 15 2019.

accusation of genocide has come forward when ‘*the prospects for Indigenous Canadians have never been more hopeful*’, later stating that ‘*Most of us (in the older generation, anyway) sincerely believe that Canada is intrinsically good.*’¹⁶⁶ Several of these authors reflected not just on their own comfort with the term, but their feelings regarding how prominent politicians such as Prime Minister Trudeau or Conservative Party Leader Andrew Scheer responded to the finding.

The article analysis found it was ultimately the more off the cuff responses or latter comments that received the majority of news coverage. A number of articles, for instance, covered Prime Minister Trudeau failing to use the word genocide in his remarks at the closing ceremony, as well as the fact that he was urged to do so by an audience member. In this instance, the majority of articles did not appear to make an obvious value judgment as to whether he was right or wrong to do so. Several articles appeared to understand that the term would likely be a contentious one, and some contrasted the language used by the Inquiry with that of Trudeau and federal ministers (‘*Carolyn Bennett, the federal Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, and David Lametti, the Justice Minister, would not endorse the finding of genocide after the ceremony. "We're going to leave the actual use of the term 'genocide' to academics and experts," Mr. Lametti said.*’¹⁶⁷).

Only one day later, Prime Minister Trudeau’s discourse changed. Per a *Globe and Mail* article quoting the Prime Minister on June 5, 2019:

We recognized the need for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and we have commissioners who came back with findings of fact and with calls to action," he said to media at the Women Deliver conference in Vancouver. "We thank them for their work, we applaud their work and we accept their

¹⁶⁶ Margaret Wentle. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 15 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Gloria Galloway and Wendy Stueck. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 4 2019.

*findings, including that what happened amounts to genocide. There are many debates ongoing around words and use of words. Our focus as a country, as leaders, as citizens, must be on the steps we take to put an end to this situation.*¹⁶⁸

The Prime Minister was then asked if he personally believed the harms done to Canada's Indigenous people amounted to genocide.

*I have acknowledged that I accept the findings of the report, and the issue that we have is that people are getting wrapped up in debates over a very important and powerful term," he said. "As I've said, we accept the finding that this was genocide. And we will move forward to end this ongoing national tragedy.*¹⁶⁹

Though the Prime Minister does not confirm his personal belief of the accuracy of the genocide finding, these statements were seen as a reversal from the day prior.¹⁷⁰ While the wording was undeniably nuanced, the National Inquiry welcomed the Prime Minister's comments, and released a statement in response, stating that: *'This is an important moment in the truth and reconciliation journey...The acceptance of our findings of fact by the federal government, especially our finding of genocide, is an acceptance of the truths shared by families and survivors. They no longer need to convince others that genocide is a part of Canadian history.'*¹⁷¹ For some, such as Indigenous academic Pamela Palmater, this statement was seen as not going far enough, as it was lacking an admission of full responsibility or sense of accountability, and failed to acknowledge the genocide as contemporary, referring to the violence as an 'ongoing national tragedy' as opposed to a continuing genocide.¹⁷² Others, such as well-known *Globe and Mail* columnist Margaret Wentz, were unhappy with the Prime Minister's reversal, attributing it to his 'wokeness' and desire to appeal to the 'morally outraged'.¹⁷³ Wentz was particularly unimpressed with Trudeau's changing language, given his failure to use the term

¹⁶⁸ Wendy Stueck and Andrea Woo. *The Globe and Mail*; Toronto, Ontario. June 5 2019.

¹⁶⁹ Wendy Stueck and Andrea Woo. *The Globe and Mail*; Toronto, Ontario. June 5 2019.

¹⁷⁰ Wendy Stueck and Andrea Woo. *The Globe and Mail*; Toronto, Ontario. June 5 2019.

¹⁷¹ Justin Brake. APTN News; Winnipeg, Manitoba. June 5 2019.

¹⁷² Justin Brake. APTN News; Winnipeg, Manitoba. June 5 2019.

¹⁷³ Margaret Wentz. *The Globe and Mail*; Toronto, Ontario. June 15 2019.

on the 4th, his reversal on the 5th, and then his modification a week after the closing ceremony when he commented ‘...for me it is a bit more appropriate to talk of a cultural genocide.’¹⁷⁴

The majority of the news articles analyzed focused on the federal government’s responses to the findings of the National Inquiry. After Prime Minister Trudeau, the politician whose comments received the most coverage in the surveyed articles was Andrew Scheer, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. A week after the closing ceremony, Scheer publicly rejected the genocide finding while speaking to reporters in Ottawa, commenting that usage of the term has ‘very profound’ ramifications, and that ‘*I think that the tragedy involved with missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is its own thing. It is its own tragedy. It does not fall into the category of genocide.*’¹⁷⁵ Scheer’s comments exemplify the definitional debate at the heart of genocide terminology, rejecting the inclusion of the violence against Indigenous women and girls as genocide due to structural differences from his understanding of the term. There may also have been a practical, political reason as to why Scheer might have phrased his remarks in such a way, given that formal recognition by Canada that it has violated its international and domestic legal obligations by contemporary genocidal conduct would open it up legally to a variety of measures and scrutiny.¹⁷⁶ A formal recognition of contemporary genocide from Scheer, the leader of a party that could conceivably have won power in the 2019 and 2021 elections, would have opened up the party to criticism as to why they were not doing more, or potential legal repercussions. While the NDP and Green Party were likely genuine in their responses acknowledging genocide, their positions are easier ones given they were not projected to lead government at any time soon.

¹⁷⁴ Margaret Wentle. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 15 2019.

¹⁷⁵ Janice Dickson. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 11 2019.

¹⁷⁶ Janice Dickson. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 11 2019.

While a review of the comments sections of these articles was beyond the scope of this analysis (and unavailable for some of these articles), the dismissals were far more vocal, and in some cases, upsetting. One empathetic author commented a ‘lye shower’ is required after delving into the comments section and reflected on the fact that: *‘These insta-pundits have also become scholars on the subject of genocide overnight. There is no way what has happened to Indigenous people in this country could be considered genocide, they write, having once seen a YouTube video on the subject. But as Ms. Buller has said, “Genocide can come in many forms.”*¹⁷⁷

Inadvisably, the Toronto Star attempted to gauge the opinions of readers on the genocide finding, which was described by an author from another outlet as a *‘tasteless yes-or-no poll asking, basically, “did genocide happen?” It’s been taken down, but last I looked, the majority were voting no.’*¹⁷⁸ This misstep could provide an opportunity to explore what Regan refers to as personal ‘historical and cultural blinders’ and the settler complicity that helps maintain them.¹⁷⁹

In summary, the review of news article provided a helpful context for the official public statements and parliamentary debates discourse that was concentrated in June 2019.

3.5 Summary of Chapter

As it is difficult to define discourse independently, the broader context as well as three sets of discourse were examined – official public statements, parliamentary debates, and news articles. The mind mapping exercise that identified the key themes of the supplementary report and the subsequent codebook were essential for this analysis, as they allowed for the operationalization of my analysis in a manner that allowed me to draw upon the work of the National Inquiry itself.

¹⁷⁷ Elizabeth Renzetti. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 6 2019.

¹⁷⁸ Denise Balkissoon. The Globe and Mail; Toronto, Ontario. June 14 2019.

¹⁷⁹ Regan, 272.

In Chapter Four, I establish a metric for action in order to determine how ultimately responsive the five political parties are to the release of the Final Report and its findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: ELECTORAL PLATFORM ANALYSIS

4.1 Context

In order to examine parties' commitments in response to the Final Report, the parties' respective 2021 electoral platforms are used as a metric for action, as they are widely accessible documents that provide an insight into both values and priorities. As the 2019 election would have been too soon for meaningful platform commitments to appear, the decision was made to examine federal parties' 2021 electoral platforms. Following a delayed National Action Plan¹⁸⁰, the electoral platforms were released in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the writ dropping, a number of organizations had highlighted that the pandemic was disproportionately affecting Indigenous women's safety and economic security.¹⁸¹ Indigenous issues had received significant mainstream attention in the previous months due to the heartbreaking confirmations of mass graves of children at the sites of former residential schools.¹⁸² Given these factors, one could assume that Indigenous issues would receive substantial attention in party platforms.¹⁸³

4.2 Methodology

Each platform was analyzed against Chart 3.2.6B to determine if the discourse contained similar commitments to the party's earlier discourse upon the release of the Final Report. The search strategy in Section 2.1.3 was applied to conduct a thorough review of related topics that were not direct commitments, such as identifying references to Indigenous women more broadly. While

¹⁸⁰ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/stefanovich-mmiwg-action-plan-delay-1.5583585>

¹⁸¹ <https://www.nwac.ca/policy-brief-violence-covid-19/#:~:text=COVID%2D19%20and%20the%20Rise%20of%20Violence%3A&text=Movement%20restrictions%2C%20isolation%20with%20abusers,women%2C%20girls%20and%20SLGBTQIA%20people.>

¹⁸² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-60395242>

¹⁸³ The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) produced a detailed report that scored each of the platforms against 11 priorities for Indigenous women, including 'Rights of Indigenous women and MMIWG2S'. NWAC graded them: 'A' for the NDP, 'B' for the Liberal Party and Green Party, and 'D' for the Conservative Party and Bloc Québécois. While the scorecard criteria differs from that used for the analysis below, NWAC's report aided in understanding how an Indigenous women's organization viewed the platforms.

the codebook was valuable as a secondary means of analysis, this analysis required a modified approach given the different forms of discourse and the broader focuses of the platforms.

4.3 Party Platforms

The table below provides a high-level overview of the commitments in discourse in the parties' 2021 electoral platforms. Shaded cells indicate a deviation from initial statement.

Commitments to Examine in 2021 Electoral Platforms	LPC		CPC		NDP		GPC		BQ	
	Response	Platform	Response	Platform	Response	Platform	Response	Platform	Response	Platform
Partner on and implement a National Action Plan	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	N/A	X
Thorough review of Final Report	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	X
Investments in essential infrastructure, including housing	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	N/A	X
Eliminate boil water advisories	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	N/A	X
Support the jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓
Reform criminal justice and/or legal system	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	X
Close socio-economic gaps	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	N/A	X
Hold the Trudeau government to account in this area	X	N/A	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	N/A	✓
Implement the 231 Calls for Justice	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	X
Reform social institutions	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	X
Invest in health and wellness / system reform	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	X
Recognize / protect/ provide for human rights	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	✓

4.3.1 Liberal Party Platform

The 91 page platform alternates between highlighting past accomplishments as rationale for votes and making commitments for the future. The platform highlights the federal government's release of its portion of the National Action Plan and related investments. While the party's

earlier discourse had committed to the full participation of Indigenous women, the platform contains little details on how this will be achieved. The platform does not commit to implementing the 231 Calls for Justice or the largescale institutional changes the Final Report calls for, and in fact makes no reference to the Calls whatsoever. There is alignment when it comes to discourse on the party's commitment to invest in housing and ensure clean drinking water for Indigenous communities, which the party failed to accomplish in its first term.

The discourse diverges in regards to criminal justice reform, and there are no Indigenous-specific commitments moving forward, let alone substantial reform of the criminal justice system. This is a significant exclusion given that systemic racism and discrimination in the justice system was highlighted by the National Inquiry as a contributing factor to violence against Indigenous women and girls, both in terms of its contributing to vulnerabilities and failing to protect women and penalize perpetrators of this violence. The platform discourse varies in a positive way on commitments to support the rights of Indigenous peoples, and highlights the importance of rights when it comes to supporting Indigenous decision-making. Overall, the platform refers to Indigenous women a total of 19 times, referencing them in a variety of sections that examines how they are impacted by housing crises, the economy, and gender-based violence.

The use of 'colonialism' in platform discourse is largely used in historical terms, with four out of five instances referring to the 'legacy' of colonialism, as opposed to highlighting its continuing existence and perpetuation by contemporary institutions and practices. In regards to national myth and overarching narratives, the platform has no references to Canada's national or international reputation as a safe country, in relation to Indigenous peoples, or violence against Indigenous women and girls more specifically. While the most controversial element of Party

discourse in response to the Final Report is around its eventual acceptance of the genocide term (with qualifications), the platform noticeably does not use the term once.

4.3.2 Conservative Party 2021 Electoral Platform

As a result of making few commitments in their public discourse in response to the Final Report, the Conservative Party's electoral platform could arguably be seen as an improvement. In line with their earlier discourse, the Party continues to commit to develop a National Action Plan. The platform only mentions the Inquiry once when listing several reports that have referenced '*significant gaps in opportunity and outcome between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people*' (114). The Calls for Justice are not referenced, which is not surprising given earlier discourse had highlighted several Calls but also included statements such as '*Then there are other recommendations that one questions and wonders how they will work.*'¹⁸⁴ Though the Party commits to an Indigenous-led housing strategy, there are no references to the relationship between the lack of housing and violence against Indigenous women and girls. While the Party did not mention boil water advisories in earlier discourse, they, like most other parties, criticize the slow progress of the Liberal approach and commit to eliminating boil water advisories for Indigenous communities, framing this initiative as a rights and governance issue.

While earlier discourse highlighted Calls for Justice relating to the criminal justice system, the platform does not commit to reform the criminal justice or legal system in any meaningful way. In line with their prior discourse, the Conservatives commit to ensuring that the Trudeau government make progress on issues of interest to Indigenous peoples. Unlike some of the other parties, the Conservative Party does not appear to have an interest in reforming social institutions

¹⁸⁴ See Hansard parliamentary debate chart in Appendix D.

such as the healthcare system. As there are only two references to Indigenous women in the entire platform, one would assume they would not be a major priority for the Party following a successful election. The platform does mention genocide, but in keeping with their prior discourse, the genocide referred to is not a Canadian one. Rather, the platform condemns China's actions in regards to the Uyghur people and commits the government of Canada to '*recognize the Uyghur genocide and encouraging our allies to do the same*' (107). This is consistent with their earlier discourse, which deemed that the term genocide was not appropriate for the Canadian context, but demonstrated comfort with using the term in international contexts.

The key term and theme of colonialism does not appear once in the platform. This is of note given that the platform refers to reconciliation a half dozen times, but the discourse does not state clearly reconciliation from *what*, and uses innocuous language such as '*the scale of the obstacles that Indigenous peoples have faced throughout Canada's history*' (115) without providing any further detail. In terms of national myth or references to Canada's reputation that might not be grounded in fact, there are no references in regards to Canada as a safe haven or Indigenous peoples, but rather references to Canada as a good destination for employment and investment.

4.3.3 New Democratic Party Electoral Platform

As the NDP's official statement in response to the Final Report consisted of three tweets, it is not surprising that their electoral platform contains a broader variety of commitments. Though the tweets had touched on a number of issues despite the brevity, the statement did not include a commitment to a National Action Plan, something which is done in the electoral platform. The Final Report is referenced, as is the Party's commitment to implement all 231 Calls for Justice. The Party commits to investing in the necessary infrastructure to address some of the root causes

of this violence, such as lack of housing options. While ending boil water advisories was not referenced in the NDP public statement, the platform contains a clear commitment to do so.

The platform highlights '*respecting inherent sovereignty*' (83) as a key pillar of its reconciliation work, consistent with parliamentary discourse. The platform expands upon their earlier commitment to reform the criminal justice and legal system, framing the issue as a fundamental component of reconciliation. In terms of closing socio-economic gaps, there are minor references to eliminate the gap in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Much of the discourse is framed in terms of reconciliation as opposed to a focus on outcomes, and the Party supports respecting Indigenous sovereignty and rights to improve outcomes. The platform includes an overarching statement that '*We believe that the Crown's relationship to Indigenous peoples must be based on an acknowledgement of our country's colonial history of genocide and stolen lands – and include legally binding commitments to fair and equitable redress going forward (69).*' This matter of redress is not common in the platforms of the other parties, but it aligns with at least one instance of NDP discourse in Parliament, and it is clear that the NDP views restitution as a component of reconciliation.

As in their response discourse, the party commits to implementing the 231 Calls for Justice, highlighting the need to work in partnership and support those who are fleeing violence. The NDP platform contains commitments to reform social institutions, highlighting reforms to health and wellness, a continuation of their earlier discourse to address trauma. Indigenous women are referenced a number of times throughout the platform in a number of different contexts. The platform discourse refers to genocide numerous times, highlighting residential schools, violence, and the history of Indigenous peoples more broadly. The discourse ties the genocide finding to

the need for action, the only party to do so. While the platform contains a disproportionate number of commitments compared to the original official response, this is theorized to be due to the limiting nature of the social media genre, as the platform commitments consistently align with the discourse of NDP parliamentarians in the wake of the release of the Final Report.

4.3.4 Green Party Electoral Platform

The platform contains a number of similarities with the Party's earlier discourse such as committing to implement all 231 Calls for Justice in numerous sections. A full review of the Final Report appears to have been undertaken, fulfilling a commitment in prior discourse. While earlier discourse did not reference investments in essential infrastructure or criminal justice reform, their platform contains Indigenous-specific and Indigenous-led initiatives and considerations. Similarly, while not referenced previously, the platform commits to ending boil water advisories and supporting Indigenous-led solutions. Keeping in line with previous discourse, the platform commits to reconciliation and engaging nation-to-nation, recognizing that self-determination is not limited to service delivery, but also incorporates broader decisions.

While socio-economic gaps were not previously referenced, the platform advocates for measures that would address specific gaps such as employment outcomes. Interestingly, the Party does not commit to holding the federal government to account on Indigenous issues, but does reference unhappiness with specific actions by the federal government such as legal battles against orders to provide fair compensation for First Nations children. In regards to reforming social institutions, the focus of the Party is on democratic criminal justice, and health reform. The platform is a continuation of earlier discourse on Indigenous rights, sovereignty, and honouring treaties, and includes advocating for a move away from the paternalistic *Indian Act*.

While earlier discourse from the Party clearly accepted the genocide finding, the platform surprisingly does not use the term once. The term colonialism appears a number of times, referring both to a colonial past as well as a contemporary understanding of systemic racism and colonialism within Canada. As with the NDP platform, the Green platform states that Canada is obliged to provide restitution for the harms it has wrought as a colonial power. References to a national narrative or reputation are brief and unrelated, with the discourse referencing Canada's reputation as a good international neighbour in areas such as pollution. References to Indigenous women appear throughout the document, linking the Final Report and its Calls for Justice to commitments for reconciliation, improved infrastructure, addressing systemic discrimination, and advancing gender equality. Overall, the Green platform builds on their formal public response to address issues raised in parliamentary debates and commit to a wide breadth of actions to address the root causes of violence against Indigenous women and girls.

4.3.5 Bloc Québécois Electoral Platform

As the sole party to not release a formal statement in response to the Final Report, there is a paucity of discourse from the Bloc to analyze. As the Bloc platform contains several commitments, this is seen as a minor improvement due to the very low bar that was previously established. Regardless, Indigenous women, as well as the National Inquiry and its supplementary report on Quebec, are not referenced a single time in the platform. A section on housing does not include considerations for Indigenous communities or reference Indigenous peoples at all. While the Bloc platform criticizes the federal government for not eliminating boil water advisories in Indigenous communities, the Party puzzlingly does not commit to eliminating these advisories should they be elected. Though the platform refers to the Bloc as a feminist party committed to the rights of women, the discourse does not acknowledge that intersecting

identity factors mean that some women are disproportionately affected by systemic racism and colonialism on top of sexism, as is the case with Indigenous women in Canada.

The one parliamentary comment made by a Bloc member highlights the similarities of the Final Report's findings with earlier reports such as the Erasmus-Dussault commission and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.¹⁸⁵ This discourse also advocates for the protection of '*fundamental human rights*', and the Bloc continues this messaging in the platform with its commitment to have a nation-to-nation relationship and abolish the *Indian Act*. The platform commits to respect Indigenous jurisdiction, sovereignty, and rights as well as pressure the federal government in this area. While supporting and respecting Indigenous self-determination requires social and institutional reform, the platform does not commit to overhaul institutions to support self-determination and address systemic racism and colonialism. In terms of instances of national myth or related narrative, there are no references to reputation other than a statement that the party believes Quebec is criticized for seeking to protect its own rights. Though the platform speaks out against violence against women, there are no considerations of how Indigenous women are disproportionately affected by this violence.

4.4 Summary of Chapter

Out of the variety of commitments examined, the only commitment made in every platform (regardless of whether it appeared in their earlier discourse), was to recognize and support the rights of Indigenous peoples (5/5). The Liberal, Conservative, NDP, and Green Parties all committed to develop a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women and girls, invest in essential infrastructure such as housing, eliminate boil water advisories in

¹⁸⁵ See Appendix D for record of Hansard discourse.

Indigenous communities, and close socio-economic gaps. Every party but the Conservative Party included meaningful commitments to support the jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples. For the remaining commitments, no more than two parties committed to see them through should they be elected, such as only the NDP and the Green Party committing to justice system reform.

References to genocide were scant, with the term only being employed by the NDP and the Conservative Party, and the NDP being the sole party to refer to a Canadian genocide against Indigenous peoples. I posit that both parties are furthering very specific types of narratives – for the NDP, that they are a progressive party keen to highlight its support of Indigenous peoples, and for the Conservative Party, that Canada and the party by extension are something to be emulated. The decision to not reference genocide was surprising for the Green Party given their earlier discourse but perhaps less so for the Liberal Party, the likely frontrunners to win the election. In terms of Indigenous issues overall, the issue given the most prominent coverage was residential schools. This was expected given the mainstream media attention to the horrifying mass graves confirmed recently at former residential school sites, as well as the fact that media coverage on violence against Indigenous women and girls had already appeared to decline even in the immediate weeks following the release of the Final Report, as shown in the Section 3.4. A chart summarizing the divergence between initial response discourse and the electoral platforms appears in Appendix E. The next chapter theorizes what conclusions can be drawn from comparing the discourse in wake of the release of the Final Report with the electoral platform discourse.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCOURSE AND ACTION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines whether a political party's path forward when it comes to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls can be theorized by analyzing the interactions of key concepts present in a political party's discourse. This work is particularly timely given that the disproportionate violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada is nothing less than a 'national tragedy'¹⁸⁶ and an undeniable one at that.¹⁸⁷ As a government employee working in Indigenous policy, I am interested in the implications for future action, action which is sorely needed per the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and National Inquiry Final Report. Given the continuing violence and the recent nature of the National Inquiry, this research is an opportune empirical contribution that examines how the Final Report was received and how the key concepts explored in this paper evoked by political parties might influence their paths forward, and in what ways, when it comes to violence against Indigenous women and girls.

5.2 Findings – Primary Research Question

My central question asks: *In what ways did concepts such as national myth, dismissals of harm against Indigenous peoples, and conceptualizations of genocide influence the reactions of federal political parties to the National Inquiry's final report?* In Chapter Three, I employ a critical discourse analysis to identify the relative presence of these concepts and the ways they interact with each other. In Chapter Four, I analyze parties' commitments in response to the Final Report by using their respective 2021 electoral platforms as a metric for action. The findings below reveal the results of the three preliminary hypotheses tested through the research.

¹⁸⁶ Government of Canada, *Budget 2021 - A Recovery Plan for Jobs Growth and Resilience* (2021), 23.

¹⁸⁷ Wendee Kubik and Carrie Bourassa, *Forever Loved* (2016), 17.

5.2.1 Limited Conceptualizations and Restrictive Definitions Contribute to the Inability to Conceive of Genocide as Anything Other than Incidents of Mass Murder Restricted to a Specific Time and Space.

The finding of genocide would not have been a surprise given that the Final Report was leaked prior to the formal ceremony¹⁸⁸, and political parties would have had time to consider how their usage of the term would be perceived, such as a sign of recognition of harm¹⁸⁹, regardless of the personal belief of the speaker as to the suitability of that term. The survey of newspaper articles demonstrates that narrow conceptualizations of genocide hamper acceptance of its finding, illustrating the validity of the above preliminary hypothesis. Narrow conceptualizations are more present in the writing of the authors themselves than the quotes attributed to political leaders, with some authors stating they worry using the term genocide will detract from the real issue of violence, an issue that they do not afford much coverage.¹⁹⁰ Though Liberal Minister of Justice David Lametti stated that discussion of the term is best left to ‘academics and experts’¹⁹¹, the definitional debate constituted a significant amount of coverage. The eventual government acceptance of the finding was seen by some journalists as more than ‘rhetorical’, noting that ‘under international law, survivors of genocide are eligible for restitution and compensation.’¹⁹² Prime Minister Trudeau also weighed in, stating that ‘There are many debates ongoing around words and use of words’, and when pressed, concluded that people were ‘getting wrapped up in debates over a very important and powerful term.’¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ See Appendix E: Chantal Hebert, Toronto Star, June 10 2019.

¹⁸⁹ MacDonald, 420.

¹⁹⁰ See Appendix E: John Ivison, June 5 2019.

¹⁹¹ See Appendix E: Brian Platt, June 4 2019.

¹⁹² See Appendix E: Thomas Walkom, June 5 2019.

¹⁹³ See Appendix E: Alex Ballingall, June 5 2019.

The party that demonstrates the validity of this hypothesis most clearly is the Conservative Party, whose members do not use the term genocide once in parliamentary statements referring to the Final Report or violence against Indigenous women and girls or Indigenous peoples more broadly. Most telling, however, is how party members use the term when referring to what they consider valid genocides – which coincidentally all happen to be international atrocities. One speaker references how ‘Yazidi women were brought to Canada after the genocide’¹⁹⁴, discourse that is doubly reinforcing – not only is Canada not the perpetrator of genocide, it is also the safe haven for those who have been harmed elsewhere. A high-profile definitional debate occurred when party leader Andrew Scheer provided his thoughts on the appropriateness of the finding, concluding that it ‘It is its own tragedy. It does not fall into the category of genocide.’¹⁹⁵ Stances such as Scheer’s do not take into account genocide by attrition, possibly from a less nuanced understanding of intent and the influence of the established norms of genocide scholarship and the Holocaust paradigm.¹⁹⁶

Two of the five federal parties accepted the finding of genocide immediately, demonstrating that narrow conceptualizations of a standard form of genocide can be overcome. The NDP response is clear about the tragedy, the nature of it, and the scope – reminding readers that ‘thousands of Indigenous women, girls & 2SLGBTQQIA ppl were murdered or went missing in a Canadian genocide’, and that Canadians ‘cannot deny this horrific suffering.’¹⁹⁷ Beyond the NDP and Green Party’s acceptance of the finding, their commitments to carefully review and implement the Calls for Justice in their entirety demonstrates a willingness to (or at least publicly state to) accept the expertise of the Inquiry and Indigenous women and peoples more broadly. Should the

¹⁹⁴ See Appendix D: Cheryl Hardcastle, June 12 2019.

¹⁹⁵ See Appendix E: Globe and Mail staff, June 10 2019.

¹⁹⁶ Wakeham, 2.

¹⁹⁷ See Appendix B for full response.

parties not agree with any specific Calls for Justice, it is not something they state publically. The Green Party's response demonstrates an understanding of genocide by attrition, as evidenced by the party's use of the words 'amount to', acknowledging that slow violence can constitute severe harm.¹⁹⁸ The NDP in particular continues this tone in Hansard discourse, where party members advocate for the recognition of the finding, use the term freely to call for change, and try and fail to have a motion passed recognizing the violence as a genocide. Whether the party accepts the legal arguments or accepts the expertise of Indigenous peoples in this area, the effect is the same – an acceptance of the finding and calls for further action in response.

A more pessimistic view is that the NDP and Green parties see the Final Report as an opportunity for 'examining big-picture changes to social policy and programming',¹⁹⁹ particularly as the Inquiry calls for many of the same policy changes the parties have championed. As with other parties, the NDP in particular highlights their historical calls for action, contributing to a more favourable narrative, stating that 'The NDP has pressed the government to do this work, and now the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls report is calling on the government to do this work.'²⁰⁰

5.2.2 National Myth Contributes to What Woolford and Benvenuto Refer to as Patterns of 'denial and disavowal'²⁰¹ that Hinder One's Ability to Accept Difficult Truths about One's Own Country and Possible Individual Complicity.

Patterns of denial and disavowal stemming from national myth are present in federal responses to the Final Report, primarily in discourse from the Liberal and Conservative parties. The Liberal party's response failed to use the term 'colonialism' and did not admit to any government

¹⁹⁸ Wakeham, 11.

¹⁹⁹ See Appendix D: Jenny Kwan, June 17 2019.

²⁰⁰ See Appendix D: Jenny Kwan, June 4 2019.

²⁰¹ Woolford and Benvenuto, 375. To

wrongdoing despite being the key orchestrators of harm against Indigenous peoples in Canada.²⁰² As Canada has historically polished over its colonial history of conquest²⁰³, that element of self-reflection is lacking in the formal Liberal response to the Final Report. Myth is employed by those in positions of power²⁰⁴ to move forward certain narratives, and my analysis is the narrative suggests that this current government is an agent of change for good²⁰⁵, as evidenced in the highlighting of initiatives undertaken in recent years. Consistent with the concept of ‘historical and cultural blinders’²⁰⁶, I argue that national myth is perpetuated by the narrative past governments were responsible for harms, while the current government is portraying itself as a corrective force that is resolving the damage of the past.

Misleading narratives affect Canadian collective memory, which plays a crucial role in how Indigenous peoples and settlers are able to move forward.²⁰⁷ The myth of Canada’s exceptionalism²⁰⁸ is reinforced by statements that praise the government for discussing subjects such as reconciliation, even as the Inquiry has highlighted the frustrating lack of action that can often accompany such conversations.²⁰⁹ The Conservative Party prides itself on the process of reconciliation, but provides no further details on what this reconciliation may entail. Weakening this declaration is the fact that the Party’s sole commitment consists of developing and implementing a National Action Plan, one of 231 Calls for Justice. Elements of national myth are particularly evident when party members criticize the Liberal government for their failures to act in its present government term, a mythologized narrative that ignores the far more blatant

²⁰² Monture, 223 and Ladner, 229.

²⁰³ Razack, quoted in Kwan, 61.

²⁰⁴ Anderson, 27.

²⁰⁵ MacDonald, 412.

²⁰⁶ Regan, 173.

²⁰⁷ MacDonald, 317.

²⁰⁸ Ladner, 227.

²⁰⁹ National Inquiry, Executive Summary, 62.

inaction of the prior Conservative Party government. This is particularly problematic given that the Conservative Party did not see a need for a national inquiry or recognize the systemic nature of violence against Indigenous women and girls.²¹⁰ Scheer's conclusion on the genocide finding demonstrates that patterns of denial and disavowal are not easy to overcome and that genocide qualifies as a contested concept in the non-neutral language of politics.

The tone of the discourse is significantly different from the NDP Party, which attempts to counter accepted narratives by calling upon the government and Canadians to 'accept our history of a colonial past', and the 'misogyny, racism, and the social economic injustice' that are key contributing factors to this violence are highlighted.²¹¹ One party member in particular clearly challenges Canada's mythologized exceptionalism²¹² by stating that 'This country knows its history. We know the colonial history. We know the devaluation of indigenous members of the country. We know the history of trying to destroy, in multiple ways, those communities.'²¹³

Similar discourse is employed by the Green Party in parliamentary debate, though there is no usage of the term genocide, and instead a focus on the root causes of the violence, such as a lack of safe shelter for those in need.²¹⁴

One opportunity for future research would be exploring whether the Bloc Québécois' silence in response to the Final Report has anything to do with national myth, as the Bloc in particular has a more complicated relationship with federal sovereignty than the other parties, given its focus as a province-specific party. Alternately, their lack of response may have been a strategic decision given it would draw attention to the Inquiry's supplementary report on violence against

²¹⁰ Kappo, 2014.

²¹¹ See Appendix D: Jagmeet Singh, June 3 2019.

²¹² Ladner, 227.

²¹³ See Appendix D: Rachel Blaney, June 3 2019.

²¹⁴ See Appendix D: Elizabeth May, June 3 2019.

Indigenous women in Quebec. The sole Hansard comment by a party member, however, challenges national myth by stating plainly that ‘The report’s findings should come as no surprise to anyone’, explaining that similar findings were first shared more than two decades ago by the Erasmus-Dussault commission, and later by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.²¹⁵ The party member further challenges the myth of Canada’s exceptionalism by highlighting specific cases of harm and sexual abuse and the need for a ‘wake-up call for Canada’²¹⁶ Finally, the party member calls for ‘real action to change our nation-to-nation relationships’, which counters national myth by criticizing the imposed sovereignty of Canada’s colonial state.

5.2.3 Dismissals of Genocide Allegations are Part of a Larger Trend of Diminishing the Colonial Harms Wrought against Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

Diminishing colonial harms is a more innocuous and insidious form of discourse that can be difficult to identify. For instance, one could argue that Liberal Party’s initial response’s failure to acknowledge the finding of genocide constitutes a dismissal in itself.²¹⁷ Dismissals of harm can be inferred from what appears to be innocuous language, such as when the discourse declares ‘Facing the hardest of truths is a necessary step to addressing them – and moving forward together.’ The vague statement does not explain what these ‘hardest of truths’ may be or who should be facing them, which would be impossible without an adequate acknowledgment and understanding of colonial harm.²¹⁸

In the case of the Conservative Party, dismissals of harm are perpetuated by the Party making it apparent that it only agrees with some Calls for Justice, a conclusion they were able to make

²¹⁵ See Appendix D: Monique Pauze, June 4 2019.

²¹⁶ See Appendix D: Monique Pauze, June 4 2019.

²¹⁷ MacDonald, 422.

²¹⁸ Regan, 2.

quickly given the report had just been released. While some Calls for Justice are praised for making ‘a lot of sense’, the Party adds ‘there are other recommendations that one questions and wonders how they will work.’²¹⁹ This questioning is far more blatant than any other party’s discourse, and the discourse is contributing to a larger pattern of dismissals of harm by questioning the validity of an unknown number of calls before the report itself has even been reviewed in detail (or at all), and the context around the calls understood. By not identifying specific calls and why they feel other solutions are more appropriate, the expertise of Indigenous women and Indigenous peoples more broadly is called into question, the lack of which is already a root cause of violence against Indigenous women and girls.²²⁰ Furthermore, Scheer’s rejection of the genocide finding arguably contributed to dismissals of harm by negating the expertise of the Inquiry and the lived experiences of those who shared their stories.

The Green Party’s discourse, by contrast, appears to recognize that dismissals of harm against Indigenous peoples exist, as the party states that it hopes that ‘this report will help us to realize that the issues...cannot be addressed without full recognition of the terrible centuries of assault upon their traditional cultures and values.’²²¹ In the case of the Bloc Québécois, the silence could be interpreted as the party not deeming the Final Report important, which I believe would constitute a dismissal of harm. The sole party member to speak to the issue during parliamentary debate did not use the term genocide, but their discourse does not dismiss the harm done, as a number of word choices co-sign the tragedy, referring to ‘tragic’ and ‘devastating’ report findings, ‘violence’, and ‘discrimination.’²²²

²¹⁹ See Appendix D: Cathy McLeod, June 3 2019.

²²⁰ National Inquiry, Executive Summary, 11.

²²¹ See Appendix B for full response.

²²² See Appendix D: Monique Pauze, June 4 2019.

5.3 Findings – Secondary Research Question

My secondary research question asks: *What implications did the parties' discourse and these concepts have for the parties' respective commitments to action?* It is crucial to examine the relative nature of the key concepts within the discourse to determine not only how they are linked to action, but to different types of action more specifically. By parsing out the relative strength of each of these concepts at play in the discourse and examining parties' commitments to action, it is possible to scrutinize the relative weight each party affords to each concept and the enabling or limiting nature of the concepts themselves. As a metric for action, I analyze the parties' respective 2021 electoral platforms, and juxtapose my platform analysis with a review of the National Inquiry's Calls for Justice, which the Commission stated are legal imperatives that must be implemented.²²³

The Calls for Justice aimed at all governments are wide-ranging in nature, attempting to address not just the violence itself but the entrenched social, economic, political, and cultural root causes that lead to its existence and continuation. Given that the key concepts are closely linked, a single Call might possibly address misleading national myth, narrow genocide conceptualizations, and dismissals of harm. As such, it is helpful to achieve a deeper level of analysis by identifying which codebook themes and sub-categories the Call most exemplifies. Call 1.1 is a prime example, as the creation of a National Action Plan to eliminate violence against Indigenous women and girls would make positive inroads to address misleading and damaging national narratives, expand the common understanding of genocide, and combat dismissals of harm by contributing to an understanding of this violence as extreme, pervasive, and unacceptable. Others, such as Call 5.9 for accessible protection orders to shield Indigenous

²²³ National Inquiry, Final Report, 168.

women and girls from someone who may cause them harm, more clearly align with one key concept, in this case dismissals of harm, by addressing historical failures to act.

A number of Calls for Justice demonstrate the importance of national myth when it comes to playing a contributing role in violence against Indigenous women and girls. Call 5.25 focuses on resourcing research on the men who commit this violence, as the Final Report dismantled the myth that it is largely Indigenous men who are the perpetrators²²⁴, a damaging false narrative. Several Calls address the false narrative that all Canadians are afforded the same opportunity for self-determination, as colonialism has ensured this is untrue. Call 4.2, for instance, calls for the need to ‘Recognize Indigenous peoples’ right to self-determination in the pursuit of economic development’, explaining that an equitable basis for economic and social progress is required in order to ‘uphold the human dignity, life, liberty and security’ of Indigenous women and girls. By dismantling the myth that all Canadians are afforded this dignity and security, the Call enables recognition of the fact that this is not the reality for many Indigenous peoples.

While this research is on the discursive space of the political elite, the concept of space appears throughout the Final Report in myriad forms, creating a deeper understanding of the spatiality of violence and justice and its connection to power. There are Calls that advocate for space ‘within governance systems in accordance with their civil and political rights’, recognizing that lack of access to governance spaces is intimately tied to power. The discourse explored in this project plays out on a stage historically denied to Indigenous women, which has had an indelible effect on the composition of those furthering this discourse. The section below examines specific Calls for Justice’s links to certain concepts and the degree of responsiveness each party demonstrates

²²⁴ National Inquiry, Final Report, Forensic Document Review Project, 234.

in order to explore whether parties' usage of certain concepts, such as national myth, impedes or encourages certain types of action in response.

5.3.1 Responsiveness of Parties to Calls for Justice

The Final Report contains dozens of Calls for Justice that the parties, particularly the Liberal Party as sitting government and likely winner of the 2021 election, could reasonably commit to implementing. Despite this, a number of what could be seen as 'feasible' Calls are not included in the Liberal platform and there is no distinguishable shift from their government's path of the past few years. A call to create 'an independent mechanism to report on the implementation of the national inquiry's Calls for Justice to Parliament, annually', is not highlighted in any platform, and ironically, without the support of the federal government, such an independent mechanism cannot be instituted. This Call would broaden conceptualizations of genocide by annually educating parliamentarians of all parties on the significant and unique nature of persistent colonial systemic violence, as well as serve as a reminder of all the work that remains. Where the Liberal Party's platform commitments do align with the party's earlier discourse as well as specific Calls for Justice is in areas that the party has already commenced work in, such as housing. That the abysmal housing situation exists as a result of government omissions and failures to uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples is not touched upon. Though the platform contains actions to address violence against Indigenous women and girls, their scope and scale is nowhere near what the Inquiry calls for, resulting in a partial responsiveness at best. While the Conservative Party commits to Call 1.1 to establish a National Action Plan, there is an obvious lack of corresponding commitments in response to the dozens of Calls aimed specifically at governments. There are a number of missed opportunities given that the party often speaks of the need to achieve government efficiencies and cut down on bureaucratic red

tape, which would align closely with Call 1.6 to eliminate jurisdictional gaps that lead to services being denied or delivered. The larger connections between some of the party's favourite talking points and how they could help address violence against Indigenous women and girls by addressing the root causes of marginalization appear to be missing. One such area would be tying the Conservative platform's economic interests to Calls such as 4.1, which highlights the need to 'uphold the social and economic rights' of Indigenous women and girls or justice-based solutions such as Call 5.18 that would ensure that violence against Indigenous women is considered an aggravating factor during the sentencing of perpetrators.

Unlike the Liberal and Conservative Parties, the NDP and Green parties wholeheartedly commit to the implementation of all 231 Calls for Justice. This stance aligns with their discourse in the wake of the Final Report, which appeared to prioritize respecting the knowledge and experiences of those who contributed to the Inquiry and who likely know best how to end this violence. The NDP platform does not qualify the term genocide, and there are references to it in the context of residential schools, violence, and history of Indigenous peoples more broadly. The party's broad acceptance demonstrates a willingness to see government to hold itself to a higher level of responsibility when it comes to acknowledging its role in the complex systemic violence.

Surprisingly, the Green Party platform does not use the term despite doing so in the past, but continues to recognize the value of the Calls for Justice and advocate for the implementation of all 231 Calls, consistent with earlier discourse. Further supporting this commitment is a variety of other promised actions should the Green Party take power, a number of which would address the negative effects of national myth and dismissals of harm.

While the Calls for Justice are broad and encapsulate a wide range of issues to address diverse root causes, the Bloc's platform largely fails to make connections between their priorities and addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. Furthermore, the electoral platform does not continue the discourse established by a sole party member's parliamentary comments. Though the platform denounces violence against women, domestic violence, and femicides, and commits to a court that specializes in matters of sexual crimes and domestic violence, the broader recognition that Indigenous women are disproportionately impacted is nonexistent, and Indigenous women are not referred to once throughout the platform. Missed opportunities can be found, such as failing to respond to Call 2.1, which would ensure that that access to Indigenous cultures and languages exist as constitutionally protected rights. Given the Bloc's familiarity with the importance of language and cultural rights as it relates to the French language, one could have the perhaps naïve assumption that they would recognize the importance of supporting this right for Indigenous peoples as well, particularly as the platform states it supports self-jurisdiction of Indigenous groups. Rather, the research has to tease out understandings from the silence in a variety of electoral platform areas.

5.3.2 Role of Concepts in Enabling or Limiting Action

An important component of this research's empirical contribution is to explore whether the key concepts present in political discourse in response to the Final Report enable or limit certain types of action when it comes to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. Meaningful action is facilitated by the exertion of political power, and given discourse's intimate relationship with power, the responsive discourse of political parties is ripe for analysis.

The Liberal electoral platform discourse contains a number of examples of national myth, and the platform perpetuates it as opposed to addressing it. As befits a sitting government, the platform spends an inordinate amount of time weaving the narrative that it has been tremendously successful and has had made significant accomplishments benefitting Indigenous peoples. Per the Liberal Party, the right initiatives are in place, there is only a need to ‘accelerate them’. The continuation of earlier messaging portraying Canada and its government as a benevolent leader bringing about positive change appears hard to discard, and the platform refers to the ‘legacy’ of colonialism, wording choices that firmly set colonialism in the past instead of as a continued lived reality. Noticeably, the platform discourse does not use the term genocide once, and this omission is a clear choice that its usage was not worth the perceived negatives. In this case, willingness to eventually use the term in response to the Final Report did not automatically guarantee a usage of the term in the party’s platform discourse or commitments. The party’s earlier discourse does not acknowledge that government is a key perpetrator of systemic violence, a significant absence that ultimately means the platform does not commit to implementing the 231 Calls for Justice and the largescale institutional changes required to achieve systemic change. Ultimately, the self-congratulatory tone present in earlier Liberal discourse continues, and while dismissals of harm are subtle, past reticence about the usage of the term genocide and persistent national myth results in commitments where the government had already decided to act, continuing to portray itself as a benevolent leader while failing to truly commit to the significant systemic change the Inquiry calls for.

The Conservative platform also contains elements of national myth, such as its numerous references to past governments not fulfilling their duties, which ignores that the Conservative government was in power for the decade prior to the Liberal government. The true history of

Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples is cloaked by discourse that refers to 'the scale of the obstacles that Indigenous peoples have faced throughout Canada's history.'²²⁵ Failure to use the term colonialism also contributes to a narrative of Canada that is more favourable in nature.²²⁶

There is a substantial disconnect between the need to broaden conceptualizations of genocide and the platform's usage of the term itself. The Conservative platform is consistent in that it continues to not use the term genocide to refer to violence against Indigenous peoples in Canada, yet is comfortable with the usage of the term when it applies to circumstances outside of Canada's borders, which perpetuates a lack of focus on Canada in genocide discussions.²²⁷ While the party has the opportunity to combat dismissals of harm, it instead contributes to them by referring to 'significant gaps in opportunity and outcome between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.' Framing systemic barriers entrenched by colonialism as missed opportunities is discourse influenced by historical and cultural blinders. This type of discourse contributes to national myth by portraying Canada as a land of equal opportunity, a framing in which I argue that history is absent. Ultimately, there are no surprises here, and earlier discourse was an indicator of what was to come with the party's commitments, which are lacking.

Similarly, the NDP platform is very consistent with earlier discourse. As the party supports implementing all 231 Calls for Justice, it follows that the platform would challenge aspects of national myth, with the discourse referring to 'decades of colonialism perpetrated by the federal government'²²⁸, framing colonialism as continuing and the government as active in its existence. An optimistic but perhaps naïve understanding of this discourse is that the party is challenging

²²⁵ Conservative Party of Canada 2021 Platform, 115.

²²⁶ Ladner, 228.

²²⁷ Woolford and Benvenuto, 375.

²²⁸ NDP 2021 Platform, 75.

‘false historical innocence.’²²⁹ Pessimistically, this could be seen as the NDP furthering its own agenda, as it benefits an opposition party that has never been in power to criticize the approach of current and past governments, and present themselves as a reasonable alternative with ‘administrative ‘solutions’²³⁰ However, their discourse and platform continue to challenge national myth, such as their stance that ‘an acknowledgement of our country’s colonial history of genocide and stolen lands’ is essential for the Crown and Indigenous peoples’ relationship.²³¹ The party, which was never saddled with a narrow conceptualization of genocide and eager to dismantle reject national myth and dismissals of harm in its discourse, ultimately delivers a platform containing commitments that are responsive, demonstrating a willingness to support the Report’s findings and the knowledge and expertise of Indigenous peoples

The Green Party’s platform is perhaps the most surprising in terms of how it relates to key concepts, as there are some noticeable changes from their discourse in response to the Final Report. Similar to the Liberal Party, while the party’s response in the wake of the release accepted the Inquiry’s finding of genocide, the electoral platform does not use that term once. It is not as straightforward as determining whether the Party no longer agrees with the finding, as the platform discourse does not seem to be perpetuating dismissals of harm in general. Rather, the platform demonstrates an understanding of colonialism as both historical and contemporary, which aligns with the National Inquiry’s stance that colonialism is a continuing reality that exists in various areas of society, including government.²³² National myth is not apparent in the platform, and references to Canada’s international reputation focus on the need to be a good

²²⁹ Regan, 216.

²³⁰ Regan, 93.

²³¹ NDP 2021 Platform, 69.

²³² National Inquiry, Executive Summary, 21.

neighbour environmentally as opposed to a shining example of exceptionalism²³³ overall. The platform also demonstrates an understanding of the role of land and sovereignty for Indigenous peoples, which is responsive to National Inquiry calls for self-jurisdiction and reconciliation. While the lack of the term genocide is somewhat surprising, the platform's promised actions ultimately demonstrate a responsiveness to the Final Report in their targeted actions in areas such as violence, housing, child welfare, nation-to-nation relationships, and the abolishment of colonial mainstays such as the *Indian Act*, coupled with their continued commitment to implement all 231 Calls for Justice.

The Bloc Québécois' platform is largely one of missed opportunities. While the platform comes out against violence against women, its failure to recognize colonialism inadvertently contributes to dismissals of harm on a larger scale when it comes to Indigenous peoples more broadly by ignoring 'the continued practices and effects of colonialism'.²³⁴ The platform does not use the term genocide, which is perhaps not surprising, as a party would likely not use the term for the first time in an electoral platform when acceptance of the term could be highlighted publicly to further their own agenda as well as their understanding of history.²³⁵ What is surprising is that the platform discourse does not refer to Indigenous women once, eliminating any references to the Inquiry. The elements of national myth that were confronted and dismissed in the Hansard discourse are not present here. Rather, the lack of discourse on colonialism is more obvious given that the platform commits to nation to nation relationships with Indigenous communities, abolishing the *Indian Act*, and supporting the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the case of the Bloc, a paucity of earlier discourse,

²³³ Ladner, 227.

²³⁴ Kuokkanen, 232.

²³⁵ Anderson, 27.

regardless of the key concepts, confirmed that this issue would not be a priority come election time, which is reflected in the near absence of any relevant commitments.

5.4 Summary of Chapter

This chapter examines how national myth, dismissals of harm against Indigenous peoples, and conceptualizations of genocide influenced the reactions of federal political parties to the National Inquiry's Final Report. I explore whether analyzing these key concepts in a political party's discourse can reveal their path forward when it comes to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. The analysis pulls from the research's critical discourse analysis and platform analysis to test the responsiveness of parties' commitments by using the Calls for Justice as a metric for action. Essentially, the research's empirical contribution demonstrates an enabling self-confirming relationship between national myth, dismissals of harm, and narrow conceptualizations of genocide in influencing the commitments of political parties in the wake of the Final Report. While each party differs in their approach, there are a number of similarities in terms of the relative weight different parties afford each concept, particularly national myth. Dismissals of harm are present in several platforms in both the language used and the absence of tailored actions, signifying a lack of responsiveness to this violence. The analysis further confirms the continuation of a genocidal definitional debate similar to the one present in the literature review. How parties evoke key concepts is important as this research's empirical contribution supports a greater understanding of how the elite discourse of political parties in the public space can enable or discourage action to end violence against Indigenous women and girls.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Reiteration of Purpose

This research explores political responses to the National Inquiry Final Report. I examine key concepts to determine whether they enable or impede certain types of action; action which the National Inquiry, families, survivors, and numerous activists and academics such as Lavell-Harvard²³⁶, Green²³⁷, and Palmater²³⁸ argue is crucially needed. As ‘people everywhere live in denial of their history’²³⁹, this research empirically moves the yardstick forward in analyzing the relative influence of key concepts in such denials. I situate this work within an intersectional feminist research ethic to undertake research that is responsive to an intersection of real world and theoretical suppositions - my research is undeniably reactive to a pressing national tragedy²⁴⁰, a paucity of literature on violence against Indigenous women and genocide in the Canadian context²⁴¹, and a challenge from the TRC to reflect upon the role we all play in our country’s colonial system.²⁴²

6.2 Summary of Findings

In essence, the research’s empirical contribution shows a self-confirming relationship between the key concepts present in political discourse in response to the Final Report and a political party’s path forward when it comes to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls. I undertake a critical discourse analysis to determine the relative presence of the key concepts of national myth, dismissals of harm against Indigenous peoples, and conceptualizations of

²³⁶ *Forever Loved*, foreword.

²³⁷ Green, 18.

²³⁸ Palmater, 36.

²³⁹ Moshman, 929.

²⁴⁰ Kuokken, 245.

²⁴¹ MacDonald, 320.

²⁴² Truth and Reconciliation Commission, vi.

genocide and how they interacted with each other to influence the discourse of the five major federal political parties. I find that parties' respective commitments to action act as self-confirmation of their earlier discourse, and argue that for the most part, it is possible to predict a party's path forward when it comes to addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls by analyzing their discourse in response to the Final Report and the relative presence of national myth, dismissals of harm, and narrow conceptualizations of genocide within this discourse.

I undertake a mind mapping exercise to identify the key themes of the Inquiry's supplementary report on genocide and develop a codebook to operationalize this analysis. I examine the broader context of the discourse and review three sources during the course of my critical discourse analysis - official public statements, parliamentary debates, and news articles. The discourse of the political parties varied in relation to their role within the larger federal system – the reigning Liberal Party was careful to further a narrative of government as a benevolent actor on the right path to end this violence, while the opposition Conservative Party coupled criticism of the Liberal Party's efforts while ignoring their own past failures. Dismissals of harm are present, whether in outright dismissals of the finding of genocide or more nuanced questioning of the Calls for Justice or the Commission's expertise. Consistent with academic literature on genocide itself, a definitional debate was present, confirming my hypothesis that narrow conceptualizations of genocide hamper acceptance of forms that are not temporally and geographically limited incidents of mass murder and extreme violence.

In Chapter Four, I establish a metric for action by examining the parties' 2021 electoral platform commitments in order to determine how ultimately responsive the five political parties are to the release of the Final Report. By juxtaposing their earlier discourse against their eventual

commitments, I confirm there was a lack of consistency in addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls, yet alignment on broader, vaguer statements to support Indigenous peoples. The NDP and the Green Party remained consistent in their explicit support to implement all 231 Calls for Justice, while parties such as the Liberals and the Conservatives were far more reserved. References to genocide were scant, with the term only being employed by the NDP and the Conservative Party, and the NDP being the sole party to refer to a Canadian genocide against Indigenous peoples. Both the Liberal Party and the Green Party, which had accepted the genocide finding in earlier discourse, ultimately did not use the term in their electoral platforms. Overall, violence against Indigenous women and girls was unfortunately not a major priority in most party platforms, with some, such as the Bloc, not mentioning it at all.

In Chapter Five, I theorize what conclusions can be drawn from comparing the discourse in wake of the release of the Final Report with the electoral platform commitments. I pull from the critical discourse analysis and platform analysis to test the responsiveness of parties' commitments by using the Calls for Justice as a metric for action. The research empirically demonstrates a self-confirming relationship between national myth, dismissals of harm, and narrow conceptualizations of genocide in predicting parties' eventual commitments to action or lack thereof. There are similarities between parties in regards to the relative weight they afford each concept, particularly national myth, regardless of each party's individual approach. A lack of responsiveness to this violence demonstrates a dismissal of harm in itself by the absence of tailored and substantial actions.

6.3 Implications for Future Research

When reflecting on the findings, one promising possibility for future research would be to explore the educational and empathetic effect of consuming the Final Report's content. This avenue of research stems from the fact that it was not clear in reviewing the comments of many politicians whether they had actually reviewed the report in any detail, and consuming the report could result in greater empathy, and hopefully, increased impetus for action. Individuals could be asked to read the Inquiry's Executive Summary and Supplementary Report on genocide and then complete a questionnaire to gauge the presence of biases that might impede public support to end this violence. Approaches to mitigate any biases could then be developed.

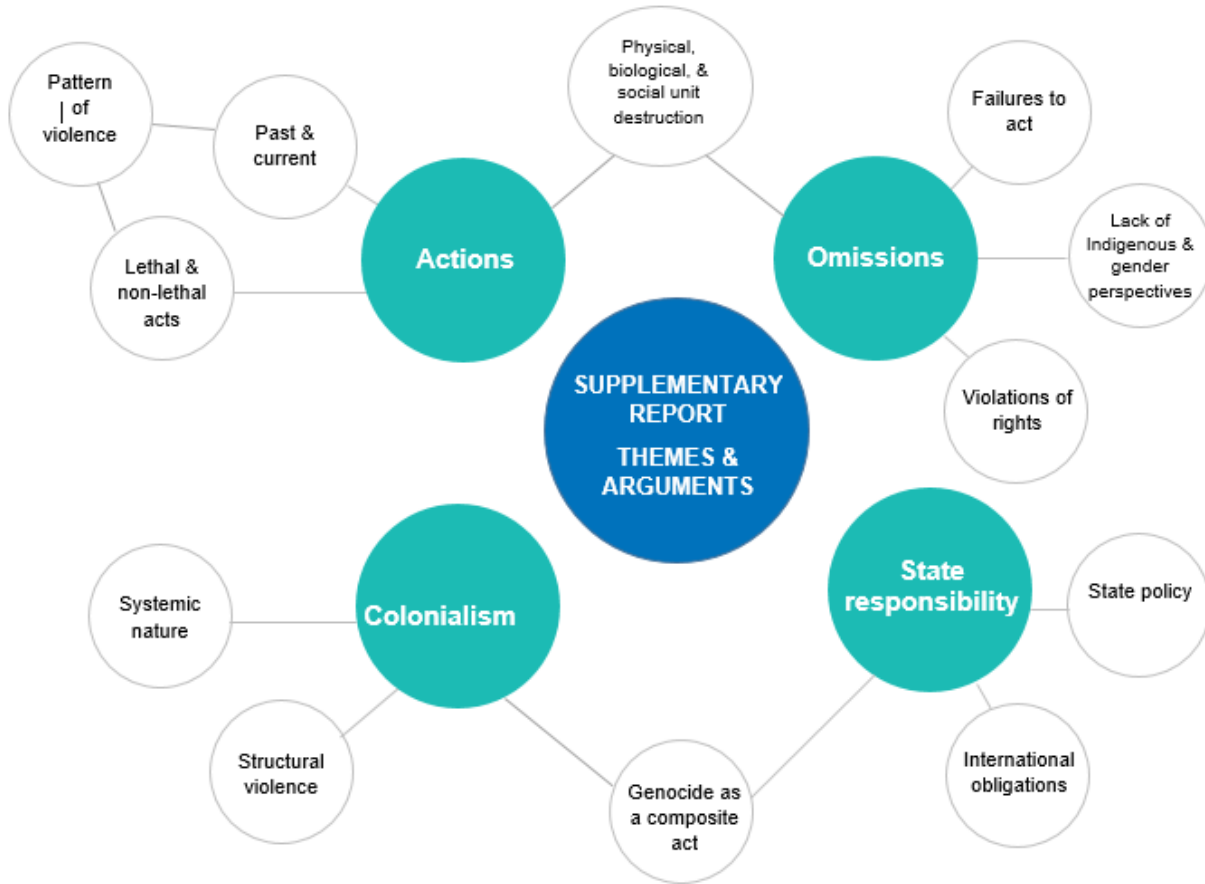
6.5 Conclusion

This research exists in some small part due to a need to understand how Canadian political elites continue to carry on while so many Indigenous women and girls and those who love them have been taken or harmed by deplorable violence. Grounding this work in an intersectional feminist research ethic helps me better understand the intersections of colonialism, racism, and sexism that combine to create myriad forms of systemic violence. While slow progress is being made, much more urgent action is required, not just from political elites, but from all of us, who have the ability to hold them as well as ourselves accountable. Understanding how political parties evoke key concepts is important, as this research empirically contributes to a greater understanding of how the elite discourse of political parties in the public space can enable or limit action to end violence against Indigenous women and girls. Problematic discourse that engages in dismissals of harm, mistakenly focuses on definitions of genocide, and furthers

damaging national myth will understandably not result in concrete positive change. This violence needs to end, and it is time that both the discourse and the actions reflect that.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: MIND MAPPING A LEGAL ANALYSIS OF GENOCIDE



APPENDIX B: FORMAL STATEMENTS FROM POLITICAL LEADERS

Prime Minister's Office

Date: June 3, 2019

Format: Public Statement

Attributed to: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, today issued the following statement to welcome the final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls: “Today, I received the final report at the closing ceremony of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which was launched in 2016 to recommend concrete actions to address the systemic causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, LGBTQ and two-spirit people and end this national tragedy. “I thank the Chief Commissioner, the Commissioners, Grandmothers, the National Family Advisory Circle, and the Commission’s staff for their work and dedication. I especially wish to acknowledge and thank First Nations, Inuit, and Métis families and survivors, as well as knowledge keepers and experts, who participated in the Inquiry hearings and courageously told their stories. The Inquiry is a result of the work of many individuals and organizations who advocated tirelessly for Indigenous women and girls, and Indigenous LGBTQ and two-spirit people – and continue to do so today. Facing the hardest of truths is a necessary step to addressing them – and moving forward together. “We will conduct a thorough review of this report, and we will develop and implement a National Action Plan to address violence against Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ and two-spirit people. We will work with Indigenous partners to determine next steps, and we will include the perspectives and full participation of Indigenous women and girls. We will also include the voices of LGBTQ and two-spirit people with lived experience, as well as the family members of victims, and survivors of violence. We will also continue to work with provinces, territories, and municipalities to encourage cooperation across all orders of government in responding to the report. Reducing the rates of violence against Indigenous women and girls, and Indigenous LGBTQ and two-spirit people, is a priority for the Government of Canada. Our government will turn the Inquiry’s Calls for Justice into real, meaningful, Indigenous-led action. “Since the Inquiry’s launch, we have taken steps to address early recommendations, honour missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, their families, and survivors, and take action on issues reflected in the Calls to Justice. We are working with Indigenous communities to improve health and wellness by investing in essential infrastructure, including housing, and eliminating boil water advisories. We are also working together to better support inherent jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples in areas like education, governance, and child and family services. “We also recently introduced legislation to protect, promote, and revitalize Indigenous languages, and we are working to reform the criminal justice system to make sure Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ and two-spirit people receive the full benefit and protection of the law. Measures like these help tackle the systemic causes of violence that put Indigenous women and girls at risk, close the unacceptable gaps that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and move us closer toward a Canada that is safer and more just for all.”

Conservative Party of Canada

Date: June 3, 2019

Format: Public Statement

Attributed to: Party Leader Andrew Scheer

CONSERVATIVE Party Leader Andrew Scheer said in a statement: “Today, my thoughts are with the families of the victims, the survivors, and the many communities that have felt the pain of these tragedies. Canada’s Conservatives support the process of reconciliation with Canada’s Indigenous peoples. Under my leadership, a Conservative government will develop and implement a National Action Plan, in partnership with Indigenous peoples, to advance reconciliation, address violence and achieve measurable improvements in the day-to-day lives of Indigenous women and girls. There are a number of ‘Calls to Justice’ in today’s report that could meaningfully improve the lives of Indigenous women and girls, including the standardization of protocols so all cases are thoroughly investigated and establishing a national task force to review and, if required, to reinvestigate cases across Canada. Conservatives will carefully review the details of this final report and continue to hold the Trudeau government to account to ensure that the Inquiry’s report results in closure, peace and solutions for the victims’ families. May today mark another important step in the reconciliation process, towards a safe and just Canada for all.

New Democratic Party of Canada

Date: June 3, 2019

Format: Twitter thread / social media

Attributed to: Party Leader Jagmeet Singh

1. At the release of the Final Report into #MMIWG, we all watched & listened as two youth handed over the final report to the Prime Minister on stage. One, a young woman, looked the PM in the eyes & said, in a call to action repeated far too often, “do something, please.” 1/3.
2. The report is clear: thousands of Indigenous women, girls & 2SLGBTQQIA ppl were murdered or went missing in a Canadian genocide. We cannot deny this horrific suffering. Too many Indigenous women & girls suffered unconscionable violence & for too many, this continues. #MMIWG 2/3.
3. The report calls for powerful changes, including reforms to the legal system, social institutions, health and wellness and basic human rights. It is our duty to ensure this report doesn't sit on a shelf. We have to read it, carefully, and implement the 231 Calls for Justice. 3/3

Green Party of Canada

Date: June 3, 2019

Format: Public Statement

Attributed to: Party Leader Elizabeth May, Indigenous Affairs critic Lorraine Rekmans
OTTAWA — Green Party Leader Elizabeth May said today that she accepts the key findings of the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous woman, including that the ongoing impacts of colonialism amount to a genocide. “We need a fundamental shift and that shift must begin with dignity for all Indigenous peoples,” said Ms. May. “Every Canadian has a part to play in implementing the recommendations of the inquiry”. The final report, released today, has more than 200 recommendations, including a call for governments and police to develop an effective response to human trafficking, sexual exploitation and violence. “It means respect, an end to

policies of assimilation, and strong support for health and education on and off reserve. It means ending poverty in Canada with a guaranteed liveable income.” Green Party Indigenous Affair critic, Lorraine Rekmans said: “It must be a priority for any government to empower Indigenous women, girls and gender diverse people to ensure an end to these horrors. We must invest in healing the trauma and empowering women to move forward. These recommendations must be enacted to send clear signals that we all find this situation intolerable.” Ms. May said that she will read the inquiry’s 1,200-page report and she urged all Canadians to do the same. “My hope is that this report will help us to realize that the issues affecting Indigenous peoples in Canada are complex and cannot be addressed without full recognition of the terrible violence of centuries of assault upon their traditional cultures and values.”

APPENDIX C: ANALYSIS OF INITIAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS

Party	Liberal Party of Canada
Date	June 3, 2019
Format	Public Statement released by Prime Minister’s Office
Attributed to	Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
Context	<p>The Prime Minister of Canada was present for the closing ceremony of the National Inquiry in Gatineau, Quebec on June 3, 2019. Prime Minister Trudeau was formally handed the Final Report in a special cloth bag that had been blessed using traditional medicines on behalf of the Inquiry’s four commissioners. The Prime Minister delivered a speech to attendees, with one portion of his remarks gaining significant media attention in particular:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trudeau: <i>“This report, these truths, difficult, challenging and uncomfortable...”</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Audience member: <i>“Genocide! Say what it is!”</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trudeau: <i>“This is an uncomfortable day for Canada, but it is an essential day.”</i></p> <p>While the Prime Minister’s speech is important for reference purposes, this analysis draws from the public statement released by the Prime Minister’s Office for ease of comparison with official statements from other federal parties who did not have had the opportunity to speak at the event.</p>
Headline / Title	Prime Minister welcomes final report from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
Word Count	492
Summary	The statement acknowledges and thanks the diverse groups who participated in the National Inquiry, from the commissioners to the National Advisory Family Circle, as well as the families, survivors, experts, and knowledge keepers who participated and shared their stories. The statement references the mandate of the Inquiry and the government’s commitment to thoroughly review the report and implement a National Action Plan. The Prime Minister commits to working with Indigenous partners and references recent government actions taken to address systemic causes of violence.
Main theme	State responsibility
Main theme – code	State policy
Secondary theme	Actions
Secondary theme - code	Past and current
Genocide	No reference.
Analysis	This statement is the broadest in scope of statements released by party leaders, which is not surprising given the position, resources, and responsibilities afforded to a sitting Prime Minister. Given that the Liberal government instituted the National Inquiry, the statement begins in a reflective tone, and reflects on the efforts and willingness of diverse groups to participate in the Inquiry and share their stories. The statement does not

acknowledge the difficulties that the Inquiry encountered in its work (slow bureaucratic government processes, staffing, lack of supports for those sharing their stories, etc.), which received significant media attention and criticism from family members, advocates, and opposition parties.

The statement then turns its focus forward and commits to thoroughly review the report and develop a National Action Plan to address the violence examined in the report (Call for Justice 1.1). The Prime Minister commits the government to working with Indigenous partners and including ‘the perspectives and full participation of Indigenous women and girls’, which is responsive to the lack of Indigenous and gender perspectives that the National Inquiry highlighted as a key cause of genocide in its supplementary report, *A Legal Analysis of Genocide*.

The statement commits to working with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to ‘encourage cooperation across all orders of government’ and then transitions to current work underway to implement interim recommendations in areas such as housing and boil water advisories. The inherent jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples is acknowledged, but limited to areas ‘like education, governance, and child and family services’. Recent legislation to protect Indigenous languages is referenced, as are planned reforms for the justice system. The closing line of the statement highlights that these actions support addressing the systemic causes of this violence, and acknowledges the need to close socio-economic gaps, and ‘move us toward a Canada that is safer and more just for all.’

The wording differs from statements from opposition parties in several ways, which is perhaps not surprising given that this government instituted the Inquiry and provided its mandate. Firstly, the efforts of those who participated in the Inquiry, whether as staff or truth-tellers, are acknowledged, and gratitude voiced for both the logistical and emotional labour that was undertaken. Secondly, the length of the statement itself dwarfs those put out by the opposition parties, one of which did not even release a formal response. Thirdly, the tone is more self-congratulatory, with a third of the statement focusing on areas the government is taking action on. The statement does not acknowledge the failure of the government to meet the majority of its high-profile Indigenous peoples-related goals they had committed to in the 2016 election, such as ending boil water advisories.

A review of the vocabulary reveals several instances of flowery language amongst the updates on progress and actions, most evidently in the following: ‘Facing the hardest of truths is a necessary step to addressing them – and moving forward together.’ What exactly these hard truths are (one would assume genocide), is ironically not made clear. While the government’s responsibility in moving forward is expanded upon, an acknowledgment of harm enacted by the government is not present, and

	<p>colonialism is not mentioned. The over-arching assumption is that the government is already on the right path. Whether the Inquiry itself or Indigenous leaders and communities would agree is another question.</p> <p>Commitments to examine in 2021 electoral platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Action Plan • Investments in essential infrastructure, including housing • Eliminating boil water advisories • Improved support of jurisdiction of Indigenous peoples (in areas such as education, governance, and child and family services) • Criminal justice system reform • Close socio-economic gaps
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Party	Conservative Party of Canada
Date	June 3, 2019
Format	Public Statement
Attributed to	Party Leader Andrew Scheer
Context	MP Andrew Scheer, leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and the Official Opposition from 2017-2020, was not present at the closing ceremony. The Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) noted that Scheer ‘tweeted about immigration and firearms legislation’ as the ceremony was taking place. Prior to June 2019, Scheer’s most high-profile involvement in Indigenous issues was the Lynn Beyak controversy, a senator in the Conservative caucus who was supporting racist views against Indigenous peoples. Scheer ultimately expelled Beyak, but only after criticism mounted. Scheer’s later comments on June 10, 2019 on the genocide finding garnered significantly more attention than the June 3 rd formal public statement.
Headline / Title	N/A
Word Count	183
Summary	Acknowledgement of the loss experienced by families and communities, followed by a statement on the party’s commitment to reconciliation. Justice system actions were highlighted, followed by stating the Trudeau government will be held to account.
Main theme	State responsibility
Main theme – code	State policy
Secondary theme	N/A
Secondary theme - code	N/A
Genocide	No reference.

<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Similar to Prime Minister Trudeau’s statement, the wording acknowledges those who have suffered from the tragedy of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and acknowledges victims themselves as well as their families, survivors of violence, and communities.</p> <p>Reconciliation is referenced a number of times, more so than in any other response. The discourse clearly states that the party supports ‘the process of reconciliation’, and commits to the development and implementation of a National Action Plan should the Conservatives take government. The Action Plan’s primary goal is to ‘advance reconciliation’, then address violence and improve socio-economic measures for Indigenous women and girls.</p> <p>The statement highlights specific Calls for Justice, though the discourse inadvertently confirms the party is not supportive of / unlikely to pursue all Calls to Justice given the language employed (‘There are a number of ‘Calls to Justice in today’s report that could meaningfully improve the lives...’). The statement references the call to standardize protocols to ensure cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls are investigated consistently and thoroughly, as well as the creation of a national task force to review cases and determine whether some should be reinvestigated. The wording does not commit the Conservatives to pursuing these calls.</p> <p>The statement does commit the Conservatives to review the report in detail, and ‘continue to hold the Trudeau government to account’. While the statement voices its hope that the report ‘results in closure, peace and solutions for the victims’ families’ and reconciliation is mentioned several times, working in partnership with Indigenous peoples is only referenced once – when referring to the development and implementation of a National Action Plan (Call for Justice 1.1).</p> <p>Similar to the Liberal statement, the comments end with the hope that ‘a safe and just Canada for all’ is achieved. What that may look like for Indigenous women and girls however, is not expanded upon.</p> <p>Commitments to examine in 2021 electoral platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Action Plan • Hold the Trudeau government to account in this area • Standardization of case protocols* • National task force to review cases* <p>Note: The statement did not commit the party to the above two actions, only stating that they were Calls to Justice that could ‘meaningfully improve the lives of Indigenous women and girls’, an important distinction.</p>
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Party	New Democratic Party
Date	June 3, 2019
Format	Twitter / Social Media
Attributed to	Party Leader Jagmeet Singh
Context	MP Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party, was present at the closing ceremony in Gatineau, Quebec. Per APTN, Singh had originally scheduled a news conference on the environment and jobs, but had chosen to cancel it and attend the closing ceremony.
Headline / Title	N/A
Word Count	142
Summary	Succinct but effective. Three tweets totalling under 150 words that 1) set the stage, 2) highlighted the genocide finding, and 3) referenced key areas for reforms and the need for action.
Main theme	Actions
Main theme – code	Pattern of violence
Secondary theme	State responsibility
Secondary theme - code	State policy
Genocide	Referenced and accepted.
Analysis	<p>While the format of this response differs significantly from those of the other parties, it manages to do several things more effectively. Firstly, it humanized and provided insight into the closing ceremony itself, and began by focusing on the moment that two youth, one male and one female, handed the Prime Minister the Final Report. Singh shares how the young woman made her own personal call to action and directly urged the Prime Minister to ‘do something, please.’”</p> <p>Secondly, Singh highlights that the report clearly states that a Canadian genocide has resulted in thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. Singh then immediately states that ‘we cannot deny this horrific suffering’, which is taken as implicit support for the genocide finding.</p> <p>Thirdly, Singh’s language makes it clear that the violence and suffering is not a thing of the past, and continues to exist for many. By transitioning into the report’s calls for reforms to institutions, the legal system, human rights, and more, the statement suggests that government is responsible for not just historical harm, but contemporary as well.</p> <p>Singh ends with a reminder that it is everyone’s duty to ensure the Final Report does not gather dust on a shelf, and closes with the straightforward statement that: ‘We have to read it, carefully, and implement the 231 Calls for Justice’. In terms of saturation with the public, there were 188 Likes, 53</p>

	<p>Retweets, and 8 Quote Tweets. The handful of comments were mixed in support.</p> <p>Commitments to examine in 2021 electoral platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to review and implement the 231 Calls for Justice • Reforms to ‘legal system, social institutions, health and wellness and basic human rights’
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Party	Green Party of Canada
Date	June 3, 2019
Format	Public Statement
Attributed to	Party Leader Elizabeth May as well as Lorraine Rekmans, the Indigenous Affairs critic for the Green Party
Context	Green Party Leader Elizabeth May was present at the closing ceremony of the National Inquiry in Gatineau, Quebec. May committed to read the full report and would publicly reference her progress doing so in the following months as she advanced through the 1,200 pages. Soon after the Final Report, the Green Party committed to implementing the Calls for Justice in addition to implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls for Action and enshrining the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Canadian law, should the Green Party be elected.
Headline / Title	All Canadians must work together on MMIW recommendations, says Elizabeth May
Word Count	250
Summary	States acceptance of key findings and genocide finding in first sentence. Speaks about fundamentally shifting the way things are done in Canada, and the role for every Canadian in implementing the Calls for Justice. Highlights specific Calls for Justice. Quotes Rekmans about the importance of empowering Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse people, investing in trauma supports, and implementing the Calls for Justice.
Main theme	Actions
Main theme – code	Past and current
Secondary theme	Colonialism
Secondary theme - code	Genocide as a composite act
Genocide	Referenced and accepted.
Analysis	The statement’s first line confirms that Party Leader Elizabeth May ‘accepts the key findings of the inquiry...including that the ongoing impacts of colonialism amount to a genocide.’ This direct statement contemplates genocide as a composite act more than any of the others, one resulting from the impacts of colonialism, which the statement acknowledges is ongoing.

	<p>The statement includes a call to action to all Canadians, emphasizing the role they have to play in ensuring the Calls are implemented, and calling for a need to begin with ‘dignity for all Indigenous peoples.’ The statement highlights key Calls in areas such as human trafficking, equitable health and education on and off-reserve, and ending ‘politics of assimilation’, as well as guaranteeing a liveable income in order to end poverty, which is a concept the Party has supported in the past.</p> <p>Unlike the other statements, this one quotes not just the Party Leader, but also the Green Party critic of Indigenous Affairs, Lorraine Rekmans. Rekmans’ comments focus on what to prioritize, which includes empowering Indigenous women, girls, and gender-diverse peoples. Rekmans also acknowledges the importance of healing trauma, a concept which is not referenced in any of the other responses.</p> <p>The Green Party’s response does not limit which Calls should be implemented (such as in the Conservative response), and commits their leader to reading the entire 1,200 page report, as well as urging all Canadians to join her. The complexity of issues is acknowledged, as is the need to fully recognize how the cultures and traditions of Indigenous peoples have been assaulted for centuries.</p> <p>Commitments to examine in 2021 electoral platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thorough review of Final Report • Implementation of the 231 Calls for Justice
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Party	Bloc Québécois
Date	N/A
Format	N/A
Attributed to	N/A
Context	Along with the release of the Final Report and the supplementary report <i>A Legal Analysis of Genocide</i> , the National Inquiry simultaneously released a Quebec-specific report to draw attention to the unique challenges that contribute to violence against Indigenous women and girls within the province. Per the National Inquiry, this includes ‘language barriers, health and social services provided by religious congregations and interaction with Indigenous and provincial police forces.’ ²⁴³
Headline / Title	N/A
Word Count	N/A
Summary	No formal or informal statement released by the Party or Party Leader. A statement from a party member will be considered in the Hansard section.

²⁴³ <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

Main theme	N/A
Main theme – code	N/A
Secondary theme	N/A
Secondary theme - code	N/A
Genocide	N/A
Analysis	<p>It is disappointing that there was no statement, whether formal or informal, released by the Party or Party Leader Yves-François Blanchet given the National Inquiry’s supplementary report focused on the unique circumstances in Quebec that compound and contribute to worsening violence against Indigenous women and girls. The supplementary report included Quebec-specific calls that are meant to be ‘in addition to, as well as in association with’ the 231 Calls in the main body of the report.</p> <p>Along with similar Calls such as annual reporting on progress and a Quebec-specific action plan, unique Calls include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing <i>The Government Action Plan for the Social and Cultural Development of the First Nations and Inuit</i>. • Creating an ‘independent, multi-jurisdictional civilian entity’ to protect the rights of Indigenous citizens, take complaints, and conduct investigations into the quality of public services provided to Indigenous peoples in Quebec. • Having the Ministry of Public Security ‘establish a multi-disciplinary crisis team for cases of missing Indigenous women and girls’. <p>Commitments to examine in the 2021 electoral platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A. Platform will be examined for any responsiveness to Final Report Calls for Justice, Quebec-specific Calls for Justice, or genocide finding.

APPENDIX D: PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENTS

Month	Date	Name	Party	Summary	Theme	Code
June	3	Jane Philpott	INDP	Recognition of release of report, highlights specific calls for action, investments, rights	Actions	Past and Current
June	3	Andrew Scheer	CPC	Final report, criminal code gaps, human trafficking action needed	State responsibility	State Policy
June	3	Seamus O'Regan	LPC	Response to Scheer - thanked inquiry, national action plan as path forward	State responsibility	State Policy
June	3	Jagmeet Singh	NDP	History of violence and colonialism, recognize it and work together	Colonialism	Systemic Nature
June	3	Seamus O'Regan	LPC	Response to Singh - thanked inquiry & participants, action plan, current actions	State responsibility	State Policy
June	3	Jagmeet Singh	NDP	Follow-up statement - need for action, working together	State responsibility	State Policy
June	3	Seamus O'Regan	LPC	Response to Singh - actions taken in response to interim report	Actions	Past and Current
June	3	Seamus O'Regan	LPC	Third reading of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Children, Youth and Families Act (Bill C-92), related to Inquiry	State responsibility	State Policy
June	3	Seamus O'Regan	LPC	Bill C-92 bill explanation, recognizing Indigenous rights	Colonialism	Systemic Nature
June	3	Kevin Waugh	CPC	Bill C-92, mentions link with violence against Indigenous women and girls	Omissions	Failures to Act
June	3	Robert-Falcon Ouellette	LPC	History of government harm re. child welfare, link to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls	Actions	Lethal and Non-Lethal Acts
June	3	John Nader	CPC	Recognition of report, but focus on Bill C-92	State responsibility	State Policy
June	3	Cathy McLeod	CPC	Recognition of report, but focus on Bill C-92, effect of Tina Fontaine's death	State responsibility	State Policy
June	3	Elizabeth May	Green	Concerns with elements of Bill C-92 not going far enough, tie to missing and murdered women and girls, Tina Fontaine	Omissions	Failures to Act
June	3	Kevin Lamoureux	Liberal	Recognition of Final Report, and Bill C-92 being historic events	Omissions	Failures to Act
June	3	Adam Vaughan	LPC	Respect for Indigenous journalists raising awareness, seguing into media bailout	Actions	Past and Current
June	3	Cathy McLeod	CPC	Link between missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and child welfare	Actions	Physical, Biological, and Social Unit Destruction
June	3	Kevin Waugh	CPC	Important to get Bill C-92 right, link to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls	Actions	Physical, Biological, and Social Unit Destruction
June	3	Rachel Blaney	NDP	Bill C-92 examination	Colonialism	Structural Violence

June	4	Jenny Kwan	NDP	Asked if government will clearly state it committed genocide & implement calls	Colonialism	Genocide as a Composite Act
June	4	Carolyn Bennett	LPC	Government accepts genocide finding, we all need to work together	State responsibility	Genocide as a Composite Act
June	4	Sheri Benson	NPD	Lack of transportation and missing & murdered Indigenous women and girls	Omissions	Failures to Act
June	4	Marc Garneau	LPC	Government action on transportation, including Highway of Tears	Actions	Past and Current
June	4	Georgina Jolibois	NDP	Support for families of missing & murdered, esp. in Northern Saskatchewan	State responsibility	Genocide as a Composite Act
June	4	Carolyn Bennett	LPC	Blames past governments for harm, working together to move forward	Actions	Lethal and Non-Lethal Acts
June	4	Jenny Kwan	NDP	Concerns with budget, references missing and murdered women and girls crisis	Colonialism	Genocide as a Composite Act
June	4	Todd Doherty	CPC	Concerns with budget, references Inquiry	Omissions	Failures to Act
June	4	Monique Pauze	BQ	Acknowledges participants, failures to incorporate past recommendations	Omissions	Failures to Act
June	4	Jenny Kwan	NDP	Gender discrimination generally and in refugee legislation, failure to remove it in <i>Indian Act</i> , Inquiry agrees it is needed	Omissions	Violations of Rights
June	5	Jenny Kwan	NDP	Recognition of Canadian culpability and need for accountability	State responsibility	Genocide as a Composite Act
June	5	Jenny Kwan	NDP	Attempt to pass unanimous motion acknowledging genocide, multiple unknown members said no	State responsibility	Genocide as a Composite Act
June	5	Jenny Kwan	NDP	Action needed on Bill S-3 to end sex-based <i>Indian Act</i> discrimination	Omissions	Violations of Rights
June	6	Adam Vaughan	LPC	Focus on Liberal action on housing, need for urban Indigenous housing	Omissions	Failures to Act
June	8	Marilyn Gladu	CPC	Concerns with Bill C-88, one reference to Inquiry	Colonialism	Structural Violence
June	11	Todd Doherty	CPC	Focus is on Fisheries Act, one reference to Inquiry	State responsibility	State Policy
June	17	Jenny Kwan	NDP	Focus is on Motion 173 and diabetes, cites call for justice for universal income	State responsibility	State Policy
June	17	David Lametti	LPC	Focus is on Criminal Code amendments, refers to Inquiry call	State responsibility	State Policy
June	17	Murray Rankin	NDP	Focus is on Criminal code amendments, refers to commissioner and Calls	Actions	Physical, Biological, and Social Unit Destruction
June	17	Arif Virani	LPC	Response to Rankin's comments,	State responsibility	State Policy
June	17	David Lametti	LPC	Response to May re. mandatory minimum penalties	State responsibility	State Policy
June	18	Paul Manly	GPC	2 nd call for government to recognize violence against women & necessary action	State responsibility	State Policy
June	20	Paul Manly	GPC	3 rd call for government to recognize violence against women, pay inequity	State responsibility	State Policy

APPENDIX E: ARTICLES ANALYZED

Paper	Author	Month	Date	Headline	Main Theme	Coding
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Nuttall, Jeremy	June	1	GENOCIDE: The final report from a tumultuous three-year inquiry concludes that thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls were victims of a Canadian	Actions	Pattern of violence
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Cruikshank, Ainsley	June	2	As missing women inquiry ends, cases remain unsolved	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Kenyon, Wallace	June	3	Eyes turn to Ottawa as inquiry closes: Report on treatment of Indigenous women cites 'campaign of genocide'	State responsibility	International obligations
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Galloway, Gloria	June	3	Inquiry calls for police overhaul to halt Indigenous 'genocide'	State responsibility	State policy
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Hebert, Chantal	June	4	All-or-nothing approach could hurt report	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>National Post</i>	Platt, Brian	June	4	Prof who wrote analysis defends use of 'genocide'; Trudeau refuses to use the word in his speech	Actions	Physical, biological, and social unit destruction
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Ballingall, Alex	June	4	'We have failed you': PM acknowledges 'uncomfortable' day as inquiry releases report into violence against Indigenous women, girls	Actions	Physical, biological, and social unit destruction
<i>National Post</i>	Iverson, John	June	4	Uncompromising nature of report may doom it	Colonialism	Systemic nature
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Daum Shanks, Signa	June	4	We failed to treat Indigenous women like people, but I know we can change	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Freeze, Colin	June	4	Final report urges widespread overhaul of police practices	State responsibility	State policy
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Galloway, Gloria	June	4	PM vows action on Indigenous inquiry: Trudeau promises 'thorough review' of final report on missing and murdered women but declines to endorse its genocide finding	State responsibility	State policy
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Jacobs, Beverley; Kaye, Julie	June	5	Indigenous people have faced violence for too long	Actions	Pattern of violence
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Walkom, Thomas	June	5	Inquiry broadens its scope, but colonialism still to blame	Colonialism	Systemic nature
<i>National Post</i>	Iverson, John	June	5	Report's misfires hard to ignore	State responsibility	State policy

<i>Toronto Star</i>	Ballingall, Alex	June	5	Ottawa 'accepts' genocide conclusion: 'We will move forward,' Trudeau says day after report on violence against Indigenous women, girls	Actions	Physical, biological, and social unit destruction
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Stueck, Wendy and Woo, Andrea	June	5	PM accepts Indigenous inquiry's finding of genocide	State responsibility	International obligations
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Ballingall, Alex	June	6	Probe of MMIWG findings urged: OAS chief wants panel to examine conclusions surrounding 'genocide'	State responsibility	International obligations
<i>National Post</i>	Rubenstein, Hymie	June	7	Horrific Crimes, but no genocide	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Blaze Baum, Kathryn; Stueck, Wendy	June	8	Years later, Tina's family is still asking, 'What if?'	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Paris, Erna	June	8	The national inquiry's report was marred only by its inaccurate genocide charge	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>National Post</i>	de Souza, F R Raymond	June	8	MMIW'S bold stance won't work	Actions	Past and current
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Renzetti, Elizabeth	June	8	It's Time To Look In The Mirror	Actions	Physical, biological, and social unit destruction
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Hebert, Chantal	June	10	PM's mixed message sows confusion	State responsibility	State policy
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Dickson, Janice	June	11	Scheer rejects inquiry's finding of 'genocide': Conservative Leader says missing, murdered Indigenous women and girls is 'its own tragedy'	State responsibility	State policy
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Coren, Michael	June	12	What the world needs now is some extra empathy	Actions	Pattern of violence
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Balkissoon, Denise	June	14	Read the report on Indigenous women's lives before dismissing it	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Ballingall, Alex	June	18	Canada urged to act on MMIWG inquiry's finding of 'colonial genocide'	State responsibility	International obligations
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Wente, Margaret	June	19	Justin Trudeau and the 'woke' generation: The intense debate over the term genocide has created a chasm the Prime Minister cannot bridge	Omissions	Failures to act
<i>Toronto Star</i>	Ballingall, Alex	July	21	Liberals follow rocky path to reconciliation: Trudeau vowed to forge new relationship but Indigenous leaders say progress has been slow	State responsibility	State policy
<i>Globe and Mail</i>	Aubin, Aaron	June	29	Indigenous people deserve ethical spaces: Fostering safe places can lead to meaningful reconciliation and economic development in First Nations	State responsibility	State policy

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