

Twenty years later: Family's Continued Battle for Media Coverage of their Missing and
Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Sana Shah, B.A.

Social Justice and Equity Studies

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Faculty of Social Sciences, Brock University
St. Catharines, Ontario

© 2021

Abstract

Past research on media coverage of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) has focused mainly on stereotypical images of Indigenous femininity, with limited research on the family's role and perspectives regarding such coverage. This study examines how family members conceptualise the media coverage of their missing and murdered loved ones, and the family's role in shifting the dominant media narratives. Drawing on an intersectional feminist framework that pays close attention to decolonization, I reflect on the dominant media discourses about MMIWG. This research focuses on the cases of two Indigenous women – Rosianna Poucachiche, murdered in 2000, and Shannon Alexander, missing since 2008. The primary data was collected through an in-depth interview with a family member of the two young women. Articles were selected from mainstream media platforms, that include, *CBC News*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Canada NewsWire* and the *Montreal Gazette*. A qualitative content analysis was conducted to analyse data from the interview and news articles, which produced four main themes: impact of colonialism, police role in addressing MMIWG cases, media's role and coverage of MMIWG, and the experiences and role of MMIWG families in pushing for media coverage. The findings of this research show that, although stereotyping and insensitive media coverage of MMIWG continues, there has been an identifiable change in media reporting in the past decade as narratives shift to more positive language and empathetic tones. I argue that this has been possible due to ongoing Indigenous family and community activism. The findings further reveal that families and activists have pushed media to not only place a greater emphasis on family narratives, but on issues of systemic and racist oppression as well, to acknowledge how these systems are implicated in the phenomenon of MMIWG. Recommendations from this research suggest that mainstream media platforms need to ensure that the families of MMIWG are not only consulted, but that their narratives be prioritised in public reporting on this issue.

Keywords: mainstream media, media coverage, intersectional, feminist, decolonization, colonial, colonialism

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many individuals that have walked this journey with me.

First and foremost, I would like to express a deep sense of appreciation for Brittney Poucachiche. I thank you for your strength and willingness to speak with me. I will forever hold your stories close to my heart.

I am eternally grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Robyn Bourgeois. It has been an honour to have you as a mentor. I would not have made it this far without your constant support and encouragement to put in my best effort towards completing this thesis.

I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude for my supervisory committee, Dr. Margot Francis and Dr. Andrea Doucet, for their guidance and careful feedback throughout the process of writing this thesis. It has made my work that much stronger.

Many thanks to Dr. Jennifer Brant for agreeing to be the external examiner and making the thesis defence process enjoyable and memorable.

To my family and close friends: thank you for standing by my side and supporting me throughout the process of completing this degree.

Lastly, I acknowledge the support received from the Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS), in helping fund this research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Chapter: Introduction.....	1
Statement of Problem	1
Thesis Statement and Rationale for the Research	3
Organization of Chapters.....	4
Language and Terminology.....	5
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework.....	7
Intersectional Feminist Framework and Decolonization.....	7
Conclusion	10
Chapter 3: Literature Review	12
Historical Context.....	13
Hierarchy in Mainstream Media Coverage	18
Shifting Blame: The Spectacle of Prostitution, Drug-Addiction, and Crime	21
Absolving the Settler Colonial State	24
Family Activism and the National Inquiry	27
Conclusion	31
Chapter 4: Research Strategy	32
Research Questions	32
Methodological Approaches.....	33
Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations	36
Research Methods	37
Data Collection	37
Data Analysis.....	39
Reflexivity	42
Limitations of the Research Design	42
Conclusion	43
Chapter 5: A Family Member’s Narrative of Her Stolen Loved Ones	45
Ongoing Legacy of Colonialism in Canada	45
Brittney: Laying the Terrain for Isolation and Assimilation	45
Inter-generational Trauma: Ongoing Legacy of Residential Schools	47
Police Response in the Cases of MMIWG	49
Rosianna: More Than Just Another “Cold Case”	49

Shannon: A Suspicious Disappearance	50
Media’s Role in the Representations of MMIWG	52
Families’ Ongoing Struggles and Resilience	54
Canada Must Be Held Accountable	56
Conclusion	57
Chapter 6: Deep Dive in Media Coverage of Rosianna and Shannon	59
Why do Numbers Matter?	59
Headlines: A Reader’s First Perception of the Cases of MMIWG	61
Media Narratives of MMIWG: A Closer Look	64
Families’ Struggles and Police Inaction	67
The Impact of the National Inquiry into MMIWG	70
Mainstream Media Addressing Colonialism and Racism	72
Mainstream Media’s Efforts Towards Decolonization	73
Meanings Behind Photographs	75
Conclusion	76
Chapter 7: Discussion	78
Colonialism in Canada is not Historic	78
Family and Community’s Fight for Greater Media Coverage	80
Conclusion	85
Chapter 8: Conclusion	86
Limitations of the Research	88
Research Contributions and Implications	88
References	90
Appendices	106
Appendix A: Letter of Invitation	106
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form	107
Appendix C: Interview Guide	110
Appendix D: Support Information for Participants	112
Appendix E: Pictures of Rosianna Poucachiche	113
Appendix F: Pictures of Shannon Alexander	114
Appendix G: Article Analysis Charts – Rosianna Poucachiche	116
Appendix H: Article Analysis Charts – Shannon Alexander	118

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Article headlines of Rosianna Poucachiche’s case	62
Table 2. Article headlines of Shannon Alexander’s case	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Number of articles published per year.	60
---	----

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“The truth about missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls must be represented in the media. Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people have spirit: they are mothers, daughters, sisters, aunties, wives, valued community members. They matter, and their stories are important. The path forward to honest representations of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people is not straight or easy, but there are several changes that the media can make to lead to more truthful representations that can ultimately contribute to change.”

- (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019, p. 392)

Statement of the Problem

Existing research documents that in Canada, Indigenous women and girls are far more likely to be murdered than their non-Indigenous counterparts (Bourgeois, 2015, 2017; Kuokkanen, 2017; Saramo, 2016). According to the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)¹, the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls has been a crisis “centuries in the making” (National Inquiry into Missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019, p. 313), and since the 1970s, there has been an increase in these cases (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, 2014; Longstaffe, 2017). However, there continues to be limited representation and misrepresentation of their cases in dominant media coverage (Jiwani, 2009; Hugill, 2010; Tucker, 2016).

¹ Throughout this thesis, when I write about MMIWG, it is inclusive of 2SLGBTQQIA (Two-Spirited, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual) people. The National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019) made a conscious decision to use inclusive language as this violence is not limited to only women and girls, 2SLGBTQQIA people are also vulnerable to increased violence and continue to be murdered and go missing, even though their cases are not always evident through the data concerning MMIWG. The National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019) highlights that despite facing severe forms of colonial violence, their cases are not always discussed. This lack of data on the cases of 2SLGBTQQIA individuals can be linked with the “current data collection methods and practices [that] lead to inaccurate or incomplete data on violence against 2SLGBTQQIA people, contributing to the erasure or invisibility of 2SLGBTQQIA individuals and their experience.” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019, p. 458).

As a colonial nation state, the Canadian federal government and other institutions such as the police and the media operate within an oppressive framework (Bourgeois, 2017; Craig, 2014; Elliott, 2016; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). The cases of MMIWG are not a recent phenomenon, as Indigenous women and girls have been “objectified and dehumanized” since European contact (Harper, 2006, p. 38), which was as early as the 16th century (National Inquiry into Missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls 1a, 2019). As evidenced by portrayals of MMIWG in mainstream Canadian news platforms, such as the *Toronto Star*, *The Globe and Mail*, *National Post* and the *Vancouver Sun*, dominant media representations reduce Indigenous women and girls to gendered, racist stereotypes, which consequently dehumanizes and objectifies them as inherently deviant and promiscuous (Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017; Gilchrist, 2010; Hargreaves, 2017; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019; Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2010; Razack, 2016a). Further, existing coverage uses these stereotypes to blame MMIWG for the violence they experience, rather than placing responsibility on their perpetrators or the colonial systems of oppression that make this violence possible (Eberts, 2017; Razack, 2002). As St. Denis (2017) puts it, “the media has had a big influence in shaping public opinion and encouraging misinformation and hostility” (p. 43) towards oppressed communities.

Existing research has examined the media’s negative coverage of MMIWG (Elliot, 2016; Gilchrist, 2010; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Longstaffe, 2017; National Inquiry into Missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019), as well as how families and communities are working towards raising awareness about and addressing the epidemic of MMIWG (Dean, 2011; Hargreaves, 2017; Saramo, 2016). However, there is limited research on

the ongoing resilience of families and communities, as well as how family members are impacted by dominant narratives of MMIWG.

Thesis Statement and Rationale for the Research

Through focusing on the role of families and their perspectives, this research explores the patterns in media coverage concerning the cases of their missing and murdered family members – a topic that is not widely covered in the literature on MMIWG. I argue that despite facing ongoing colonialism and racist oppression, families of MMIWG continue to fight for their missing and murdered loved ones’ to be presented respectfully in mainstream media platforms and their activism is largely responsible for the advancements made in existing media coverage of MMIWG.

Through qualitative interviewing, I explore Brittney Poucachiche’s narrative concerning the cases of her cousins, Rosianna Poucachiche and Shannon Alexander, and then contextualize her experience as a family member within a broader analysis of secondary literature which evaluates media portrayals of MMIWG. I examine the media coverage of both Rosianna and Shannon’s cases, as portrayed in mainstream Canadian media platforms, including *CBC News*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Canada NewsWire* and the *Montreal Gazette*². Drawing significantly from Brittney’s narrative, this thesis foregrounds family’s involvement and activism as reflected in the media coverage of Rosianna and Shannon. This research aims to make a contribution towards filling a gap in research concerning the role of families in the media coverage of MMIWG. My hope is that the findings of this research will further push media platforms to work with family members and ensure that their ongoing resilience and activism is centred. After all, they are the ones who are not only most directly impacted by the loss, but are also the “experts” on the lives of their missing and murdered loved ones.

² Formerly known as *The Gazette*.

My investigation of the role and perspectives of families regarding the media coverage of MMIWG is guided by the following research questions:

- How do families narrate and express their thoughts and feelings about media representations of the disappearance and/or death of their family members?
- How are the cases of MMIWG covered by the media?
- What role does colonialism play in the marginalization of the lives of Indigenous women and girls?
- What role do the police play in the media discourse concerning MMIWG?
- How has family and community activism influenced media coverage of MMIWG over the past decade?
- What shifts are visible in mainstream media coverage of MMIWG?

Organization of Chapters

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Following the introduction, chapter two explores my theoretical framework. This research is informed by an intersectional feminist approach, paying close attention to decolonization, that explores how interlocking social systems of oppression marginalise Indigenous women and girls, and the Canadian settler colonial state that makes them vulnerable to predation and violence. I draw from Indigenous feminist scholars to explore how colonialism is made visible in the oppressions experienced by Indigenous women and girls. The third chapter provides a review of existing literature, which situates this research and highlights the nature of media discourses on the cases of MMIWG in Canada. In chapter four, I outline my research strategy. Chapter five presents my interview findings, as I unpack Brittney's narrative. Chapter six provides a content analysis of the news articles covering Rosianna and Shannon's cases. In chapter seven I engage in a discussion of my findings from both the interview

and news articles. I conclude this thesis with chapter eight, where I share the limitations and implications of this research.

Language and Terminology

In this thesis, I follow Dr. Robyn Bourgeois' (2017) direction concerning language when I use the term "Indigenous" to collectively refer to First Nations, Inuit, and Metis people in Canada" (Bourgeois, 2017, p. 254). As argued by Bourgeois (2017), the term "Aboriginal" is contested by many Indigenous people as one that is both disrespectful and government imposed. While I refrain from using the term "Aboriginal" in my own writing, I have not changed the terminology as used in the titles of media articles and Brittney's narrative, so as to maintain the integrity and originality of the content. Furthermore, I use the term "Indian" strategically to discuss the impacts of the laws in the *Indian Act*, as well as the stereotypes of Indigenous femininity.

Colonialism

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (Volume 1a, 2019) defines colonialism as:

the attempted or actual imposition of policies, laws, mores, economies, cultures, or systems and institutions put in place by settler governments to support and continue the occupation of Indigenous territories, the subjugation of Indigenous individuals, communities and Nations, and the resulting internalized and externalized ways of thinking and knowing that support this occupation and subjugation. (p. 77)

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism, as argued by Patrick Wolfe (2006), is when settlers invade and destroy with the intent to stay. Settler colonialism is thus the ongoing invasion of Indigenous land; however, this is not limited to just land. As Bourgeois (2014) explains,

settler colonialism is an expression of power that targets indigenous bodies (alongside other racialized and gendered bodies that comprise the settler colony) in order to secure unfettered access to indigenous lands, which then become settler territory and, thus, the source of wealth and security for settler societies and states. (p. 30)

Turtle Island

A term used by many Indigenous peoples to refer to the land that is now known as North America (Bourgeois, 2014). For the purpose of this thesis, I use this term strategically when referring to “Canada” to show respect for Indigenous peoples and promoting decolonization.

Intergenerational Trauma

This form of trauma can be defined as a product of colonialism, whereby colonial violence and oppression create traumatic experiences that are passed down through generations of family and community, thus continuing the cycle of colonial violence (Bombay, Matheson, & Anisman, 2014; Linklater, 2011; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019).

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of this thesis. In this research, I adopt an intersectional feminist framework that pays close attention to decolonization. I draw from both intersectional feminist scholars, specifically Kimberly Crenshaw (1991), and Indigenous feminist scholars, that include Kim Anderson (2010), Emma LaRocque (2017) and Joyce Green (2017b) to bridge the gap in feminist frameworks that sometimes do not consider the impact of gendered colonialism on the lives of Indigenous women and girls. I use this framework to ensure an accurate analysis of the gender-based colonial oppression that Indigenous women and girls experience in Canada.

Intersectional Feminist Framework and Decolonization

As a non-Indigenous researcher, I align this research with Indigenous ways of knowing and being, as well as Indigenous self-determination, to ensure respect towards Indigenous peoples and support both anti-colonialism and decolonization. However, being a non-Indigenous researcher limits my ability to apply Indigenous ways of knowing and being, as well as my understanding of the direct impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples. To mitigate this, I draw from Indigenous feminist theory (Anderson, 2010; Green, 2017b; LaRocque, 2017) to analyse how Indigenous women and girls are uniquely marginalised and discriminated against in settler colonial Canada. Indigenous women and girls are marginalised on multiple grounds through dominant interlocking social systems of oppression. However, intersectionality does not merely look at the accumulation of multiple oppressions, rather it explores what different identity categories do and how they create unique experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). These identity categories are interlinked and fluid; they are “always in the process of creating and being created by dynamics of power” (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013, p. 795). Thus, a well-rounded critique of the marginalization of

Indigenous women and girls in both the media and the settler colonial Canadian state, cannot be accomplished without analysing and understanding exploitative social, economic, and political structures and contexts.

While all women experience patriarchal violence, Indigenous feminist scholars draw attention to how sexist oppression is linked to colonialism and racism for Indigenous women and girls (Anderson, 2010; St. Denis, 2017; Green, 2017a; LaRocque, 2017). Both colonial and patriarchal violence are concepts that are entrenched in the *Indian Act* to further marginalise Indigenous women and girls (Bourgeois, 2017; Green, 2017a; LaRocque, 2017; Starblanket, 2017). Decolonization, which offers pathways to critique colonial structures and policies (Bourgeois, 2017; Green, 2017a; Walia, 2013), must be central for a feminist framework which is mindful of and responsive to the distinct experiences, interests, and needs of Indigenous women and girls. Colonialism, racism and patriarchy work simultaneously through one another in the lives of Indigenous women and girls (Bourgeois, 2017), and they cannot be separated from one another. Moreover, decolonization cannot be achieved, so long as these systems of oppression remain unaddressed (Anderson, 2010).

Gender-based violence and discrimination experienced by Indigenous women and girls are not merely a consequence of colonialism but are also further amplified through ongoing colonialism. Prior to colonialism, Indigenous women had significant authority. Many Indigenous societies were matrilineal, whereby “women were the head of the household” and had economic independence (Anderson, 2010, p. 83). This does not mean that violence in Indigenous communities did not exist prior to colonization, however, as Anderson (2000) states, “[m]any Native cultures, values and practices safeguarded against the kinds of abuses permitted – and often encouraged – by western patriarchy” (p. 57). Thus, there were strategies in place to combat

violence and offer support to victims. It also must be understood that colonialism affects Indigenous men and women differently and it “has been and continues to be a gendered process” (Green, 2017a, p. 5). Colonialism has relied on explicitly gendered and racist stereotypes to denigrate Indigenous peoples and, for Indigenous women and girls, this has predominantly involved the myth of the “squaw.” The stereotype of the “squaw” is particularly harmful as it presumes the bodies of Indigenous women and girls as sexually available (Barman, 2010; Bourgeois, 2017; St. Denis, 2017; Eberts, 2017). This stereotype can be understood as a racial/racist variant of “slut” and “whore” - slurs that are prevalent in popular culture today. However, unlike those terms, the word “squaw” specifically targets Indigenous women and girls (Acoose, 1995; Bourgeois, 2014; LaRocque, 1994; St. Denis, 2017). In future chapters, I argue that these stereotypes are often reproduced by the media in the cases of MMIWG, when these women and girls are blamed for the violence inflicted upon them. Thus, Indigenous women, who identify as feminists, place great emphasis on decolonization and anti-colonial perspectives.

Decolonization also demands that Indigenous peoples be at the forefront of dealing with issues that concern them. However, decolonization, as many Indigenous feminists argue, cannot be successful if gendered violence is ignored because sexual and gender-based discrimination cannot be separated from colonialism and racism. Colonial domination is sustained through gender-based violence and oppression (Barker, 2008; Borrows, 2013; Bourgeois, 2015, 2018; St. Denis, 2017; Green, 2017a; hooks, 2000; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1b, 2019; Razack, 2002). To analyse the oppression faced by Indigenous women and girls, we must use a gender lens to understand colonial oppression in order to stay away from replicating already existing patriarchal prejudices (Anderson, 2010; Green, 2017a). However, decolonization cannot be successful without the disruption and removal of

negative stereotypical perceptions about Indigenous femininity, which enables and normalises violence against Indigenous women and girls. Thus, for this research to be successful, I adopt an intersectional feminist framework and prioritise decolonization to analyse how colonial oppression and gender-based violence/sexual-discrimination are intricately entwined. These systems of oppression work together to make Indigenous women and girls vulnerable to violence, thus “dismantling dominant systems of oppression is essential to ending violence against Indigenous women and girls, and all other socially marginalised oppressed people” (Bourgeois, 2017, p. 257).

While I am an outsider as a non-Indigenous researcher, as a South Asian woman, I share an insider view in terms of my understanding and experiences of racism and sexism in a country that is built upon white male supremacy and whiteness. Moreover, as a woman who grew up in post-colonial Pakistan, I have some insider knowledge of decolonization. These experiences have informed my positionality as a researcher. While my experiences may not align with those of Indigenous peoples in Canada, I do share a sense of solidarity with these communities as I have a close and personal understanding of white supremacy that oppresses and dehumanizes racialized bodies.

Conclusion

An intersectional feminist framework that pays attention to decolonization facilitates a nuanced analysis of media coverage of MMIWG, as I draw from the works of Indigenous scholars and prioritise their voices in my analysis. Analysing the media coverage of MMIWG with a focus on decolonization allows for a strong explanation of how Indigenous women and girls are oppressed on multiple fronts. Simply adopting a feminist framework without focusing on colonial oppression would fail to analyse the unique forms of violence faced by Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Colonialism remains to be the foundation of most oppressions faced by Indigenous

peoples. This theoretical framework thus allows for an analysis of the stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous women and girls, as it prioritises the work and activism of Indigenous scholars and communities.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

Violence faced by Indigenous women and girls is a structural issue, rooted in colonial domination and racist, heteropatriarchal violence (Bourgeois, 2017; Green, 2017; Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017). However, existing scholarship highlights that these colonial elements are not always covered in dominant media coverage of MMIWG (Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017). Within the growing body of literature examining media representations of MMIWG in Canada, key scholars, Dara Culhane (2003), David Hugill (2010), Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young (2006), argue that media takes a narrow approach towards covering the cases of MMIWG that fails to address the role of ongoing settler colonialism, as well as the resistance and resilience of Indigenous communities. It must be acknowledged, however, that these authors are all non-Indigenous.

In this literature review, I begin with offering a historical context for the violence against Indigenous women and girls. This will be followed by a discussion of how mass media creates a hierarchy of victims, which tends to marginalize racialized bodies. Next, I offer an analysis of the media's preference for the spectacle of prostitution, drug-addiction and crime in representing MMIWG. I will then discuss the complicity of Canada as a colonial state in the growing disappearances and deaths of Indigenous women and girls and explain how mainstream media platforms often fail to include this in the coverage of these cases. I then highlight the ongoing resilience and resistance of Indigenous families and communities and the National Inquiry into MMIWG.

Historical Context

Colonization is responsible for the development of Canada as a nation state. Prior to colonial imposition on land now widely known as “Canada,” many Indigenous nations referred to this land as “Turtle Island,” and some nations continue to do so today (Bourgeois, 2014). Colonization, according to the National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019), “refers to the processes by which Indigenous Peoples were dispossessed of their lands and resources, subjected to external control, and targeted for assimilation and, in some cases, extermination” (Volume 1a, p. 231). Colonialism, on the other hand, is the endorsement of colonization, through policies and laws (National Inquiry into Missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). Systemic racism and sexism are entrenched within ongoing settler colonialism, which continues to increase Indigenous women and girls’ vulnerability to violence (Barker, 2008; Bourgeois, 2015; Green, 2017a; Hargreaves, 2017; Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2010; Razack, 2002). Despite making up only about 4% of the total population, between 1980 and 2010, 11.3% of missing women and girls and 16% percent of homicide victims were Indigenous women and girls (Bourgeois, 2017; Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2014). Furthermore, the National Inquiry into MMIWG states that “Indigenous women and girls are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than any other women in Canada, and 16 times more likely than Caucasian women” (National Inquiry into Missing and murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019, p. 55).

Bourgeois (2017) unequivocally argues that “the effects of colonialism are gendered, and the colonial gaze has a gender-specific derogatory and essentialized frame for Indigenous women” (p. 260). Prior to the arrival of white settlers on Turtle Island, Indigenous women and girls had strong roles, as many Indigenous communities were matrilineal, whereby societies were based on

more egalitarian values, which offered Indigenous women a more publicly empowered position, as they had greater opportunity in governance, ceremonial life, as well as trade (Barker, 2008; Hargreaves, 2017). The arrival of European settlers to Turtle Island disrupted Indigenous ways of living and knowing. This stripped Indigenous women from their previously held leadership roles and marginalised them within their own communities as well (Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017; Green, 2017b).

Examples of colonial domination and its impact on Indigenous women and girls can be seen in the *Indian Act*, which is still in effect today. The *Indian Act* gives the federal government of Canada control over Indigenous peoples and continues to determine multiple facets of their lives (Barker, 2008; Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017). The *Indian Act* defines who is Indian and who is not. Bourgeois (2017) explains that, “the legal definition of who constitutes an ‘Indian’ is defined through men” (p. 261), whereby “any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band, and any child of such person and any woman who lawfully married to such a person” (Gibbins and Ponting, cited in Comack, 2014, p. 62). This demonstrates the sexist basis of the *Act*, consequently negatively impacting the lives of Indigenous women and girls. Under the *Indian Act*, prior to the passing of Bill C-31 in 1985, Indian women who married men without Indian status, lost their own status (Barker, 2008; Culhane, 2003; Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; Kuokkanen, 2017). Being stripped from their status meant that these Indigenous women could not pass their own status onto their children (Barker, 2008; Culhane, 2003; Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; McIvor, Palmater & Day, 2017). The *Act* further undermined and continues to undermine Indigenous women’s leadership (Barker, 2008; Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; Saramo, 2016).

Anderson (2000) argues that prior to colonial contact, there was no hierarchy of men's labour versus women's labour, as both held their unique value. Indigenous women were able to exercise their political roles within their communities, based on the specific nations they belonged to (Anderson, 2000). For instance, Anderson (2000) highlights that "Mohawks had a women's council that would bring their issues to the Grand Council or to all of the people, if necessary" (p. 66). However, as an outcome of colonial laws, "[a]lthough these women may have some influence on the modern-day political system, they no longer hold the official status or authority they did before the introduction of an elected chief and council" (Anderson, 2000, p. 66). Moreover, as a result of the *Indian Act*, Indigenous women were stripped of the right to vote in band elections (Anderson, 2000), and they were banned from participating and serving in band councils from 1876 until 1951 (Bourgeois, 2014, p. 44).

Another outcome of the *Indian Act* was the disruption of Indigenous women's rightful ownership of property (Barker, 2008; Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; Saramo, 2016). As Bourgeois (2015) explains, "the *Indian Act* not only facilitated the removal of these Indigenous bodies from Indigenous territories but also eliminated any future claim to Indigenous lands in Canada" (p. 1460), thus pushing Indigenous women and girls further away from their communities. Despite the passing of Bill C-31, Indigenous women continue to face hardships in attempting to return to their communities (Bourgeois, 2017; Dick, 2006). Because they cannot return to their communities, many Indigenous women and girls lose their support systems. Moreover, they are sometimes forced to move into city spaces that are often unwelcoming of Indigenous peoples. The disruption to family structures and land displacement has only increased Indigenous women and girls' vulnerability to violence.

Another significant mechanism of colonialism was the residential school system. Residential schools were mandated under the *Indian Act* in the mid 1870s (Amnesty International, 2004; Barker, 2008; Kubik, Bourassa & Hampton, 2009; Larmer, 2018). However, “the practice of ‘educating’ Indigenous children began as early as the 1600s” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019, p. 259). One of the main purposes of these schools was to segregate Indigenous children and assimilate them into Eurocentric standards (Anderson, 2000; Bourgeois, 2014). These children were stolen from their families, as Indian agents and police were sent to reserves to forcefully take children to residential schools (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). The residential school system further pushed Western gender roles onto Indigenous children as another way for them to conform to Eurocentric ideals (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). Residential schools were built on exploitation and violence, and many survivors have now spoken out about the abuse they endured, both physical and sexual (Bychutsky, 2017; Hunt, 2016), which continues to cause inter-generational trauma. As the National Inquiry into MMIWG asserts, “intergenerational trauma [...] works to maintain colonial violence in the present” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019, p. 328). An important component of this colonial “civilising” of Indigenous children was to contain and control the sexuality of Indigenous girls (Anderson, 2000). This control correlates with sexist and racist stereotypes of Indigenous women and girls that are rooted in colonial discourse.

The image of Indigenous women as “exotic sexual commodities” is not new (Tucker, 2016, p. 8). Upon contact, European settlers married Indigenous women, largely because they functioned as intermediaries to help settlers with the fur trade (Barman, 2010; Hargreaves, 2017; National

Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). The Hudson Bay Company (HBC) records describe Indigenous women and girls as “immoral, lustful, and expendable” (Acoose, cited in Hargreaves, 2017, p. 90). The stereotype of the “squaw” emerged from these records and is a direct product of settler colonialism (Bourgeois, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). The image of the “Indian Queen” was constructed as a symbol for the New World, while a more sexualised image of the “Indian Princess” presented Indigenous women and girls as both available and accessible (Anderson, 2000; Green, 1975; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019). However, these images were soon re-oriented towards the more stigmatized idea of a “squaw” once Indigenous peoples started to resist colonization and stand up against colonial takeover (Anderson 2000; Green, 1975; Anderson, 2000; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019). These negative stereotypes about Indigenous women and girls were constructed as a means to stigmatize Indigenous femininity (Anderson, 2000; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019).

In the eyes of European settlers, Indigenous women and girls were equated with land, thus rendering them available and disposable, like land, for their consumption (Anderson, 2000; Green, 1975). The squaw stereotype constructed Indigenous bodies as sexually available, promiscuous and disposable (Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; Razack, 2016a; Savarese, 2017). Acoose (1995) further explains that, “[a]s a consequence, those images foster cultural attitudes that encourage sexual, physical, verbal, or psychological violence against Indigenous women. Stereotypic images also function as sentinels that guard and protect the white eurocanadian-christian-patriarchy” (p. 55). Thus, the inferiority and the immorality of Indigenous

womanhood/femininity has been constructed to stand in sharp contrast to the purity of white womanhood/femininity (Bourgeois, 2018; Gilchrist, 2010; Longstaffe, 2017; Tucker, 2016). In this context, the violence inflicted upon Indigenous women and girls often goes unnoticed and unacknowledged, as they are represented as a soiled version of the European settler's standard of white femininity and true womanhood.

Hierarchy in Mainstream Media Coverage

Mass media has a strong influence on public perception, and as Feldman (1994) argues, the media implicitly endorse a hierarchal ranking of bodies and communities. He contends, the depictive grammar of the mass media should not be perceived as an ahistorical given; it is an apparatus of internal and external perceptual colonization that disseminated and legitimizes particular sensorial disposition over the other within and beyond our public culture. (p. 406)

Gendered and racialized/racist media coverage is a part of ongoing settler colonialism. In such coverage, MMIWG are depicted as the racial "other" whose violation is normalised. When racialized others are depicted as victims of crimes, the role of racism in the violence inflicted on them is often ignored and erased (Jiwani, 1999; Jiwani & Young, 2006). The cases of MMIWG have been treated as isolated instances, ones that are not attached to a larger ongoing colonial agenda. Consequently, the violence against Indigenous women and girls has been met with denial regarding settler culpability. As Farley (1997) argues, denial of one's pain can be a greater humiliation than the pain itself, especially when the victim is the racial inferior. This denial of pain reinforces the idea of race as pleasure, whereby "whites" are not only perpetrators of oppression, but they are pardoned from causing it, thus reinforcing a racial hierarchy (Farley, 1997). This is evident in Canada's treatment of the cases of MMIWG and the institutional failures in achieving

justice. Fanon (1967) makes an eloquent statement concerning the racialized inferior, as he argues, “the feeling of inferiority of the colonized is the correlative to the Europeans’s feeling of superiority. Let us have the courage to say it outright: It is the racist who creates the inferior” (p. 93). The racial inferiority of Indigenous women and girls was not just constructed but consumed by settlers as well. Their bodies were used for both sexual pleasure and economic gain (Hargreaves, 2017; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019).

Media coverage plays an important role in how Canadian society understands the phenomenon of MMIWG. The racial divide is pervasive in mainstream media coverage of MMIWG, as racialized bodies continue to be deemed unworthy of respect and value. The depiction of Indigenous women and girls as defiant and deviant has been prevalent in mainstream media narratives of MMIWG. Jiwani and Young (2006) argue that stereotypical images ascribed to certain groups of people feed into producing and reproducing common-sense notions of why they are more likely to be victims of violence. The Missing White Woman Syndrome (MWWS), is a phenomenon that addresses the widespread belief that the media takes most interest in the cases of white female victims that are young, fit the ideal standards of beauty, and have middle to upper class status (Conlin & Davie, 2015; Liebler, 2010; Moss, 2019; Sommers, 2017; Stillman, 2007). Even though most research concerning MWWS focuses on cases from the United States, researchers argue that there is a parallel case to be made for Canada as well (Liebler, 2010; Sommers, 2017; Stillman, 2007). While Indigenous women and girls make up the majority of victims that have gone missing from Highway 16, located in Northern British Columbia, it was not until Nicole Hoar, a white middle-class young woman, went missing that the media and police took notice (Bruckert & Law, 2018; Morton, 2016; Monchalin, Marques, Reason & Aorara, 2019;

Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010; Pope & Smiley, 2014). Scholars argue that the media does not treat the cases of MMIWG in the same way as those of white middle to upper class women (Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006). However, white women across all social classes do not receive respectable media coverage either. For example, sex-workers are presented in a stereotypical manner, whereby they are over-sexualised and dehumanized (Ferris, 2007). It must also be noted that images of sex-workers in media, albeit problematic, fail to address the high rates of Indigenous women's presence in survival sex-work, as these images are usually of white-women (Ferris, 2007).

As demonstrated through the examples above, we can see the operations of a binary construct about racialized and non-racialized women, whereby racialized women and girls who go missing are deemed unworthy of protection and grief. Relatedly, mass media often romanticises the phenomenon of the "damsel in distress" when covering the cases of missing persons (Conlin & Davie, 2015; Elliott, 2014; Liebler, 2010; Moss, 2019; Sommers, 2017; Stillman, 2007). However, a worthy damsel in distress needs to fit a certain criterion: they need to be white and pure, as well as in need to be saved by a man (Conlin & Davie, 2015; Sommers, 2017; Stillman, 2007). Thus, Indigenous women and girls are instantly excluded, as they are not recognized as worthy victims deserving of concern for their safety. Elliot (2014) explains that victims are either presented as damsels in distress or those that are beyond saving, and in this dichotomy, racialized women are those that are beyond "help or respect" (p. 64). In dominant mainstream coverage, Indigenous women and girls are inherently viewed as deviant miscreants (Ferris, 2007; Hargreaves, 2017; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Longstaffe, 2017; Tucker, 2016), who need policing instead of protection (Dhillon, 2015). Further, mainstream Canadian media paints a narrow and frequently problematic image of Indigenous peoples. Duncan McCue (2014), an

Indigenous journalist, argues that Indigenous peoples only make it into mainstream Canadian news coverage if they are seen as warriors or if they are drumming, dancing, drunk, and/or dead. Such representations depict Indigenous peoples as either always ready to fight or dying as result of their own actions (Matloff, 2016; McCue, 2014).

Shifting Blame: The Spectacle of Prostitution, Drug-Addiction, and Crime

Indigenous women and girls are predominantly depicted as “prostitutes” and sexual commodities in mainstream media coverage of cases of MMIWG (Bourgeois, 2015; Culhane, 2003; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006). This is not a new phenomenon: Indigenous women and girls have been portrayed as innately sexual, promiscuous, and involved in the sex trade throughout Canadian colonial history (Barman, 2010; Bourgeois, 2018; Dean, 2011; Eberts, 2017; Hargreaves, 2017; Jiwani, 2009; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019). Stuart Hall (1997) refers to the stereotypical representation of racialized bodies as the “racialized regime of representation” (p. 249), whereby the racialized body is limited to certain characteristics that dehumanize them. This dehumanization makes any human faculties invisible to the audience (Hall, 1997). Frantz Fanon (1967) draws on psychoanalytic theory to argue that by attributing stereotypes to certain groups of people, overtime, they become normative and dominant narratives. This can be seen in media representations which, too often, conflate Indigenous femininity with prostitution (Eberts, 2017; Hugill, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006). As Razack’s (2002) historical analysis argues,

Newspaper records of the nineteenth century indicate that there was a conflation of Aboriginal woman and prostitute and an accompanying belief that when they encountered violence, Aboriginal women simply got what they deserved. Police seldom intervened, even when the victims’ cries could be clearly heard. (p. 130)

Thus, all too often, Indigenous women and girls are blamed for the violence inflicted upon them. In regard to the cases of MMIWG, perpetrators are often either exonerated or given shorter sentences, especially if the victims are linked with “prostitution or hypersexuality” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019, p. 631). The victims of violence are then put on trial for being perceived as having made reckless decisions that resulted in their deaths and disappearances. It is now evident that a shift away from these stereotypes is essential to ending the dehumanization of Indigenous women and girls that underpins this violence.

Constructing MMIWG as unworthy of value not only denies them the respect that they deserve as human beings, but it also assumes that they do not have anyone who loved and cared for them. Mainstream discourses that portray the lives of Indigenous women and girls as unworthy of grief, in contrast to non-Indigenous women, raise the question - what makes for a grievable life? Drawing from Judith Butler’s (2009) concept of grievability, to say that a life is not grievable is to say that it has not been lived to begin with, thus meaning, “it has never counted as a life at all” (p. 38). This worthiness of being grievable is associated with the respect accorded to some lives and not to others. This is evident in the historical stereotyping of Indigenous lives, where Indigenous women and girls were portrayed as mere sexual objects, available for the use of white settlers, who could dispose of them at their will.

While cases of white missing and murdered women garner greater media attention, the cases of MMIWG are buried in “soft news” (Gilchrist, 2010). This type of news is comprised of content that is considered entertaining, thus, when the cases of MMIWG are mixed in with soft news, the attention is diverted away from their cases and they become invisible (Gilchrist, 2010). Often, no pictures of MMIWG are placed in news articles, and when they are, they are either

passport-sized or their mugshots, which further increases their perceived deviance and criminalization (Gilchrist, 2010; Tucker, 2016). In particular, through failing to provide detailed biographies, these women and girls are dehumanized and reduced to a number in body counts (Gilchrist, 2010; Tucker, 2016).

Families and communities of MMIWG are working towards shifting the media's portrayal of their loved ones from that of drug-addicted prostitutes to a more respectful image that presents them as daughters, sisters, mothers, and aunties (Culhane, 2003; Jiwani & Young, 2006). However, this shift in coverage can be counterproductive, as the lives of MMIWG may then only be valued in relation to dominant narratives of respectability, which are rooted in colonial heteropatriarchal and heterosexist family structures (Hargreaves, 2017; Jiwani & Young, 2006). Individuals that are not associated with these roles then become invisible. However, not all Indigenous women and girls that are murdered or go missing hold conventional heteropatriarchal familial roles, such that those who are not associated with these roles then become invisible. Culhane (2003) explains that such silencing of certain groups of people can be referred to as the "regime of disappearance" (p. 595), where the media highlight the spectacle of drug addiction, prostitution and crime and attention is diverted away from the role that sexual and physical violence has in the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls. By erasing the role of violence, the bodies of Indigenous women and girls are hypersexualised and the violence inflicted upon them is considered an inevitable consequence of their so-called "risky" lifestyles. Indigenous women and girls are deemed "invisible as victims of violence and hypervisible as deviant bodies" (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 899). While Indigenous women and girls' "visibility stems from their race, class, and gender, which become signifiers of their deviance," (Jiwani & Young, 2006, p. 899), their invisibility is evident in police's inaction and lack of attention towards issues concerning them.

Through ignoring their suffering, the blame shifts from colonial oppression and violence, to the women themselves (Culhane, 2003). By shifting blame onto Indigenous women and girls, they are seen as individuals deserving of policing and surveillance, rather than protection (Dhillon, 2015). All these factors underpin the ongoing colonialism in Canada, where Indigenous women and girls continue to be pushed into the margins.

Absolving the Settler Colonial State

Scholars who have explored the phenomenon of MMIWG argue that the othering of Indigenous peoples as deviant is rooted in colonialism (Bourgeois, 2015; Barker, 2008; Borrows, 2013; Green, 2017a; Harper, 2006; Palmater, 2015). Mainstream media works within this colonial framework and their coverage is not neutral as “[p]ower is at the core of what is considered ‘newsworthy’” (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019, p. 387). Those that are considered “newsworthy” are presented respectfully in media, a privilege that is not often granted to MMIWG. Respectful media coverage tends to focus more on positive personal attributes of an individual, such as their education, their physical features, and familial relations. As colonialism underpins Canada’s existence as a nation state, Indigenous bodies are deemed subordinate to their non-Indigenous white counterparts (Palmater, 2015). Systemic barriers and the everyday oppressions faced by Indigenous women and girls have played a significant role in the epidemic of MMIWG.

Indigenous women and girls are pushed into marginalised spaces that are marked by violence and poverty. Indeed, Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately located in marginalised inner-city spaces such as Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside (DTES) or the Stroll in Regina (Longstaffe, 2017; Razack, 2002). These marginalised spaces are also known as “Skid Row” and are marked by extreme poverty and high rates of drug use and sex work (Hugill, 2010;

Longstaffe, 2017; Razack, 2002). These spaces are labelled as the most “marginalised and stigmatized” neighbourhoods in Canada (Longstaffe, 2017, p. 231), and are inhabited by a racialized majority (Hugill, 2010; Razack, 2002). Inner-city spaces are also dominantly masculine places (Bourgeois, 2018; Jiwani & Young, 2006). A myriad of representations depict Skid Row as a “zone of degeneracy,” a place where respectable and moral individuals do not reside (Culhane, 2003; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Longstaffe 2017; Razack, 2002), thereby ensuring that Indigenous peoples living in these areas are deemed degenerate. “Respectable” is therefore equated with “white, middle-class, people” who can “move in and out of degenerate zones,” while those “living in these zones become the racialized, deviantized Other” (Elliott, 2016, p. 31).

More specifically, the media’s coverage of the MMIWG linked to Vancouver’s DTES only pays attention to the high representation of drug/alcohol use and street level sex work (Culhane, 2003; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Longstaffe, 2017; Eberts, 2017). Thus, the violence inflicted on individuals in these neighbourhoods is ignored (Elliott, 2016; Razack 2000; Moral, 2011). These neighbourhoods are strategically designed to attract economically and racially disadvantaged people. Somers, Moniruzzaman and Rezanoff (2015) highlight that the high rates of migration of economically disadvantaged people to DTES Vancouver is in direct correlation to the high density of social services in that area. In particular, DTES Vancouver was once a prosperous neighbourhood but has seen years of capital investment and disinvestment, which pushed low-income people into the city (Hugill, 2010). Vancouver is now a city with pockets, some of which have seen major development, while the highly racialized neighbourhood of DTES remains financially neglected and is underpinned by drug addiction and sex work (Hugill, 2010). When the media portrays MMIWG as drug addicts and prostitutes, it ignores the many factors, such as

colonial violence, racism, poverty, and gendered exclusions, that work together to oppress Indigenous women and girls.

Poverty is a significant factor in Indigenous women and girls' over-representation in inner-city neighbourhoods and their movement into the sex-trade (Hugill, 2010; Longstaffe, 2017; Razack, 2002). Many Indigenous women and girls in Canada that are involved in the sex-trade are trafficked into it, as they are seen as easy targets due to their frequent exposure to racism, unemployment and intergenerational trauma (Bourgeois, 2018; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2014; Sethi, 2010; Sikka, 2010). The role of trafficking in Indigenous women and girls' over-representation in the sex-trade is rarely mentioned in media reports, despite the fact that Indigenous women tend to comprise the largest proportion of survival sex trade (Culhane, 2003; Kuokkanen, 2008). Moreover, MMIWG are often portrayed as runaways (Bailey & Shayan, 2016; Jiwani & Young, 2006), rather than missing persons who are potential victims of crime.

Mainstream media coverage does not typically shine a light on the everyday struggles of Indigenous communities; rather, much media coverage, as Culhane (2003) argues, privileges the "exotic and spectacular representation of drugs, sex, violence, and crime rather than the ordinary and mundane brutality of everyday poverty" (p. 595). Many cases of MMIWG are from these inner-city spaces, especially the DTES of Vancouver, which is notorious as the location for representations of urban violence (Culhane, 2003; Hugill, 2010; Longstaffe, 2017). While media reports regarding the cases of missing and murdered women and girls from the DTES focus on the over-representation of Indigenous women and girls as missing persons, they do not discuss the role of everyday colonial oppression (Hugill, 2010; Hunt, 2016). Instead, the neoliberal state values the culture of self-sufficiency (Hugill, 2010), whereby individuals facing poverty are seen as the "problem," and the factors that push them into poverty are overlooked. Hence, for many

Indigenous women and girls, death is represented as an inevitable outcome, and media coverage further romanticises their situation by blaming them for occupying “dangerous” spaces. The state further disregards the hardships faced by Indigenous peoples in these neighbourhoods, through failing to track the impact of budget cuts on homeless shelters and treatment centres for drug and alcohol addiction (Culhane, 2003; Farley, Lynne, & Cotton, 2005; Hugill, 2010).

The media’s focus on Indigenous women and girls’ involvement in risky behaviours places the blame on them rather than structures of colonial violence (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Volume 1a, 2019). Thus, both mainstream media and the state continue to have a role in the violence and oppression experienced by MMIWG, and their representational strategies erase the impact of ongoing settler colonialism on their lives.

Family Activism and the National Inquiry

For Indigenous women and girls, simply being alive is, in itself, an act of resilience and resistance, since the structural systems built on colonialism have been driven to exterminate Indigenous lives and their gendered effects continue to push Indigenous women and girls further into the margins (Bourgeois, 2017; Eberts, 2017; Green, 2017a; Hargreaves, 2017). Through actively silencing the voices of Indigenous communities concerning the cases of MMIWG, the media undermines their resilience in the face of extraordinary social violence as well as their active resistance to this violence, thus making the violence inflicted upon Indigenous women and girls in Canada a norm (Bourgeois, 2017; Culhane, 2003; Eberts, 2017; Green, 2017a; Harper, 2006; Kuokkanen, 2017; Palmater, 2016). The epidemic of MMIWG is a testament to the extreme violence that Indigenous women and girls face. Yet, the media has a history of predominantly focusing on them as individual cases that are not linked to a broader pattern of violence (Saramo,

2016). Indigenous communities and families of MMIWG, however, have argued that no one is safe from this violence (Culhane, 2003).

Previous media discourses about MMIWG tend to not place a great focus on families of MMIWG and their ongoing activism (Jiwani & Young, 2006), and also exclude them from media accounts regarding their missing and murdered loved ones. This has not only silenced the voices of Indigenous communities for years but has also ignored their ongoing resistance to colonial oppression, which is evident in the media coverage of the Pickton trial from DTES. The media placed significant focus on the family and farm of Robert Pickton, who was charged with the murder of 26 missing women (Jiwani & Young, 2006). While the majority of these women were Indigenous, their families were rarely discussed. Jiwani and Young (2006) further highlighted that even when the women's families were quoted in news articles, they were mentioned towards the end, and the focus remained predominantly on the perpetrator. In correlation with most media coverage on violence against women, a focus was placed on the perpetrator, while there remained a lack of discussion as to how this extremely public court case impacted the families of the victims (Jiwani & Young, 2006). This focus on Pickton and his family displays a strategic erasure and the lack of dignity and agency accorded to Indigenous communities within mainstream media.

The past decade has seen a rise in the coverage of Indigenous-led activist movements concerning MMIWG (Saramo, 2016). Some media platforms, prominently *CBC News* as well as *The Globe and Mail*, have actively voiced concern about the state's complicity in the violence inflicted on Indigenous women and girls. Upon the completion of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous women and girls, journalists from both *CBC News* and *The Globe and Mail* challenged Prime Minister (PM) Trudeau for his reluctance to admit the Inquiry's finding that found Canada guilty of *ongoing* genocide against Indigenous peoples (Dyer, 2019; Galloway

& Stueck, 2019). While PM Trudeau acknowledged and accepted the Inquiry's finding of genocide, he chose to use *past* tense, which is contrary to the original finding which eloquently states that Canada continues to commit genocide against Indigenous peoples (Ballingall, 2019; Galloway & Stueck, 2019; Dyer, 2019). Moreover, Palmater (2020) argues that despite the Inquiry's finding rooted in fact and law, some media commentators went so far as to state that perhaps it was the finding itself that needed re-investigating, or further investigation. Such reluctance to accept Canada's violence against Indigenous bodies is a denial of Indigenous peoples' ongoing resistance and fight for survival.

Families and communities are not silent; they are resisting colonialism. Researchers such as Bourgeois (2015; 2017), Culhane (2003), Hargreaves (2017), Longstaffe (2017), and Saramo (2016) discuss that families are integral in raising awareness about MMIWG. After all, it is these families who have lost their loved ones and it is important to not only acknowledge their activism, but to make their stories a focal point of ongoing research. Despite there being some research discussing the role of family members in raising awareness about the cases of MMIWG, there remains a gap in media coverage, whereby families are not only sidelined but are often not consulted either. This lack of family input in the coverage of the cases of MMIWG may also have a role in the misleading and negative media portrayals of these women and girls. There has been compelling research on the distrust families have towards the police, due to their lack of vigilance towards the cases of MMIWG (Bourgeois, 2017; Culhane, 2003; Dhillon, 2015; Kuokkanen, 2008; Longstaffe, 2017; Savarese, 2017). In 2015, *CBC News* asked 110 families of MMIWG to rate their experience with the police, and "on a scale of 1-10 (excellent), the average rating was 2.8" (Saramo, 2016, p. 210). This rating displays the frustration families feel towards the police in Canada, as majority of the cases of MMIWG are left uninvestigated.

The National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019) states that the “National Inquiry will have honoured the struggles taken up by the families and survivors over the past 40 years” (p. 8). Families have been fighting for a national inquiry for years, however, the Harper government did not take this plea seriously, as Stephen Harper himself stated that a national inquiry was not a political priority, nor was it high on his radar (Bourgeois, 2015; Saramo, 2016). The Harper government undermined the need for an inquiry as it characterised the cases of MMIWG as “individual acts and as crimes” (Saramo, 2016, p. 208). Prior to the release of the final report of National Inquiry into MMIWG, families and activists critiqued whether it would be relevant given that the government would be putting aside money to resolve an issue that the government itself produces and justifies (Palmater, 2020). As Palmater (2020) argues, violence against Indigenous women and girls is state sponsored and is a direct product of colonialism, whereby government officials and the legal system allow it to perpetuate. However, this role of the government and the legal system is not always reflected in mainstream coverage.

While mainstream media has limitations concerning what can and cannot be published, social media platforms offer families and communities a greater space for raising awareness themselves (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). In comparison to mainstream media platforms, where news runs its course after some time, social media allows for ongoing activism, as there are no limits to how much one can share online. Thus, social media showcases how families and communities have adapted different ways to raise awareness about the cases of their missing and murdered loved ones.

Media discourses tend not to place great focus on families of MMIWG and their ongoing activism (Jiwani & Young, 2006), and exclude them from media accounts regarding their missing and murdered loved ones. This not only silences the voices of Indigenous communities, but also

ignores their ongoing resistance to colonial oppression. Even though the National Inquiry into MMIWG has brought positive change through centering the voices of families of MMIWG, media coverage still needs to place greater emphasis on family narratives and activism. Thus, the work cannot end here. There needs to be ongoing research that prioritizes the stories and narratives of families and unpacks patterns in media coverage of the cases of MMIWG.

Conclusion

Colonial violence is the foundation of Canada as a nation state. Violence against Indigenous women and girls is deeply embedded in systemic racism and oppression. The stereotypes of Indigenous women and girls are a direct product of colonialism, as it continues to be a gendered regime. These stereotypes have been reproduced in media coverage of MMIWG and have consequently influenced negative public narratives of MMIWG for decades, as Indigenous women and girls have been predominantly victim-blamed for their untimely deaths and disappearances. Moreover, the media has a history of focusing on the so-called “risky” lifestyles of MMIWG, rather than the violence inflicted upon them, thus portraying them as ungrievable losses and unworthy of respect. However, families and communities have been working tirelessly towards shifting the dominant and stereotypical narrative of MMIWG. With the release of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, there has been an increased focus on calling attention to the Canadian state’s complicity in the cases of MMIWG. Moreover, it is a huge accomplishment for the families involved in the National Inquiry into MMIWG to have PM Trudeau acknowledge that Canada has committed genocide against Indigenous peoples, after years of fighting for the approval of an Inquiry. The media must also ensure that the narratives of families are brought to public attention.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH STRATEGY

This chapter focuses on the methodological approaches and the research design adopted in this thesis. As highlighted in chapter two, a feminist approach without focusing on Indigenous perspectives is not enough to offer a rich analysis about media coverage of MMIWG. To bridge this gap, this research is influenced and informed by both feminist and Indigenous methodologies. This is especially important because as a non-Indigenous researcher, it is my ethical responsibility to prioritise Indigenous cultural and methodological approaches in order to conduct this research in a way that is both respectful of Indigenous peoples, as well as their goals towards decolonization. The data for this thesis is comprised of an interview with Brittney Poucachiche, and a qualitative content analysis of the media articles covering the two cases of her missing and murdered cousins, Rosianna Poucachiche and Shannon Alexander.

I organize this chapter by first offering a list of the research questions addressed in this thesis. I then provide an outline of the research ethics approval, as well as other relevant ethical considerations. This is followed by a detailed explanation of the methodological approaches as well as the research design adopted in this thesis.

Research Questions

This thesis explores families' perspectives on the media coverage of their loved ones, as well as how they continue to fight for justice for their missing and murdered love ones. I explore this through asking the following research questions:

- What role does colonialism play in the marginalization of the lives of Indigenous women and girls?
- Are the cases of MMIWG respectfully³ covered by the media?

³ As highlighted in Chapter 3, respectful media coverage tends to focus more on positive personal attributes of an individual, such as their education, their physical features, and familial relations.

- What role do the police play in the media discourse concerning MMIWG?
- How do families narrate and express their thoughts and feelings about media representations of the disappearance and/or death of their family members?
- How has family and community activism influenced media coverage of MMIWG over the past decade?
- Have there been any significant changes in mainstream media coverage of MMIWG?

In order to explore these questions, I chose to use qualitative interviewing methodology, which required an approval from Brock University's Research Ethic's Board (REB). Due to the restrictions set by COVID-19, only one interview was possible. The above-mentioned research questions were used to examine the information gathered from both the interview conducted with Brittney and the online news articles concerning Rosianna and Shannon.

Methodological Approaches

This project makes use of both Indigenous and feminist methodologies that emphasize the importance of centering the narratives of those who are marginalised (Hesse-Biber, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). An important aspect of working with marginalised communities is to listen carefully. The participant “must feel that the researcher is willing to listen to the story” (Kovach, 2009, p. 98). However, it is not enough for the researcher to only listen to stories; the “goal is to listen deeply” (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 191) and “intently” (Kovach, 2009, p. 99). When the researcher listens deeply/intently, the researcher and the participant(s) co-create knowledge and meaning (Hesse-Biber, 2014; Kovach, 2009). Through carefully listening to the stories of participants, their stories are given precedence, allowing for a conversation to take place organically, blurring the boundary between researcher and participant and reducing the impact of the power structure in place. Research is not one-sided, as both the researcher and participant(s)

co-create knowledge and should be seen as co-participants in the process. It is presumptuous to say that research, such as this study, can be objective. Throughout the process of carrying out this research, I, as the researcher, made important decisions that were not limited to the questions I asked Brittney. As the researcher, I made thoughtful analytical decisions in terms of what content to focus on and how to share it with the readers. While it is important to state that without Brittney's detailed account, this thesis would not be possible, it must also be stated that we worked as co-producers, as I was responsible for making decisions regarding how to present the information Brittney entrusted me with, as well as the information gathered from news articles.

Both feminist and Indigenous research strategies encourage research preparation, where the researchers adequately inform themselves about the data concerning their research and the cases involved (Hesse-Biber, 2014; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). While preparation is good practice for most research, feminist and Indigenous research methodologies especially encourage and prioritise it. Smith (2012) emphasises the importance of educating oneself about the history of Indigenous cultures and their resistance in preparation for conducting research with Indigenous peoples. Thus, as the primary researcher, I made sure to learn some basic information concerning Rosianna and Shannon's cases, prior to speaking with Brittney.

The history of feminist research is rooted in providing an outlet to those that are oppressed and marginalised for voicing their thoughts and concerns (Hesse-Biber, 2014; Gorelick, 1991). However, this initial focus, much like first wave of feminism, focused primarily on white women (Gorelick, 1991). Thus, Indigenous women were not included, and their voices were not deemed important (Green, 2017a). Indigenous methodologies, on the other hand, centralises Indigenous voices and knowledge that are often ignored in mainstream research (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). Indigenous methodologies are based on Indigenous ways of living and their knowledge, which are

not a central part of feminist research. Strategically adopting both approaches was therefore important to my research.

While feminist and Indigenous approaches possess commonalities that make their combination possible, there are some important differences to be noted. Even though feminist research values a gender-based analysis, it does not necessarily support decolonization (Green, 2017a). Similarly, efforts of decolonization do not always support and reflect gender justice (Green, 2017a). The two issues of gender discrimination and colonialism must not be separated, as they work together in producing the colonial gendered violence experienced by Indigenous women and girls. As Green (2017a) argues, when an anti-colonial critique “is gendered, and when it includes feminist analysis in its formation, it has the potential to produce models of emancipation for both men and women in Indigenous communities” (p. 15). Thus, adopting a research strategy that places emphasis on both feminist practices and decolonization allows for a more complex analysis.

A fundamental difference between Indigenous research frameworks and feminist research methods is the terminology. In feminist research methods, there are different ways of conducting interviews, including feminist oral histories and feminist narrative research, that do focus on storytelling too. However, it is significant to highlight that storytelling is a central part of Indigenous methodologies. In Indigenous research frameworks, storytelling is a fundamental tool for data collection. Russel Bishop (as cited in Smith, 2012) suggests that “story telling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of representing the ‘diversities of truth’ within which the storyteller rather than the researcher retains control” (p. 146). Within Indigenous research, storytelling is important as it encompasses the raw account, as offered by the storyteller (Smith, 2012). Kovach

(2009) states that there is an “inseparable relationship between story and knowing” and its “method and meaning,” making story telling an integral part of Indigenous research (p. 94).

Participant Recruitment and Ethical Considerations

To carry out this research, an application was submitted to Brock University’s REB. In the application, any risks that the research could pose to the participant were highlighted, as well as the process of the research. Ethics approval was received without any edits required. As per the Research Ethics application, the participants were limited to the Niagara Region. Upon receiving ethical approval, a copy of the letter of invitation was sent to faculty members, as well as the larger community at Brock University, via email. My contacts were then asked to forward the information to anyone that they thought might be interested. One contact reached out to a few people who showed interest and I was provided their information. I then reached out directly to potential participants. One interview was scheduled with Brittney Poucachiche. She identified two of her cousins, Rosianna Poucachiche, who was murdered in 2000; and Shannon Alexander, who went missing in 2008. An interview guide was also sent to Brittney, upon her request.

The interview with Brittney was successfully completed in late February of 2020. Unfortunately, no further interviews could be conducted due to COVID-19 restrictions, as in-person meetings were no longer possible. Moreover, due to ethical restrictions, interviews could not be conducted online. This was because any services that the participants could access for emotional trauma were closed due to the lockdown. Therefore, I did not deem it ethical to ask people to share their traumas with me while also going through the stress of a global pandemic, a difficult situation in and of itself.

Research Methods

A qualitative research method was used to conduct this research. I conducted an in-depth interview with Brittney, and a content analysis of media articles that cover the cases of her two cousins, Rosianna and Shannon.

Data Collection

An informal/unstructured approach was chosen to conduct an in-depth interview with Brittney, because a more rigid structure may have prevented the participant from sharing their stories. An unstructured approach is more conversational, which as Kovach (2009) argues, is a useful and respectful way of collecting knowledge/data. In mainstream imperial and colonial research, Indigenous peoples have predominantly been marginalised, as Western ideas are considered the only “rational ideas, and the only ideas which can make sense of the world, of reality of social life and of human beings” (Smith, 2012, p. 58). These Western ideas are built upon the colonization of Indigenous peoples, and are used to further oppress them (Smith, 2012). These ideologies ignore Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, and they further silence Indigenous voices. Therefore, an unstructured interview was best suited for this project as it gave the family member an opportunity to share their stories on their own terms.

Kovach (2009) outlines how there are multiple ways of collecting data that can capture personal knowledges. These methods include “storytelling, research circles, and conversations” (p. 123). Such approaches encourage the researcher to follow the lead of the storyteller/research participant. Strictly structured interviews do not correspond with the nature of Indigenous research, as they limit the story-teller’s ability to provide a complete account without any interruption (Kovach, 2009, p. 123). Conversational methods such as storytelling that are open-ended in nature allow for greater flexibility and “accommodate principles of native oral traditions,” thus

differentiating them from a “traditional interview process” (Kovach, 2009, pp. 123-124). This makes the process more participant-oriented. Keeping these guidelines in mind, the participant was given the opportunity to lead the conversation to ensure that they had the space and time to share their stories. Using such an approach led to greater comfort, as the conversation flowed smoothly.

A basic interview guide was used and shared with the participant (See Appendix C). This was primarily done upon Brittney’s request, as she wanted to prepare herself for the conversation, since she knew it would be an emotional interaction. The interview guide, which contained some general questions, was used to guide the conversation, rather than direct it. Moreover, as I had anticipated, despite asking for the list of questions prior to our meeting, Brittney did not strictly adhere to them. Rather, Brittney shared her account in the format of a story that did not follow a strict pattern. The interview took place at Brock University’s library in a private room. The duration of the interview was approximately two hours. The participant consented to the interview being recorded and she waived her right to confidentiality. Once the conversation began, the participant opened up and shared her story and answered many questions without them needing to be asked. Brittney also consented to using the names of her missing and murdered loved ones in this thesis, i.e., Rosianna Poucachiche and Shannon Alexander. Brittney was also given the option to receive the final copy of this thesis, which she agreed to.

To offer a rich analysis, I decided to make the cases of Brittney’s cousins, Rosianna and Shannon, the focal point of this research to observe the patterns in media coverage of MMIWG. Although, not originally a part of this research, due to the limitations set by COVID-19 in my ability to conduct more interviews, I included the media articles covering the two cases in my research. The criteria for selection of the news articles were to include articles published in English

language only, and those available on mainstream media platforms, including *CBC News*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Canada NewsWire* and the *Montreal Gazette*. This research includes articles that were available and accessible through Google search and Brock library's search engine till May 2020. The key words used to search these articles were limited to the names of the two girls, i.e. Rosianna Poucachiche and Shannon Alexander, as well as "Missing Shannon Alexander." Initially, the Brock Library search engine's "newspaper search" option was used to find articles, however, due to limited results, I also searched for articles through Google. Not all article headlines mentioned the girls' names, so I read through the articles that came up in the results to make sure no relevant article was missed. However, this was limited to exploring the first 10 pages of the search results, on both Google and the Brock Library search engine. The decision not to continue my search beyond ten pages was made when no more relevant articles were found for three consecutive pages of the search results. I found a total of six articles that addressed Rosianna's case, and fifteen articles that concerned Shannon.

Data Analysis

A content analysis was conducted for both the interview and the news articles, as this method allows analysis of all types of written texts (Bengtsson, 2016). The interview was recorded and transcribed, and then analysed using a qualitative content analysis. Vaismoradi et al. (2016) outline that the main characteristics of a qualitative content analysis are to code data and explore the meanings behind that data through generating themes. Moreover, an interpretive or qualitative content analysis aims to explore the interpretation of meanings associated with the text that is being analysed and the implications of the language that is used in the text (Ahuvia, 2001; Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Prior to creating specific themes to address my research findings, I engaged in a close reading of the interview to highlight recurring patterns and information that stood out as unique.

Wester, Pleijter and Renckstorf (2004) describe this approach as an “intuitive form of close reading” (p. 496), whereby no strict procedures for analysis were followed. I employed this approach as it allowed me to organize Brittney’s interview into key arguments and concerns, while adopting an intersectional feminist framework and paying attention to decolonization.

Through completing multiple readings of the interview, I was able to familiarize myself with Brittney’s account, and highlight specific issues that she addressed. Keywords were highlighted during a second close reading, which included: police, violence, isolated, media and family. Through highlighting keywords, I was able to focus on recurring information in Brittney’s account. I placed key responses from Brittney’s interview under the research questions, and then arrived at specific themes. My interpretation and analysis of Brittney’s account were guided by the research questions I explore in this thesis, placing a central focus on media coverage of MMIWG. The broader themes derived from the interview transcript include ongoing legacy of colonialism in Canada, police response in the cases of MMIWG, media’s role in the representations of MMIWG, and families’ ongoing struggles and resilience. When forming the themes, I wanted to ensure they allowed me to respond to my research questions and incorporate Brittney’s account. Once I arrived at my themes, I made critical decisions regarding which quotations to incorporate into my findings that would facilitate answering my research questions.

A similar approach was used to analyse the content from media articles and a mixed-methods content analysis was conducted. When analysing the news articles, I followed the method of content analysis employed by Gilchrist (2010) in her research concerning the media depictions of MMIWG. Following her approach, I broke down the findings from the news articles into different categories that addressed the amount of coverage of MMIWG, the wording used in the headlines, and the photographs provided of both Rosianna and Shannon. For the article headlines,

I focused on how often Rosianna and Shannon's Indigeneity was highlighted, and whether or not their names were included in the headlines (See Appendix G and H). For the body of the articles, a quantitative analysis was used to observe how often certain information was mentioned. This analysis focused on whether the articles included: personal information about the girls, family narratives, colonial oppression and racism, and photographs of the girls (See Appendix G and H).

The qualitative analysis of the articles was rooted in the broader themes that emerged from the interview findings, as close attention was paid towards the language used in the articles and the type of information shared about the victims. I highlighted information that stood out in each article and then cross-analysed them to see if there was any overlapping information. I noticed that indeed there was some overlap in the information shared across articles. I also paid attention to the media source of each article to observe the tone of the articles based on the platforms they were published, so as to speculate whether some platforms were more sensitive to the issue than others. I focused on the words and language used by the writers to address the cases of MMIWG. To analyse whether the tone was more negative or positive, I paid close attention towards how Rosianna, Shannon, and their family members were represented. For instance, I focused on whether the articles used negative stereotypes to address the young women, and if there was a focus on the agency and resilience of family members.

The data from the interview was analysed in conjunction with the media coverage of Rosianna and Shannon's cases, as I aligned the interview findings with the content available in online articles. I correlated the broader themes that emerged from the interview with those addressed in the media articles. This correlative analysis helped with addressing important themes throughout the findings and discussion chapters.

Reflexivity

While interpreting the interview, I was mindful of the fact that the data accumulated for this research was based on the narrative of one family member and the media coverage of their two cousins. Thus, the analysis is not generalizable to the experiences of all family members of MMIWG. Moreover, qualitative research cannot entirely be objective; it is situated and contextual, as it is influenced by the researcher's own disciplinary and theoretical location, as well as the socio-cultural contexts, and possible interpersonal and political issues they are embedded in (Doucet, 2008; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). When analysing the information shared by Brittney and the information provided in media coverage, I made a conscious effort to not only focus on the colonial oppression that is responsible for MMIWG, but also on the resilience put forth by families by shining light on their ongoing activism. A challenging aspect of this analysis was to balance my analytical decision as a researcher with interpreting the account shared by Brittney, as well as the data present in news articles. I made an effort to focus on Brittney's narrative and the activism of family members and communities that have pushed for a change in media coverage. However, given my position as the researcher, my own subjective analysis is prevalent in this thesis, especially when I explore the meanings associated with the kinds of photographs of Rosianna and Shannon that are shared with the public, as well as how some platforms may have done a better job at covering their cases than others.

Limitations of the Research Design

Similar to any other research strategy, this research is not without its limitations. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only one interview was conducted, which offered a subjective account that is not generalizable to all families of MMIWG. I also examine the cases discussed in the interview; however, due to the pandemic, my media search was limited to what was available to

me online, through Brock University's library database and the Google search engine. Moreover, it must be noted, the number of articles analysed and discussed in this thesis are not reflective of the exact number of publications concerning Rosianna and Shannon's cases. These articles were also limited to English written language. Thus, any coverage that may have been done through radio platforms, television broadcasts or in the French language were not a part of this research. Moreover, since Shannon went missing with her friend, Maisy, some articles only focused on the accounts of Maisy's family, which could not be included in this thesis, as I did not have her family's consent. In terms of the articles themselves, much information was overlapping, and some articles offered minimal information about Rosianna and Shannon, as well as their families. Due to the similarity of content across articles concerning the respective cases, the data collected from the articles was somewhat limited.

Conclusion

This thesis is grounded in a combination of feminist and Indigenous research methodologies. Both approaches value listening to the stories of those that are marginalised and to give their voice an outlet. They also encourage that the research be done "with" the participant, rather than "about" them. Through adopting Indigenous and feminist research approaches, an emphasis is placed on both feminism and decolonization. To gather data for this research, an in-depth interview was conducted with Brittney Poucachiche, and online media articles concerning the cases of her cousins, Rosianna and Shannon, were searched and selected for analysis. The data was analysed using a qualitative content analysis, through which themes were derived from the interview transcript and the media articles. Throughout the analysis process, I was conscious about my position as the researcher, which gave me the privilege of making analytical decisions about the stories shared with me. The data analysis of the content gathered from the interview and the

online articles is divided into broader themes, including the impacts of colonialism, police role in addressing cases of MMIWG, media's role and coverage of MMIWG, and experiences and role of the families of the MMIWG in pushing for media coverage. The stories of family members and communities were prioritised throughout the process of analysing the interview data and the data from news articles.

CHAPTER 5: A FAMILY MEMBER'S NARRATIVE OF HER STOLEN LOVED ONES

“At first when she [Shannon] went missing, it felt like she was just another name and it was just...bring it up and it was a pass and go thing. But I think nowadays, because media is so scrutinised, that they have to be careful with what they say and how they approach it. I feel like nowadays they have to be more sensitive about the subject. Because I think in a way they do it for themselves to look like they are a caring and sensitive news network by saying stuff like that.”

“I remember, the only thing that I had seen in the newspaper was her [Rosianna] obituary and that was the media coverage that I had.”

- Brittney Poucachiche

In this chapter, I offer an analysis of Brittney's account of her own life, and her narrative of the cases and media coverage of her cousins, Rosianna and Shannon. This chapter is divided in four main sections in line with the main themes: ongoing legacy of colonialism in Canada, police response in the cases of MMIWG, media's role in the representations of MMIWG, and families' ongoing struggles and resilience. I first focus on Brittney's experiences with inter-generational trauma and ongoing colonialism. This is followed by an analysis of Rosianna and Shannon's cases, and an analysis of Brittney's interview. Following these analyses, I highlight Canada's culpability in the cases of MMIWG. This chapter emphasises the initial response from both media and the police towards Rosianna and Shannon's cases. It further contends that family members and Indigenous communities are at the forefront of raising awareness about their MMIWG.

Ongoing Legacy of Colonialism in Canada

Brittney: Laying the Terrain for Isolation and Assimilation

Upon speaking about her beloved missing and murdered cousins, Brittney did not simply provide information concerning their cases; rather, she deemed it important to discuss her own life and positionality within Canada as an Indigenous woman as well.

At only 31 years of age, Brittney Poucachiche is no stranger to grief, loss and the ongoing violence and oppression inflicted upon Indigenous peoples. Brittney is of both Algonquin and

Mohawk descent; Algonquin from her mother's side and Mohawk from her father's side. Brittney explained that her upbringing has played a significant role in how she navigates her life. She stated, "I feel like I live in two different worlds," pointing to her life both on and off reserve, as her mother is from Lake Rapid, an Algonquin reserve six hours north of Ottawa, while her father was originally from Akwesasne, NY, and grew up in Syracuse. Brittney stated,

"My mother made sure I went on her reserve and showed me how it was there, and the community where I primarily went often as a child was a community of not more than 600 people. Her reserve still runs on a generator, so my mum growing up showed me the effects of a reservation, while my father growing up in an urban setting, showed me how Aboriginal people have moved into an urban setting and how they live. [...] And my mum's reserve, being isolated, the nearest grocery store was three and a half hours away."

It is evident that life on reserve is vastly different from life in an urban setting. Reservations are some of the most underfunded and isolated spaces in Canada, thus further pushing Indigenous peoples into extreme poverty (Palmater, 2020). The housing crisis on reserves is a recurring issue. On the one hand, there is not enough housing and on the other, the majority of the houses on reserves require repairs (Pamlater, 2020). Brittney argues that due to lack of resources and opportunities available on reserves, many Indigenous women and girls tend to move into urban areas. Their quest for higher education and a better life pushes them to move away, despite the constant dilemma of finding their own space in mainstream Canada. Brittney stated that the decisions she has made for herself are all contingent to "finding [her own] space in a white space." She further explained that acquiring an education that is deemed more acceptable in Western standards is her way of finding a balance for herself, to gain more acceptance in a society that marginalises Indigenous people.

"...where is my place in society as an Aboriginal young woman, who... to be who I am and you know get back to my culture but still living in modern society, and again that comes with the two-world thing."

She explained that being successful in a colonial society is largely associated with receiving Western education, which often comes at the cost of not living in her community and learning her teachings, thus further adding to the constant battle of living in two different worlds. However, she was clear in stating that the racism and sexism she experiences is inescapable in either space. Dealing with racism and marginalisation instills a sense of fear among Indigenous women and girls, something they live with every day. This fear stays with them even when they protest for their rights, at the same time they are resilient, as they go on with their struggle for recognition. Brittney spoke about her own struggles with raising awareness and fighting for her rights,

“Especially nowadays with the whole movement, and sometimes I worry that people are going to harass me because of Aboriginal people protesting....and well now I have to fight for this, I have to say something. So it’s always a constant battle in finding space...”

Inter-generational Trauma: Ongoing Legacy of Residential Schools

The phenomenon of MMIWG is a product of both historic and ongoing colonial policies and systemic oppression. Scholars, such as Emmanuelle Walter (2015) argue that “residential school syndrome is a direct – though not sole – cause of the phenomenon of missing and murdered women, it made entire communities vulnerable” (p. 166). Intergenerational trauma is an ongoing legacy of residential schools, as nuns and priests in these schools physically and sexually abused Indigenous boys and girls, they were also subjected to torture, starvation and medical experimentations (Palmer, 2020). Indigenous children were forcefully taken from their families and forced to assimilate into Euro-Canadian culture through violent tactics (Bingham, et al., 2019; Mathysen, 2011; Watson, 2018). Brittney explained that the majority of people in her community, including her mother, were residential school survivors.

“Unfortunately, my mum served in residential school from when she was five till twelve years old. That whole community, most of, majority of people went to residential schools.”

Even though the last residential schools may have closed in 1996, the residual effects are still prevalent (Bourgeois, 2014; Bychutsky, 2017; Kuokkanen, 2017). Her mother continues to deal with the trauma of attending residential school, and though Brittney herself did not learn about her mum's attendance at a residential school until she turned sixteen, she feels she also suffered from the affects, and still does.

“Not understanding why my mum was scared of certain things or why she didn't do certain things, I couldn't [understand], and around my sixteenth birthday is when I found out...that even took a harder toll on me...”

In Brittney's opinion, she found Harper's apology to be nothing more than a political stunt, given that the government continues to oppress and dehumanize Indigenous peoples.⁴ Intergenerational trauma is long lasting, and Brittney argues that within her community, “violence is predominant, it comes with intergenerational trauma, it comes with isolation.” When violence against an entire group of people is condoned by government authorities, it does not take long for such behaviour to be normalised and accepted. Thus, for many Indigenous families, facing violence in diverse forms is not something out of the ordinary. For much of her childhood, Brittney thought that violence was just a part of life:

“When I was younger, I thought violence was something normal, I thought it was okay to hit a woman. I thought it was okay to isolate women. It was such a normality in my community, that I thought violence was normal against women.”

Even though all Indigenous lives are discriminated against in Canada, there is no denying that Indigenous women and girls face a unique form of violation, whereby they are oppressed for being both Indigenous and a woman. Indigenous women and girls continue to face an ongoing oppression

⁴ On June 11 in 2008, Stephen Harper, the PM of Canada at the time, addressed the survivors of Indian Residential School and delivered a formal apology (Reid, 2015). While some Indigenous people were appreciative of it, others were critical.

and marginalisation, as the policies in the *Indian Act* remain both racist and sexist (Anderson, 2010; Barman, 2010; Bychutsky, 2017).

The past decade may have seen some positive changes, however, the prevalence of systemic oppression against Indigenous people has taken new forms. For instance, Indigenous children no longer have to go to residential schools, however, the effects of it are long lasting, as many families continue to deal with intergenerational trauma (Bychutsky, 2017; Mathysen, 2011; Jiwani & Young, 2006; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019; Watson, 2018). Moreover, despite the closing of residential schools, there is an over-representation of Indigenous children in the foster-care system today, as they continue to be taken away from their families at exceedingly high rates (Palmer, 2020). This further repeats the cycle of oppression against Indigenous peoples and further perpetuates inter-generational trauma.

Police Response in the Cases of MMIWG

Rosianna: More Than Just Another “Cold Case”

Rosianna Poucachiche was only sixteen-years-old when her life was put to an end in October 2000. Rosianna was murdered at her home in Lake Rapid, an Algonquin reserve located north of Ottawa. Her body was left in her room in the basement where her parents found her in the morning. She had endured severe trauma, as her body was brutally bruised and beaten (Canada NewsWire, 2000). Her death was not widely covered in the mainstream media, and the initial police investigation was disappointing. Brittney was twelve-years-old at the time, and she recalls being scared for her own life after the incident, mainly because nothing was done.

“She was brutally murdered, raped and left for dead in her room downstairs, and nobody cared, nobody said anything. The cops showed up for a few hours and took off and they never came back in the community.”

The case soon grew cold, however, Brittney argues that the case started out cold, as the police never did seriously investigate Rosianna's death. Her murderer was eventually arrested and charged in 2017, seventeen years after her death. This was around the same time the National Inquiry into MMIWG was making headway. Brittney observed that while she thinks that the Inquiry is a step in the right direction, it does leave her wondering about the police handling of Rosianna's case.

“And not too long after the Inquiry, they [police] said that they are still looking for the person who did this...this was (about) 20 years ago when this all happened, and just recently they think they found the person, but I think it's because the Inquiry put pressure on the police and the community to arrest somebody for her murder.”

After having had absolutely no indication from police that Rosianna's case was still open, to hear that they were again looking for the perpetrator as the National Inquiry into MMIWG gained momentum, did seem like police interest might be self-serving and performative. The fact that the case took 17 years to resolve, some of her family members, including Brittney, were left wondering if their beloved Rosianna had received justice. As Brittney went on to say, “In a way, what matters is, is that I don't feel justice has been served, because it took 20 years.” While the arrest may have brought closure to some of the family and seemed like a victory for the community, it should still be regarded a failure from a legal standpoint. Based on the articles analysed, there were no details provided about the trial. The only explanation available through media coverage was that the perpetrator had been arrested in 2000, but there was not enough evidence to convict him (Kupfer, 2017). It was not until 2017 that the police found DNA evidence that connected the perpetrator to the crime, which led to an arrest (CBC News, 2017a; CTV Montreal, 2017).

Shannon: A Suspicious Disappearance

Shannon was only seventeen-years-old when she disappeared with her friend, Maisy Odjick, in September of 2008 from her home in Maniwaki, QC, which is near the Kitgan Zibi First

Nations reserve, a few hours from Ottawa. She remains missing to this day. Their belongings were left behind and were later found by Shannon's father (Baker, 2015; Canada NewsWire, 2008; Kennedy, 2008; Sibley & Dimmock, 2014; Ottawa Citizen, 2009; Pilienci, 2018). Since both the girls left with their belongings untouched, there was suspicion of foul play. Brittney stated that her family also wondered if something bad might have happened, since it was unlike Shannon to leave without informing anyone. The two girls were meant to be having a sleepover at Shannon's house; however, the night turned into their family's worst nightmare. They were both nowhere to be found and were last seen in Maniwaki in 2008 (CBC News, 2013a; Sibley & Dimmock, 2014). They were first seen in the evening at the polyvalente school in Maniwaki, where the girls attended a dance and were later seen by Bryan Alexander, Shannon's father, at their home. Brittney recalls her cousin's disappearance,

“She [Shannon] went missing with her friend Maisy Odjick at the time. They disappeared at the exact same time and the exact same way, and it just seemed like nobody knew anything at all. Her dad, I think was gone, she was 17, so I think he let her stay overnight at the house with her friend. So, when he got home, that's when he realised that all her clothes were there, her ID, her money was there, everything... every single thing was still there, besides her, and he hasn't seen her since. They just vanished without a trace...”

Brittney argued that the initial response from the authorities towards Shannon's disappearance was inadequate. It was assumed by the police that both Shannon and Maisy had simply run away and would eventually return, as Brittney went on to say, “...police and media just dubbed them as runaways.”

The assumption that Shannon and Maisy were “runaways” influenced the police's approach towards investigating their disappearances. Brittney explained that the police told the families that they would eventually return on their own. Since the girls did not return home, the police finally went searching for their bodies, as they had received a new lead. However, Brittney argued that it may have been too late, as she stated, “A couple months later they [police] finally

accepted that they are missing, and something may have happened to them. But it took a really long time.” Brittney further argued that the trail of evidence might have disappeared as well. To this day, it is primarily Brittney and Maisy’s families and community that are fighting to find the girls and are holding on to hope for their safe return.

Media’s Role in the Representations of MMIWG

McCue (2014) raises an important point when he argues that for Indigenous peoples to make it into the news, they either need to be dead, drinking, dancing or drumming. When Rosianna was murdered in the year 2000, she was seemingly reported as “just another dead Indigenous girl”. Regarding initial media coverage of her cousin’s murder, Brittney remembers,

“I saw a small, maybe like a paragraph that said something like ‘Aboriginal girl in isolated community was murdered, murderer still at large’ or something, but they didn’t have anything on the case [...] there was no name, no description.”

It was not until 2017, when Rosianna’s murderer was charged with the crime, that her case generated media attention. Media coverage reduced Rosianna’s life to a single “cold case” for Canadian readers, which shows that, for Indigenous women and girls, oppression and marginalisation does not end even after their death. Brittney told me how her mother had sent her the article that explained that the perpetrator had been found:

“When my mum messaged me, she said, ‘oh they think that they caught the person who did that’ and when I saw that article, I saw her picture and right away I clicked on it.”

To Brittney, it did not matter who wrote the article, nor which platform it was published on. Rather, just the fact that someone had brought attention to Rosianna’s case was important. This shines light on how families are often excluded from the proceedings, as well as from articles about their loved ones, such that media fail to include any personal details about the woman who has gone missing or been murdered.

When Rosianna was murdered in 2000, her family was not contacted by the reporter who provided the sole coverage, and the article offered virtually no personal information about her. Rosianna's murder was discussed in media coverage in two contexts: first, in the year 2000, it was reported that she had died. Second, in 2017, it was announced that her murderer had been arrested – seventeen years later. Brittney went on to argue that Rosianna's Indigeneity was one of the main reasons why her life did not matter enough to garner immediate police investigation. As she said, "I think if it had been an Indigenous man who murdered a white woman, it would've blown up like crazy." While Indigenous women and girls are more likely to be victims of homicide than their non-Indigenous counterparts, their cases are far less likely to be resolved (Bychutsky, 2017; Native Women's Association of Canada, 2010; Saramo, 2016). The media did not consider Rosianna's life important enough to provide respectful media coverage for her case, nor did they offer personal details about her. Regarding the limited coverage of MMIWG, Brittney stated, that in her perception "...Aboriginal people do not have a priority space in newspapers."

The media's initial coverage following Shannon's disappearance did not offer much information. It was both unprofessional and dangerous for the police to have assumed the girls were runaways, and media followed the police's lead. Brittney argued that, "sometimes, the mediator between the family and the news people is the police," as media only reports details shared by the police. This explains how the media and the police cannot be separated. Brittney stressed that the police and media are "almost intertwined." She continued:

"Police say it a certain way or communicate it a certain way, how they're saying and what they're saying, the media will kind of paraphrase it for themselves and then say it."

Online social media served as a strong platform to raise awareness about Shannon's disappearance, since it allowed families to share the news multiple times on a platform that was not as widely available in 2000, when Rosianna was killed. Brittney emphasised that she is quite

active online and is “always sharing their [Shannon and Maisy’s] missing posters on social media.” However, social media as a platform for raising awareness comes with its own caveats. As Brittney explained, most online posts concerning MMIWG on social media are posted, shared and seen only by Indigenous people themselves. This raises concern whether the news is reaching wider, non-Indigenous populations. It is a similar case with Indigenous news platforms, such as Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), that are not considered mainstream. Brittney stressed that coverage by journalists for APTN is more respectful, as “they make it [Indigenous lives] seem just more important.” However, this is coverage done by and for Indigenous peoples, and the audience is predominantly Indigenous as well.

Brittney expressed her frustration with local media’s wider, and more respectful, coverage of the cases of white missing women and girls, as compared to the Indigenous women and girls. She explained that around the same time when Shannon went missing, another girl had also gone missing. What set these women apart in news coverage was that the second girl was white:

“...they had media coverage on that right away, and for months all I heard was about this white girl who had gone missing and that they were looking for her...”

Brittney expressed that while she was not upset about the media attention received by the white girl, she was disheartened that her cousin’s disappearance did not amount to the same coverage. The cases of MMIWG, in comparison to their non-Indigenous counterparts, do not receive the same amount of coverage in mainstream media (Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006).

Families’ Ongoing Struggles and Resilience

Fear played a role in why Rosianna’s family was skeptical about speaking with media personnel. This fear pivots around the apprehension of being judged. Brittney explained her sentiments and said, “We were almost fearful, we didn’t want them coming in and saying well she comes from a violent family anyways that’s why she’s a runaway.” Such fear is rooted in not only

how MMIWG are most often portrayed, but also in how Indigenous peoples are generally treated in Canada – namely, as responsible for violence against them, which can lead to lack of trust in the authorities. Brittney stated,

“We didn’t give up hope in finding her, we gave up hope in media. We gave up hope in anyone trying to help us find her...”

Brittney further explained that her family had to work hard towards informing people that Shannon was a kind and loved person, and that she should not be seen in a negative light. Perhaps, had the news articles mentioned this information, the readers may have identified with Shannon more closely. It is important to note that local media did not reach out to Shannon and Maisy’s families, rather the families had to reach out to them. Due to a lack of media coverage that actually provided details about the two missing girls, family members set up their own website called “Help Find Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander” to raise awareness about their disappearances. Brittney further highlighted that a lot of the groundwork was done by Maisy Odjick’s family, who took the lead to ensure that Shannon and Maisy’s disappearance would be covered by mainstream media. Regarding the work done by Maisy’s family, Brittney said,

“...Maria keeps talking about, which is the aunt of the other victim, that she had to go knock on people’s doors, that she had to fill out child missing forms, like the national missing forms. She had to put her in a database, they didn’t come to the reserve and put them in a database, and that took years...”

She further stated,

“...now a days our family is so big on putting posters all the time, and I on social media, I’m always sharing their missing posters on social media.”

Because of the failure of mainstream media to raise awareness, these families took matters into their own hands to ensure that people do not forget Shannon and Maisy, and that the search for them does not stop.

Canada Must Be Held Accountable

Police negligence is a part of ongoing colonial and systemic oppression, where Indigenous lives and narratives are all too often deemed invisible. By ignoring the violence inflicted upon Indigenous women and girls, the colonial practice of assuming that Indigenous women's lives do not matter persists. Brittney commented on the lack of accountability for violence against Indigenous women and girls, as she explained:

“Things happen, people do stuff to people, and we are not open about that violence, like oh that could never happen here. Well stop saying that, because, honestly, the most ignorant thing to say is that could never happen here.”

Denying that the cases of MMIWG are a direct result of settler colonialism has allowed the cases to grow. By saying that they are simply individual cases, as Stephen Harper claimed (Saramo, 2016), the Canadian government denies its role in the ongoing violence towards Indigenous women and girls. Brittney eloquently expressed that “it's not [only] what is happening... it's what isn't happening to stop these cases.” By ignoring the pleas of Indigenous families and communities about their missing and murdered loved ones, the government has played an active role in the violence inflicted upon them.

The National Inquiry into MMIWG has worked towards raising greater awareness about the violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, through prioritising family voices. This has also brought to light Canada's culpability in normalizing violence against Indigenous women and girls. The National Inquiry into MMIWG (Volume 1a, 2019) cites that Indigenous communities and families have limited to no confidence in the so-called justice system, as well as a lack of trust towards police, as police's stereotypical assumptions about Indigenous women and girls deny them of protection and blame them for the violence they experience.

Brittney argued that the National Inquiry into MMIWG has been placing pressure on the government and has brought greater public attention to the cases of MMIWG. She also claimed it has had some positive impact thus far, as she said that the National Inquiry into MMIWG might have had a role in shaming the police and the consequent re-opening and solving of Rosianna's case. While Brittney praised the Inquiry for bringing attention to the cases of MMIWG, she was also critical of the expectations placed on the Inquiry, stating that she did not think it would fix everything:

“I don't think it's going to fix everything, but I feel like it's helped, like it's been putting pressure on these cases. It's been putting pressure more on the government.”

She further explained that it is important to understand that Canada as a country is built on and deeply rooted in colonialism. Thus, “changing” multiple systems of oppression, that include the government, law enforcement, and narratives surrounding MMIWG itself, are “going to take a long time.” When I asked Brittney about her thoughts concerning the National Inquiry into MMIWG, she simply stated,

“What I want from this [The National Inquiry into MMIWG] is more focus and more sentimental value towards my own people. I want more value to us. I think that's it, if people want one-word answer, then it is that I want to be valued.”

It may seem that asking for Indigenous peoples to be valued is a small expectation, however, this ask is deeper than it seems. After years of dehumanization and violence, being *valued* entails recognizing that MMIWG must be accorded the simple dignity of being grievable – they mattered, and their memory still matters to those who love them.

Conclusion

Brittney's accounts throughout the interview make it clear that, for Indigenous women and girls, it does not matter whether they live on reserves or in urban cities, the violence inflicted upon them is inescapable, as Canadian policies continue to shape how Indigenous lives are not only

regulated, but also portrayed in media. From Brittney's perspective, despite the eight-year time gap between Rosianna and Shannon's cases, both were met with initial negligence from the police and media. Their families not only pushed for action from the police, but they also fought for greater and more respectful media coverage. When Shannon went missing, her families had greater access to social media, which enabled them to raise awareness about Shannon's disappearance online. However, this resource was not widely available when Rosianna was murdered. This demonstrates how families continue to take up the activist role and show resilience in face of great struggle. Brittney highlighted that the National Inquiry into MMIWG, which is the outcome of family and community activism, is bringing about some positive change and has pushed for better police response and greater media coverage of MMIWG.

CHAPTER 6: DEEP DIVE IN MEDIA COVERAGE OF ROSIANNA AND SHANNON

As noted in the literature review, mainstream Canadian media has a pattern of negatively presenting MMIWG and these representations are rooted in colonialism, where Indigenous women and girls are not just marginalised, but also dehumanized (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). In this section, I offer a content analysis of the articles concerning Rosianna and Shannon, published in English language, and available online through mainstream media platforms including *CBC News*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Ottawa Citizen*, *Canada NewsWire* and the *Montreal Gazette*. This analysis is grounded in feminist and Indigenous methodologies. Through a feminist framework that pays close attention towards colonialism, the analysis that follows explores how media coverage depicts MMIWG, as well as the ongoing resilience of Indigenous families in resisting colonial oppression and lobbying for a shift in media coverage.

Why Do Numbers Matter?

The respective cases of Rosianna and Shannon are from two relatively different times, as the two incidents happened almost a decade apart: Rosianna was murdered in 2000, while Shannon went missing in 2008. In Rosianna's case, I found only one article published in the year 2000, whereas no articles were found between 2001 and 2016.⁵ It appears that it was not until 2017, and the arrest of Rosianna's murderer, that mainstream media platforms took notice of the case again. In the case of Shannon, who went missing in 2008 and remains missing to this day, the media coverage began in 2008 and continued intermittently until 2018. I was able to access a total of fifteen articles that were published during this time.

⁵ As mentioned in Chapter 4, the number of articles analysed in this thesis were limited to content available through two domains: Google and Brock library database's newspaper search.

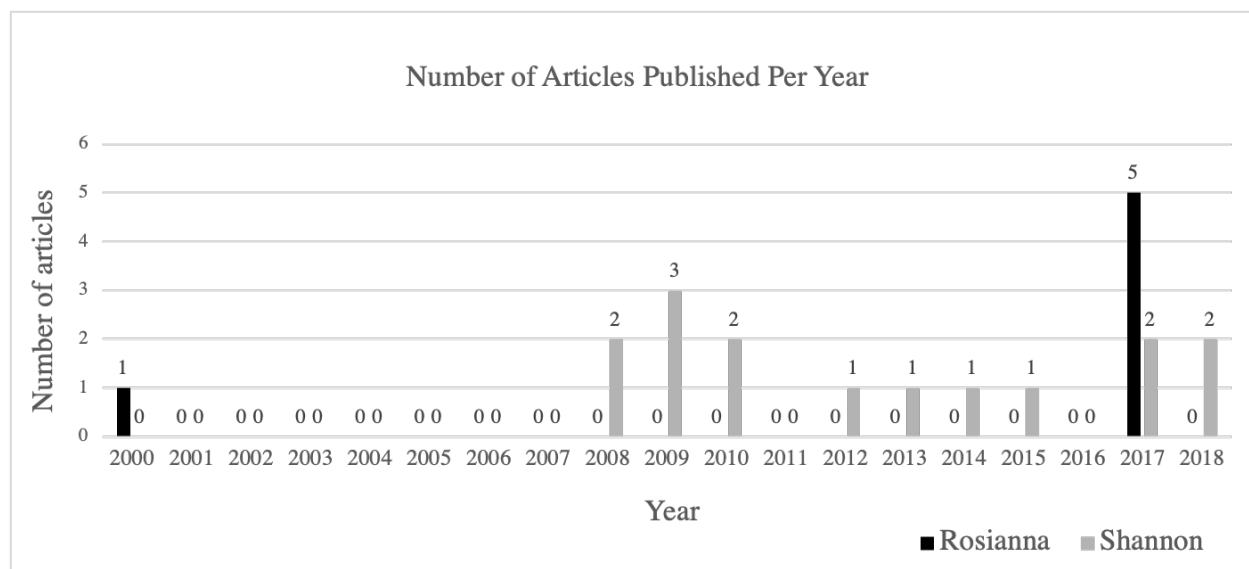


Figure 1: Number of articles published per year.

The number of articles that have been published is important, as it demonstrates the level of awareness in each of these cases in mainstream media. The one article that I found, published immediately after Rosianna Poucachiche’s death, reported that a 17-year-old girl had been brutally beaten to death in her house on Rapid-Lake reserve (Canada NewsWire, 2000). After this, I did not find any published articles about Rosianna’s case until 2017, when a suspect was charged for her murder. Thus, for 17 years, there were no leads or follow-ups, as it had become a cold case.

The publication record concerning Shannon’s case is different, as she remains missing to date. Shannon went missing in 2008, and I found only two articles that were published within the first three months of her disappearance. This lack of coverage correlates with the delayed police response to both Shannon and Maisy’s disappearances, as both teenagers were treated as runaways. The highest amount of coverage I found for Shannon’s case was in 2009, which consisted of three articles. The initial articles, published in 2008 by the *Ottawa Citizen* (Kennedy, 2008) and *Canada NewsWire* (2008), offered a description of Shannon and her friend, Maisy, as well as contact information to ensure that any sightings of the girls were to be reported to the proper authorities (Canada NewsWire, 2008; Kennedy, 2008). Family narratives were included in ten articles

covering Shannon's⁶ case, as compared to one article providing Rosianna's⁷ family's narrative. This reflects that there is a gradual positive shift towards including family narratives in mainstream coverage.

Headlines: A Reader's First Perception of the Cases of MMIWG

Headlines are critical and the words used in news headlines carry weight, as they are the first part of an article that readers take note of. Often, headlines are the only aspect of the article that people see, especially online. Within that first glance, a person decides whether or not they want to read the whole article. When analysing the articles, it was noted that the headlines were not always reflective of the information shared in the body of the articles, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Existing research by Jiwani & Young (2006) argues that Indigeneity is most often made invisible in media coverage of MMIWG. However, in contrast to their findings, my analysis of recent media coverage suggests there has been some change. The headlines for articles about both Rosianna and Shannon indeed draw attention to their Indigeneity. Between 2000 and 2017, six articles concerning Rosianna's murder were found online. Rosianna's Indigeneity was made clear in two headlines, as she was referred to as an "Algonquin girl" and an "Indigenous girl," but her name was not mentioned in any of these headlines. When reporters failed to mention her name, the general headlines ended up portraying her as just another victim of homicide. The primary interest of most reporters seemed to be in police solving a cold case; consequently, all the articles published in 2017 were focused on the murderer. Despite the fact that there was a publication ban on disclosing the murderer's name, the perpetrator was at the centre of this media discussion. Rosianna's life seemed to be inconsequential in all but one article by Kupfer (2017) for *CBC News*,

⁶ See Appendix H for quantitative content analysis of media articles of Shannon's case.

⁷ See Appendix G for quantitative content analysis of media articles of Rosianna's case

where the headline placed focus on her sister's account, "'She'll be able to rest in peace': Sister of cold case victim speaks after murder charges laid".

Media Platform	Year	Headline
Canada NewsWire	2000	Teenage girl's badly beaten body found in home on Northern Quebec reserve
Montreal Gazette	2017	Suspect charged in long-unsolved homicide on Lac-Rapide First Nations
CTV Montreal	2017	Cold case cracked? Police arrest suspect in teen girl's 2000 murder
CBC News	2017	'She'll be able to rest in peace': Sister of cold case victim speaks after murder charges laid
Ottawa Citizen	2017	Man charged with first-degree murder 17 years after death of Algonquin girl
CBC News	2017	Quebec man charged with murder in 2000 slaying of Indigenous girl

Table 1: Article headlines of Rosianna Poucachiche's Case

In Shannon's case, out of the 15 articles accessed online, only seven of the headlines mentioned her name; another three drew attention to her Indigeneity, while the rest failed to mention either. It is also important to note that no article headline mentioned both her name and Indigeneity together. This is not a trend that appears to have changed over time, rather it is a persistent inconsistency in reporting, because an article as early as 2009 mentions her name, while later articles from 2017 and 2018 fail to do so.

Media Platform	Year	Headline
Ottawa Citizen	2008	Parents plead for girls' safe return; Friends went missing from reserve north of Ottawa last month
Canada NewsWire	2008	AFN Women's Council appeals to public and media for help in the search for Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander on National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
Ottawa Citizen	2009	The search for Maisy and Shannon; 'I feel like I'm fighting this on my own,' mother says
Ottawa Citizen	2009	Without a trace; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared from Kitigan Zibi-Maniwaki area one year ago leaving countless questions but no clues. Controversy and confusion plague an investigation that is also clouded with charges of racism. Day by day, the case grows colder.
Ottawa Citizen	2009	Missing Maisy and Shannon
The Globe and Mail	2010	Vigil to mark two years since native girls went missing
Ottawa Citizen	2010	Families of missing girls cling to hope; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared two years ago today, and police are still stumped, report Meghan Hurley.
The Globe and Mail	2012	AFN demands investigation of missing native women
CBC News	2013	Families mark 5 years since 2 teens disappeared
Ottawa Citizen	2014	'Is she alive? Is she dead?'; Nearly six years after his daughter, Shannon, vanished from a Maniwaki reserve, Bryan Alexander is frustrated by all the mixed messages on her whereabouts
The Globe and Mail	2015	Lost girls: Emmanuelle Walter brings a national crisis into the public conscience
CBC News	2017	The search for Shannon Alexander and Maisy Odjick
CBC News	2017	A family's 'mixed emotions' as tip prompts new search for Quebec teens
CBC News	2018	Police hope for new leads in disappearance of Kitigan Zibi teens
Ottawa Citizen	2018	Quebec police hope to find new leads in search for young women missing 10 years

Table 2: Article headlines of Shannon Alexander's Case

There is a noticeable change in the wording of the headlines concerning Shannon and Maisy, when compared to those that focus on Rosianna. As the headlines recorded in Table 2 suggest, some clearly highlight the family's role in searching for Shannon and Maisy. Some headlines even directly quote the family members. For instance, an article from *Ottawa Citizen* uses the words of Shannon's father in the headline (Sibley & Dimmock, 2014). This shift is reflective of the activist role played by family members. Indigenous peoples have had to fight to be heard and bring attention to the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls. They have raised awareness through not only reaching out and working with the media, but also through

organizing vigils to keep their memories alive, as highlighted by Seguin (2010) in an article for *The Globe and Mail*. Headlines from *Canada NewsWire* (2008) and *The Globe and Mail* (2012) also make reference to the Assembly of First Nation's (AFN) demand for investigating Shannon and Maisy's disappearances. Moreover, increasing outrage about the cases of MMIWG, and the frustration towards police negligence and racism, have all worked to critique both the police and the state. It is only because of the hard work of Indigenous families and communities that this shift in the coverage of MMIWG has been possible.

Media Narratives of MMIWG: A Closer Look

The first article about Rosianna primarily focused on her death (i.e., when, where and how it happened). It was clearly stated that Rosianna had endured physical trauma that led to her death (Canada NewsWire, 2000). When the case was finally resolved in 2017, it was only then that the media took greater interest. However, most of the articles from 2017 only reported that the "cold case" had been solved. The news articles reduced Rosianna's description to: "beaten to death" (CTV Montreal, 2017; Spears, 2017), "bruised and beaten body" (Canadian Newswire, 2000), "severely beaten and found unconscious" (Cherry, 2017), "badly beaten body" (CBC News, 2017a), while one also included her autopsy findings (Cherry, 2017), thus completely dehumanising her. Through such a depiction, Rosianna was made invisible in the coverage, and her life was heavily discussed in relation to the violence inflicted upon her body. Thus, by explicitly describing the violence, the "racial other" is defaced and turned into an "empty vessel" for the consumption of the colonizer (Feldman, 1994). This feeds into "race pleasure" for colonial power, whereby suffering and inflicting violence onto racialized bodies is seen as a source of pleasure (Farley, 1997). Such representation of MMIWG further reinforces colonial domination over the bodies of Indigenous women and girls.

Kupfer (2017), from *CBC News*, who included interview material from Rosianna's sister, offered some detail about Rosianna's life and the trauma of her untimely death for the family. Rosianna's murderer was not known to her (Kupfer, 2017), however, he was also a resident of the Lake-Rapid reserve and was the same age as Rosianna when he murdered her (CBC News, 2017a; CTV Montreal, 2017; Spears, 2017). Evidently, the teen had been arrested in 2000, however, the initial DNA testing did not trace him back to the crime (CBC News, 2017a; CTV Montreal, 2017). Moreover, no article provided information about the trial. This raises the question as to what information may have prompted the police to suddenly lay charges after all these years.

From the media platforms accessed for this research, *CBC News* did a better job at covering Rosianna's case, as it not only discussed her sister's account, but it was the only platform that shared a picture of Rosianna (Kupfer, 2017). Two articles from *CBC News* were accessed; the first informed the public of the murderer's arrest (CBC News, 2017a), while the second discussed her sister's narrative of the ordeal and the police's handling of it (Kupfer, 2017). It is interesting to note, however, that despite offering sensitive coverage, there remain issues in terms of how the headlines are worded (See Table 1). The same headline that cites Rosianna's sister, refers to Rosianna as a "cold case victim" (Kupfer, 2017), while the other focuses on the murderer and refers to Rosianna as a "slain Indigenous girl" (CBC News, 2017a). I contend that this is a contradiction in the patterns of coverage, since despite placing emphasis on family's story, the headline remains insensitive. Having a more sensitive headline that addressed Rosianna by her name and not simply as a "cold case victim" would perhaps have drawn some empathy towards her and been more respectful towards the family.

Shannon's disappearance seems to have received the most coverage from the *Ottawa Citizen*, as most articles accessed regarding Shannon were from this platform. This platform

discussed both the police's bias towards Shannon and Maisy's disappearances, as well as the delayed response from the police. By assuming that the girls were merely runaways, police investigation into their disappearance was delayed. *Ottawa Citizen* had Brendan Kennedy cover Shannon and Maisy's disappearances, as he wrote ten articles in a span of eleven months, offering detailed accounts of both the girls through their families' accounts (Walter, 2015)⁸. Kennedy's (2009b) article for the *Ottawa Citizen*, offers in-depth information about both the girls and their families. It also brings attention to the family's ongoing activism towards raising awareness about MMIWG and ensures that Shannon and Maisy do not just become names on a missing persons list. However, despite offering this information, the coverage is not free of contradictions, as one article reported that Shannon was "a kid who enjoyed the outdoors where she and her father would ride three-wheelers or go fishing," (Kennedy, 2009b, para. 45) but in the next paragraph, called her an "angry and argumentative teen," (para. 46) and later stated that her father was a "former crack addict who struggles with alcoholism" (para. 48). Another article from the same platform introduced Maisy as "a school drop-out who was doing drugs" (Ottawa Citizen, 2009, para. 8) and went on to describe Shannon's mother as a "crack addict who left home" (para. 7) and her father as a "recovering crack addict and alcoholic" (para. 7). Such reporting provides an unnecessary and inappropriate level of detail about the victim and her family's past; it also seems to insinuate that the missing young women are somehow responsible for their situation. In fact, one of the reporters for the *Ottawa Citizen* (2009) stated that "truth is that the girls were living a narrative, too common among aboriginal people, that more often than not ends badly" (para. 10)⁹, which seems to be stereotyping an entire community. By reporting that the girls were living a common

⁸ Based on the research criteria, I was only able to access three out of the ten articles through Google search and Brock University database's newspaper search.

⁹ The reporter for this article remains anonymous, however, it can be argued that this statement is a personal opinion, as it has not been attributed to anyone.

narrative, attention is displaced from the systemic racism and violence behind the cases of MMIWG, and emphasis is laid on the “lifestyles” of Indigenous women and girls. This further shifts the blame away from colonial oppression and violence, and instead, places it on Indigenous women and girls themselves (Culhane, 2003). Once there is a label associated with any missing/murdered Indigenous woman or girl, that label stays with them (Bailey & Shayan, 2006; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). This is evident in the negative stereotypes associated with Indigenous femininity, that continue to marginalise Indigenous women and girls.

It is noticeable that the tone of the narratives in mainstream media seems to be changing in more recent news reports, especially the discourse around the victims and their families. Sibley and Dimmock (2014) from the *Ottawa Citizen* also mention Shannon’s fathers’ past, however, they word it differently, and stated: “...he beat crack 15 years ago, ending a habit [...] the Maniwaki resident thought the worst was behind him but the loss of the daughter he raised alone has been devastating” (para. 5). By emphasizing the father’s agency and care, this coverage reflects some empathy towards the victims and their family. Later articles, from *CBC News*, also focus on the families’ suffering, and reported that, as the disappearances of Shannon and Maisy remain unsolved, it increases the family’s agony, who are still looking for answers and want closure (Carlucci, 2018; CBC News, 2017b).

Families’ Struggles and Police Inaction

Mainstream articles about Rosianna and Shannon have reported on police’s incompetent investigation. Rosianna’s family was reported to have “lost confidence” in the police, due to their slow investigation of the case for years (Kupfer, 2017, para. 15). *CTV Montreal* (2017) reports that Rosianna’s family had “criticized the SQ’s [Surete du Quebec] handling of the case,” (para. 7).

Moreover, on Shannon's disappearance, journalists from *Ottawa Citizen* bring to attention that "family members had publicly accused police of giving up on the investigation" (Spears, 2017, para. 5) and of "incompetence" (Kennedy, 2009b, para. 9). *The Globe and Mail* (Seguin, 2010) also observed that "a climate of mistrust prevails between native communities and police" (para. 7). It was cited that within the first days of the investigation, Surete du Quebec (SQ)¹⁰ labelled Shannon and Maisy as mere runaways (Kennedy, 2009a; Kennedy, 2009b; Aske, 2017; Baker, 2015). Kennedy (2009b) added, "the parents say the investigation was botched from the start because the SQ assumed the girls were runaways" (para. 9), resulting in a lack of effort by the police. Even though Shannon and Maisy went missing from Maniwaki, the cases were handled separately: Shannon's case was handled by SQ, and Maisy's case was handled by Kitigan Zibi Police (Kennedy, 2009b). Shannon's father argued that the SQ wanted to hand over the case to Kitigan Zibi police, as he stated:

"This happened in town, not on the reserve. They don't care if a million ... Indians go missing." (Kennedy, 2009b, para. 27)

Moreover, initially the SQ constable stated that the police believed that Shannon and Maisy had wilfully left and that there were no indications of foul play, despite the family prompting the authorities that something may have happened to the girls, and that they did not simply leave (Kennedy, 2009a). Again, the family's concerns were not taken seriously.

Families and communities are also actively fighting for justice and lobbying to change the discourse around MMIWG, as they continue to work towards shifting the dominant negative narratives of MMIWG. The efforts made by Shannon and Maisy's family members have been

¹⁰ Surete du Quebec, abbreviated as SQ, is the provincial police service in Quebec.

highlighted across the news articles. Within a month of their disappearance, *Ottawa Citizen* reported:

“The families and friends of the missing teens have set up a website at www.findmaisyandshannon.com and a Facebook group...” (Kennedy, 2008, para. 6)

The families of Shannon and Maisy are at the forefront of organizing vigils and marches in their memory (Seguin, 2010; CBC News, 2013a; Hurley, 2010), to ensure that the search for them does not stop. They also arranged for posters to be put up for their missing girls (Sibley & Dimmock, 2014, *Ottawa Citizen*), and every month they were sending posters to shelter homes across Canada (Kennedy, 2009b). Reporters from the *Ottawa Citizen* highlight that when the police declared the girls as “runaways,” it was the families who first arranged a search to “comb the riverbanks of the Kitigan Zibi...” with the help of volunteers from the community (Aske, 2017, para. 5). Furthermore, it was the families who organised the first extensive ground search in December, following the girls’ disappearance in September of 2008 (Kennedy, 2009a).

Articles published by *CBC News* stated that Rosianna’s family was integral in assisting the police in finding the perpetrator (CBC News, 2017a; Kupfer, 2017). Rosianna’s sister highlighted that it was not until two years before the arrest that she was contacted by investigators to look into her sister’s death (Kupfer, 2017), however, there is no extensive detail provided about how the family assisted the police in the investigation. This is a critical finding, as it demonstrates that families’ resistance and resilience is being discussed in mainstream coverage. Moreover, Meghan Hurley (2010) from the *Ottawa Citizen* highlighted the role of Indigenous organizations that have been pushing for change, as she states, “Native organizations believed there was an element of racism – that investigators often assume young, troubled aboriginal women are runaways” (para. 23). By placing greater focus on the role of systems of oppression, as well as offering better

coverage of the role of families, media may have the potential to make a positive contribution towards raising awareness about the cases of MMIWG.

Indigenous communities and families also feel it is important to present MMIWG as respected and loved, as the current discourse often blames them for violence inflicted upon them (Culhane, 2003; Hargreaves, 2017; Jiwani & Young, 2006). Kupfer's (2017) article for the *CBC News* offered strong and respectful coverage of Rosianna, through her sister's account, that Rosianna "was very outgoing, she was very active. She had a lot of ambition. She had a lot of friends. She didn't have any enemies." (Kupfer, 2017, para. 7). This conveys to the readers that Rosianna was loved and cared for. Families are burdened with the challenge of disrupting stereotypical narratives of Indigenous women and girls, to ensure that their loved ones are presented as respectable¹¹ and that their cases are not seen through a negative lens.

The Impact of the National Inquiry into MMIWG

The National Inquiry into MMIWG has played a significant role in how families are consulted in sharing the stories of MMIWG. Including the family's perspectives has brought greater attention to cases of MMIWG and has pushed for an increased awareness of systemic issues. As evidenced in the cases of Rosianna and Shannon, there has been a push on law enforcements, specifically the police, for diligent investigation of the cases, which has been presented in media coverage.

Although the Inquiry was announced in 2015 by PM Trudeau, which was followed by consultations and hearings, it was not until 2017 that the Inquiry got underway. Following the approval of the Inquiry, there have been some noticeable changes in media coverage between 2015

¹¹ As discussed earlier, respectability is most often read as "whiteness" which others anyone who does not fit these confines (Elliot, 2016). When a person is not considered respectable, their loss is not deemed grievable or worthy of mourning (Butler, 2009).

and 2018, based on the articles analysed in this thesis. It was in December 2015 that investigators released updated sketches of Shannon and Maisy to show what the girls may look like at age 24, and also re-appealed for a call for information regarding the girls' disappearance (Aske, 2017; Carlucci, 2018; Pileci, 2018). Homicide investigators also received new leads in July 2017, regarding Shannon and Maisy's case, which led to an investigation of the Pitobig Creek, near the Kitigan Zibi reserve (Aske, 2017; CBC News, 2017b). It could be argued that it was a push from the National Inquiry into MMIWG being put in motion and gaining momentum, that led to greater media attention towards not only the cases of MMIWG, but their investigations as well. Moreover, the resolution of Rosianna's case, and the proceeding surge in media coverage can be argued to be a positive outcome of the National Inquiry into MMIWG. This is also reflected in the coverage from *Ottawa Citizen*, which states:

“...recent publicity over the cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women had highlighted her [Rosianna's] death.” (Spears, 2017, para. 5)

This statement was written while the National Inquiry into MMIWG was underway and Rosianna's sister, Marilyn, stated that it was likely that police's interest in her case grew as a result of the momentum gained by National Inquiry into MMIWG (Kupfer, 2017). In the articles I analysed in this study, there is no explicit reference made regarding the impact of the National Inquiry on the cases of MMIWG, other than the one reported by Kupfer (2017). While it is evident that the National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019) has brought greater media attention, however, it cannot be assumed that the shift in the tone of media coverage concerning Rosianna and Shannon's cases are solely the result of the National Inquiry. The shift in the tone of media coverage is also a result of families who have been working hard towards raising awareness about the cases of their missing and murdered loved ones before the Inquiry process began. This shift is indicated in the

coverage of Shannon's case, as there are articles as early as 2009 that focus on family narratives and issues of racism.

Mainstream Media Addressing Colonialism and Racism

Several articles included in this analysis highlighted that, in Canada, Indigenous women are at high risk of homicide, despite making up a small number of the total Canadian population (Galloway, 2012; Kennedy, 2009a; Sibley & Dimmock, 2014). Sibley and Dimmock (2014) from the *Ottawa Citizen* state,

“Perhaps most telling is that while aboriginals as a whole account for about 4.3 per cent of the country's population, aboriginal women account for about 16 per cent of all female homicides.” (para. 10)

The past decade has seen some improvements in media coverage of MMIWG. Some articles focusing on Shannon and Maisy's disappearances highlight the role of racism and colonialism in the deaths and disappearances of Indigenous women and girls, and concede that these cases are not taken seriously (Galloway, 2012; Hurley, 2010; Kennedy, 2008; Seguin, 2010; Sibley & Dimmock, 2014). As stated in *The Globe and Mail*:

“According to the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), about 50 percent of the violent deaths of aboriginal women and girls result in homicide charges – compared with 76 percent for the general population in 2011.” (Galloway, 2012, para. 10).

It is important to note that racism and colonialism are being reflected upon in news articles, while this was not the case one decade ago. This is a shift in a positive direction. Kennedy (2008), in his article on Shannon and Maisy's disappearances, further highlights that the chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) argued that the lack of attention paid to the disappearances of Indigenous women and girls is a common occurrence, and often the response is “too little, too late” (para. 9). Another article from the *Ottawa Citizen* argued that Indigenous organizations believed that racism is involved in the lack of attention paid towards the disappearances of young Indigenous girls

(Kennedy, 2009b). This shift in coverage is an attempt to create awareness among the readers, that the cases of MMIWG cannot be explained simply as *individual* events, rather that this violence is rooted in larger system of oppressions and colonialism, that persists and undermines the lives of Indigenous women and girls (Bourgeois, 2017, Green 2017a, Eberts, 2017). Even though the coverage of Rosianna and Shannon’s cases present some correlation with existing scholarship regarding the limited and stereotypical images of MMIWG, they also present hope. In contrast to existing research that argues that the role of colonialism and racism are not discussed in mainstream coverage (Gilchrist, 2010; Tucker, 2016; Moral, 2011), my analysis in this study has found that there is a gradual, albeit small, shift towards critiquing the racist and colonial systems of oppression in the mainstream media coverage of MMIWG.

Mainstream Media’s Efforts Towards Decolonization¹²

The National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019) has clearly argued that mainstream media needs to include Indigenous peoples “as a part of the creation of stories and storytelling process,” which could include hiring more Indigenous writers and journalists (Volume 1a, p. 393). More recent media coverage of MMIWG has shown that some effort has been made by mainstream platforms, and they are reporting narratives of family members of MMIWG, as well as highlighting their ongoing activism. Mainstream platforms have also made a shift towards placing greater focus on Indigenous histories and ongoing colonial legacies, which is reflected in their coverage of MMIWG. Some mainstream media platforms are more invested in decolonization than others, based on the list of platforms accessed for this research. These platforms include *CBC News*, *Ottawa Citizen* and *The Globe and Mail*. These platforms seem to have done a relatively better job

¹² Although not a main component of this study, I reviewed the websites of the mainstream media platforms that Rosianna and Shannon’s cases were reported on. While this is by no means an exhaustive review, the findings add to the broader picture of how mainstream media platforms are addressing Indigenous issues.

at covering the cases of MMIWG, evidenced through the cases of Rosianna and Shannon, as they reflected on racism and colonialism as key elements increasing Indigenous women and girls' vulnerability to violence. All three of these media platforms have an online space on their websites devoted to Indigenous issues. *CBC News* has "CBC Indigenous," which is led by a team of Indigenous journalists that report news concerning Indigenous peoples (CBC News, 2013b). In 2016, *CBC News* also launched an online database for keeping track of the cases of MMIWG (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017).

CBC News' database for the cases of MMIWG has a complete profile of Shannon Alexander on their website, where information about Shannon is shared, as provided by her cousin, Charlene McConini. Like Brittney, Charlene argued that there was no obvious reason why Shannon would run away, as she was an ambitious young girl, looking forward towards going to nursing school (CBC News, n.d.). Charlene also argued that the police had wasted precious time in their search of Shannon and Maisy, as they originally dubbed them as "runaways," only to later call them "missing" (CBC News, n.d.). Had the initial concerns displayed by the families been taken seriously, the course of the case may have been different. However, it must be noted that while Shannon's name is in the database, Rosianna's name is not, an inconsistency which highlights the incomplete and uneven reporting and tracking of cases. Moreover, simply because some news outlets are now reporting cases of MMIWG more frequently, and with greater attention being paid to colonial oppression and racism, this does not mean that newsrooms are free of racial discrimination. It was in June of 2020, that Christine Genier, host of *CBC's* Yukon Morning radio show, resigned due to systemic racism and under-representation of Black and Indigenous voices (Hong, 2020; Watson, 2020), which does not reflect well on *CBC News* as a platform. Genier, following her resignation from *CBC News*, explained that the platform's Journalistic Standards

and Practices (JSP) is “written through the colonial lens, [and] perpetuates the systemic racism and blocks our ability to bring the stories and language and culture to the programming” (Hong, 2020, para. 9). It was her inability to speak out as an Indigenous woman that led her to resign from the platform (CBC News, 2020; Hong, 2020; Watson, 2020). This further demonstrates that complete change requires dismantling systemic colonial oppression and racism.

Meanings Behind Photographs

All the images published by media sources who reported on Rosianna and Shannon’s cases were provided by their families. Rosianna Poucachiche’s picture was shared in two articles, published by *CBC News* (see Appendix E). Both articles used the same picture. In the picture, Rosianna is seen smiling while sitting on a bench. According to one article, this picture was taken “in Maniwaki, Que. the summer before her death” (Kupfer, 2017, para. 2). The picture suggests that Rosianna was a happy young girl. This is different from what Gilchrist (2010) reports in her research, that childhood pictures of MMIWG are not shared in media coverage. She further argues, that by providing “less intimate” pictures, readers are denied the “same opportunity to identify with or become emotionally invested in the Aboriginal women’s cases as they unfold” (p. 382). As pictures of children evoke more emotion and empathy towards victims of violence, a shift towards posting childhood pictures indicates a potential change in the type of images that are used in news articles.

Shannon Alexander’s image, alongside her friend Maisy Odjick’s images, were shared in four articles (Aske, 2017; Baker, 2015; Carlucci, 2018; CBC News, 2013a; CBC News, n.d.). Shannon and Maisy’s families have created a website called “Help Find Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander” that has been cited in some articles for accessing further information, including their pictures (Aske, 2017; Canada NewsWire, 2008; Kennedy, 2008). There are five

different pictures of Shannon that have circulated. Three of these pictures were of Shannon in casual clothing, smiling into the camera (see Appendix F). One of the pictures is of her in her cadet uniform (see Appendix F). Four of these pictures were taken not long before she went missing. *CBC News* (n.d.) also shared a picture of Shannon as a toddler (see Appendix F). These images suggest possible strategic selection. As I argued earlier, the pictures of MMIWG that are featured in mainstream media are usually both small and less intimate (Gilchrist, 2010). However, all the images of Shannon were well sized and arguably intimate, especially her childhood picture. The image of Shannon in a cadet uniform represents her as a strong, respectable, and passionate individual that has goals to accomplish. This photo also suggests that Shannon is committed to the Canadian military service. The casual images of Shannon suggest that she was just like other young girls. Finally, her childhood picture displays her innocence. This demonstrates that the family may have carefully chosen images that represented Shannon as a respectable young girl to prevent her from being victim-blamed as much as possible. Moreover, because the family is fighting colonial stereotypes of Indigenous women and girls, it seems that they chose images that are in sharp contrast to those stereotypes. The photographs chosen by Shannon's family are perhaps not only deemed respectable, but necessary for justice as well. Thus, the strategic selection of images could represent an attempt to disrupt the dominant and problematic narratives about Indigenous women and girls.

Conclusion

The media coverage of MMIWG over the past decade has seen some progress that would not have been possible without the ongoing activism of Indigenous families, communities and organizations (such as the AFN). Media coverage about Rosianna was quite limited when she was first murdered in 2000, however, with her family's perseverance and the changes in media

coverage and public attitudes brought by the National Inquiry into MMIWG, her case was re-opened and solved. Moreover, her sister was interviewed and more information about Rosianna was shared with the public. When Shannon went missing, police initially ignored the family's concerns and labelled her as a runaway. However, her family has pushed for greater coverage and there were also appeals made by AFN to continue the search for Shannon and Maisy. Although news articles still stereotype and dehumanize the victims, there are some positive shifts in recent media coverage of MMIWG. These shifts include a critique of the police and the state, which are not only observed in the main news articles but are reflected in the headlines as well. A finding unique to this research is that the Indigeneity of Rosianna and Shannon are reflected in some articles, in contrast to previous coverage that tends to make the Indigeneity of MMIWG invisible. Moreover, there is currently a greater focus placed on families' activism in media coverage. Families continue to hold vigils and organize marches to ensure that the search for Shannon and Maisy is ongoing, which is reflected in media coverage. Furthermore, families continue to work hard towards presenting their missing and murdered loved ones in a positive light, which is evident in the kind of pictures they shared of Rosianna and Shannon, as they play an important role in shaping public perceptions. Thus, families continue to take steps to disrupt the dominant narratives surrounding MMIWG.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I present an interpretation of my main findings from the analysis of the media coverage of both Rosianna and Shannon's cases and the in-depth interview with Brittney. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section discusses the settler colonial state's culpability in the violence against Indigenous women and girls. Colonial oppression, as evident in Brittney's accounts, cannot be ignored when analysing the media coverage of MMIWG. The second section discusses the shifts in media coverage of MMIWG. Families and communities have worked tirelessly to push for this change. It is through their strength and resilience that the media's narrative and representations of MMIWG are shifting.

Colonialism in Canada is not Historic

Violence against Indigenous women and girls has been ongoing for decades, thus, simply stating that the cases of MMIWG in Canada is a crisis fails to capture the real magnitude of the problem. The cases of MMIWG are, rather, a strategic outcome of colonial violence, and families have been working hard to raise public awareness about it. Whether these cases have been received by the government and the legal system as such is a different debate.

The findings of this thesis demonstrate that sexual and racist oppression of Indigenous women and girls is engrained both in Indigenous communities and settler society outside of these communities. This oppression is rooted in settler stereotypes of Indigenous womanhood that normalise the violence inflicted upon Indigenous women and girls and sexist policies that continue to undermine their agency (Anderson, 2000; Bourgeois, 2017; National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a, 2019). Scholars exploring inter-generational trauma explain that "children who have experienced trauma might develop coping styles that are particularly ineffective or even counter-productive" which "may result in impaired parenting and

might thus increase the likelihood of early life trauma or stressors being encountered by their offspring” (Bombay, Matheson & Anisman, 2009, p. 17). As cited in the National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019), “colonial violence creates traumatic experiences that are passed on through generations within a family, community, or people” (Volume 1a, p. 112). This does not mean that Indigenous peoples are incapable of healthy parenting, but rather, that dealing with multiple traumas and stressful experiences may result in poor coping strategies and have an adverse effect on the upbringing of future generations (Bombay et al., 2009). Moreover, the colonial policies and violence enforced by the federal government of Canada onto Indigenous peoples continue to have adverse effects on the lives of Indigenous peoples (Palmater, 2020), and these policies continue to dictate multiple aspects of their lives.

The finding within this research that Indigenous women and girls move to urban spaces due to poverty and lack of opportunity is consistent with existing research (Longstaffe, 2017). However, for Indigenous women, moving away from a reserve comes with its own difficulties, as they struggle to fit in, while facing constant oppression. This is because they have to navigate both spaces (i.e. reserves and urban spaces), and neither are free from violence. Systemic racism and sexism follow Indigenous women and girls everywhere, as they are the foundation of colonial Canada (Barker, 2008; Bourgeois, 2015; Green, 2017a; Hargreaves, 2017; Razack, 2002).

Systemic racism and discrimination against Indigenous peoples are prevalent in police handling of MMIWG cases, as suggested by long standing unresolved cold cases, delays in investigation, and labeling of victims as “runaways.” These problems have been widely reported by other scholars as well, who found in their research that the cases of MMIWG are met with a lack of support from both the government and the police (Bourgeois, 2017; Dhillon, 2015; Walter, 2015; Wilson, 2018). The magnitude of the problem may be gauged by the fact that the final report

of the National Inquiry into MMIWG (2019) has called upon the police “to acknowledge that the historical and current relationship between Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA people and the justice system has been largely defined by colonialism, racism, bias, discrimination, and fundamental cultural and societal differences” (Volume 1a, p. 190). Geographical location does not make a difference, as it is evident that cases of MMIWG face similar fates whether the incident/crime occurs on a remote reserve or in an urban settled area. Regardless of location, MMIWG and their families have to deal with police negligence and media indifference (Walter, 2015). It is therefore not a surprising finding that Indigenous communities have a lack of trust towards the police. Previous studies have reported that police do not take the pleas of families regarding the cases of their MMIWG seriously (Johnston & Pauls, 2019), thus many cases remain unsolved.

It can be speculated that it was mainly through Rosianna’s family’s perseverance and the higher profile given to MMIWG through the National Inquiry that may have led to a sudden re-opening of Rosianna’s case and the eventual arrest of her murderer. Families keep looking for closure when cases remain unsolved for years, and an arrest may bring them this closure (Razack, 2016b; Wilson, 2018). However, based on the findings, it can also be argued that even when these cases are resolved, family members may not feel as though justice has been served.

Family and Community’s Fight for Greater Media Coverage

Over the past decade, media coverage concerning MMIWG has made some improvement, however, this coverage is far from ideal, as there remain some inconsistencies in how the cases are presented. Although the cases related to deaths of Indigenous women and girls are presented in the media, in numerous cases, victim blaming discourse is rampant (Eberts, 2017; Longstaffe, 2017).

I argue that cases of MMIWG that are perceived to involve sex, drugs and prostitution attract much more media attention in comparison to those that do not. This is primarily because when these factors are involved, the blame can be shifted towards the victims, thus, reinforcing existing narratives of victim-blaming. Culhane (2003) argues that “media spectacles of sex, drugs, crime, violence, murder, and disease have brought Downtown Eastside Vancouver into living rooms around the world” (p. 595). When media articles focus on how MMIWG were raised in an environment of drug addiction and alcoholism, or as a single-parent child, they ignore the context that led to these circumstances. While it may be true that these factors may have impacted some of the women’s life, it is also important to understand that, for Indigenous women and girls, highlighting such factors without contextual details can, and has, dominantly led to a discourse of victim-blaming, where perceived “risky” lifestyle choices are seen as the reason behind the violence inflicted upon them (Culhane, 2003; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Longstaffe, 2017; Eberts, 2017).

Researchers contend that the MMIWG are subjected to racism and further marginalisation, even after death (Jiwani, 2006). Researchers further argue that when media reports use racist expressions and stereotypical depictions of MMIWG as sex workers, drug users, homeless, school dropouts and runaways, the readers may form a low opinion of them (Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006). Media has the power to shape public opinion and views. When news reports frame the MMIWG and their families in a negative light, such as engaging in high-risk behaviours, they often leave out the positive aspects of their personality and lives. Thus, on the one hand, the readers might not feel any sympathy for the victim, while on the other, they may form a disrespectful opinion of Indigenous women and girls.

The beginning of the 21st century, when Rosianna was murdered, was around the same time when the infamous serial killer, Robert Pickton came into the media's purview. Throughout his trial, it is evident the media's focus was predominantly on Pickton, and not the women that he had assaulted and killed (Craig, 2014; Jiwani & Young, 2006). We observe a similar pattern in Rosianna's case, where the murderer received most attention in media coverage, despite remaining unnamed. This not only makes the victim invisible, but also undermines and diminishes the violence inflicted upon them (Gilchrist, 2010). This further makes families fearful and wary of the media and the police, as their loved one may be neglected and/or portrayed in a negative light.

Based on the findings of this research, it becomes evident that, as a result of family and community activism, media platforms have not only covered the cases of MMIWG on a larger scale, but they have also offered a space for discussing colonial oppression that is pervasive in Canada. There is now a more nuanced coverage of MMIWG, whereby the role of colonialism and colonial stereotypes pertaining Indigenous femininity are discussed. Most mainstream media I examined in this study now contextualizes the deaths and disappearances of these women and girls as a part of a larger system of violence. This is in contrast to existing scholarship that argues that the role of colonialism and racism are not discussed in mainstream coverage (Gilchrist, 2010; Jiwani & Young, 2006; Tucker, 2016; Moral, 2011). This research also noted that there is a gradual shift towards critiquing the racist and colonial systems of oppression in the mainstream media coverage of MMIWG.

More recently, the sources I explored have taken on the difficult task of dismantling existing stereotypes about Indigenous women and girls by offering an explanation of how violence against Indigenous women and girls is rooted in colonial ideologies and policies. These shifts are more prominent in the articles covering Shannon's case. Since these changes are apparent across

various media platforms and are not confined to just one, it may be surmised that this is a true change rather than a one-off finding. In contrast to Jiwani and Young's (2006) finding that previous mainstream coverage tends to erase Indigeneity altogether, this research found that mainstream articles are now mentioning the Indigeneity of MMIWG, noting that their racialization has played a crucial role in increasing their vulnerability to violence. This shift has been possible because families and communities have been actively calling out Canada for its complicity in the violence against Indigenous women and girls. However, there remains an inconsistency in how MMIWG are referred to in mainstream media, as the article headlines either erase their Indigeneity or their names and fail to address both simultaneously. I argue that headlines that are impersonal and do not mention names fail to grasp the reader's attention, thereby not allowing them to be emotionally invested and empathise with the victims. By erasing their race and their names, the media actively "others" them and takes away any personal connection that the reader may have with them (Gilchrist, 2010). A greater change is needed to ensure that the headlines of the articles are considerate of the lives that are lost. Despite these shortcomings, it is evident that media is responding to family and community's activism, as there is growing reference being made to colonialism, racism, and police negligence. This is a positive shift in media reporting that one hopes will continue and expand across all news platforms.

Families and communities have been pushing hard for their stories to be heard to ensure that the lives of their loved ones are presented respectfully. The National Inquiry into MMIWG is the direct result of family and community activism (Bourgeois, 2014). The Harper federal government kept rejecting the launch of a National Inquiry into the cases of MMIWG because the cases were portrayed and seen as isolated occurrences, as if they are not connected to a larger problem of racism and sexism that is widespread in Canada (Bourgeois, 2017; Saramo, 2016). The

National Inquiry into MMIWG valued the families' narratives and made these narratives the heart of the final report. There has now been greater focus on involving family's input in the cases of their missing and murdered loved ones as well, making space for their stories in media. *CBC News* has not only interviewed family members and prioritised their stories, but it has also built an online section for MMIWG, to ensure that it is easily accessible and that the public is aware of the lives that have been lost. Moreover, media coverage has started acknowledging the integral roles of the families in raising awareness about the cases of their loved ones.

The findings in this study reveal that the narratives of families are now finding greater space in mainstream media, in contrast to the coverage from a decade ago, when police narratives were more likely to be prioritized. Research highlights that earlier coverage concerning MMIWG was influenced by police's stereotypical narrative of the victim, as they would refuse to investigate the case and simply blame the victim (Longstaffe, 2017), which influenced how the victim was perceived by the public. This is a frustration that Brittney expressed as well, as she stated that media often reports through the police. This is an important shift brought on by both family activism and the National Inquiry into MMIWG, as family narratives are incorporated in some detail in mainstream coverage and have worked towards not making MMIWG invisible. It must be noted, however, that the final report of the National Inquiry was published in 2019, and the articles analysed in this research pre-date this report, thus it is not possible to address the true impact that the findings of the final report may have had on media coverage of MMIWG in my research sample.

While the media can perpetuate negative ideologies, it can just as strongly work towards offering support and a platform for marginalised people to voice their concerns. There has been a shift in the online presence of media platforms, which has made it easier for readers to access and

share information widely. Through the expansion of online media platforms, Indigenous activists and community members' activism and knowledge has become increasingly visible (Miner, 2020). Moreover, what used to be a space for only specific and quite selective content, online media platforms now offer a space for opinion pieces. Thus, these opinion pieces allow for a greater explanation about issues that impact certain marginalised communities.

Conclusion

Indigenous women and girls are murdered and go missing at a rate higher than any other group in Canada. This ongoing violence perpetuated against Indigenous women and girls is not a new occurrence, rather, it is an issue rooted in systemic racism and ongoing colonial policies. Indigenous communities continue to resist this violence, and families continue to fight for the rights of their missing and murdered loved ones. Media coverage of MMIWG has a history of focusing on negative or risky lifestyles, and there exists a dominant narrative that these women and girls brought this violence upon themselves. Thus, victim-blaming has been a dominant discourse. Families of MMIWG have worked determinedly towards dismantling this dominant and problematic discourse. The past decade has observed some steady shifts and improvement. As a result of the activist role taken up by family members and the awareness raised by the National Inquiry in MMIWG, mainstream media platforms have made a gradual shift towards highlighting the role of colonialism in the violence against Indigenous women and girls and incorporating family narratives in media coverage.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine the families' role and perspectives regarding the media coverage of their missing and murdered loved ones. This research focused on the media coverage of two cases of MMIWG: Rosianna Poucachiche and Shannon Alexander. The data was collected through an in-depth interview conducted with Brittney Poucachiche, a cousin of both the young women, and an online search for media articles covering the two cases. A total of 21 media articles were included, six of these were about Rosianna, while the other fifteen focused on Shannon. A content analysis of the interview and articles was conducted. The main themes emerging from the data analysis included: the impact of colonialism, police role in addressing cases of MMIWG, media's role and coverage of MMIWG, and the experiences and role of the families in pushing for media coverage. Through exploring these themes, this research has worked towards offering an in-depth discussion of the families' role in shifting media narratives concerning MMIWG.

The findings of this research are comparable to existing research concerning MMIWG, as it argues that the settler colonial state of Canada continues to remain complicit in the cases of MMIWG. The past decade, however, has seen some positive shifts in mainstream coverage. Some mainstream platforms have made an effort to showcase the voices of the family members and communities of women who have gone missing or been murdered. However, where media coverage has failed them, families have had to take it upon themselves to raise awareness about their loved ones through social media. The transition to social media activism has been recent and has emerged primarily in the past decade. Social media has given families a platform to share their stories and raise awareness about their MMIWG through reaching a wider audience.

The gendered and racist stereotypes of Indigenous women and girls have worked towards normalising the violence inflicted upon them. These stereotypes have been entrenched in mainstream media coverage of MMIWG. Violence, discrimination and racism against Indigenous women and girls is not limited to their lifetime, rather, it is a continuum, whereby they are violated even after their disappearances and murders, through negligence in the police and media handling of their cases. Thus, dismantling the same discourse that provides the basis of much of the violence inflicted upon Indigenous women and girls cannot be done instantaneously. Moreover, by ignoring the narratives of families of MMIWG, media coverage remains one sided, where no personal attributes of the victim are shared, and they are treated merely as another missing or murdered person. It is evident that not only does media have limited contact with families, but that many families actually fear speaking with media personnel. This fear is associated with years of negative portrayals of Indigenous women and girls, as well as Indigenous communities. It is quite clear that when family narratives are included, the coverage is more respectful and personal. Thus, it is vital to not only include those narratives, but to centralise them.

It is predominantly family and community driven activism that bears the onus of raising awareness about this unique form of violence against Indigenous women and girls. Media coverage has seen important shifts in the past decade, as articles now include the narratives of family members and communities more often. This research has found that there is an evident shift towards not only drawing attention towards the victims' Indigeneity, but also places a focus on family activism. Moreover, media coverage concerning MMIWG now also reflects upon racist and colonial oppression as a culprit of the phenomenon of MMIWG. It is only because families and communities continue to organize marches, hold vigils and reach out to media personnel, that this shift has been possible. Limited media coverage of the violence faced by Indigenous women and

girls has been a long-standing problem in Canada. Thus, it is imperative that media not only include families in the coverage of the cases of MMIWG, but also offer *timely* coverage so that it reaches the masses.

Limitations of the Research

It is important to acknowledge the limitation of this research. There are three main limitations to this research, that may be addressed in future studies. The first limitation concerns the nature of my sample size. Since only one interview was conducted and the coverage of only two cases were analysed, the generalizability of the findings in this study are restricted. The second limitation of this study is the number of articles analysed. The research criteria were limited to news articles published only in the English language, on online mainstream platforms accessible through the Brock Library database and Google search. The number of articles may not be representative of all articles concerning Rosianna and Shannon's cases, as there were articles that were not available to me through the two domains used for this research. The third limitation is posed by the geographical location specified in my research criteria. Since participant recruitment was limited to the Niagara Region, the stories of families living outside of the region could not be explored.

Research Contributions and Implications

The findings of this research contribute to the small yet growing body of scholarship concerning the media coverage of MMIWG. It is evident through this research that when the narratives of family members are involved in the media coverage of their loved ones, the tone of the overall coverage becomes more empathetic. While existing scholarship has found that family resilience is often not acknowledged in media coverage, the findings of this research show that familial and community activism are now being accorded an increasing profile in news articles.

This research emphasizes the crucial role of Indigenous families as they continue to fight for their MMIWG. Based on this finding, I recommend that mainstream media platforms must not only ensure they respectfully interview families regarding the cases of their missing and murdered loved ones, but also centre their perspectives in order to highlight the larger systemic issues that have led to the phenomenon of MMIWG. Moreover, mainstream media must also interrogate “victim-blaming” narratives that shift attention away from colonial oppression and violence, and places blame onto MMIWG, thus further endangering Indigenous women and girls. A more conscious effort needs to be made to move away from negative stereotypes that feed into the normalisation of violence against Indigenous women and girls. In addition, there needs to be a focus on how colonial systems of oppression perpetuate this violence.

Building on this research, I suggest that future research studies include more family narratives from across Canada to present a wider analysis of family accounts concerning media coverage of their missing and murdered loved ones. Future research should also aim to offer an analysis of the media coverage of MMIWG from across Canada, as media plays a strong role in shaping public opinions. An analysis of more cases and a larger set of articles may show whether specific shifts are consistent in the coverage of all cases of MMIWG, across mainstream media platforms.

References

- Acoose, J. (1995). *Neither Indian princesses nor easy squaws*. Women's Press.
- Ahuvia, A. (2001). Traditional, interpretive, and reception-based content analyses: Improving the ability of content analysis to address issues of pragmatic and theoretical concern. *Social Indicators Research*, 54, 139–172. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011087813505>
- Amnesty International. (2004, October). *Stolen sisters: A human rights response to discrimination and violence against Indigenous women in Canada*. Retrieved from http://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/amr200032004enstolen_sisters.pdf
- Anderson, K (2000). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing native womanhood*. Toronto, ON: Sumach Press.
- Anderson, K. (2010). Affirmations of an Indigenous feminist. In C. Suzack, S. M. Huhndorf, J. Perreault & J. Barman (Eds.), *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (pp. 81-91). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Aske, S. (2017, July 20). The search for Shannon Alexander and Maisy Odjick. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/timeline-disappearance-shannon-alexander-maisy-odjick-1.4212703>
- Bailey, J., & Shayan, S. (2016). Missing and murdered Indigenous women crisis: Technological dimensions. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(2), 321-341. doi: 10.3138/cjwl.28.2.321
- Baker, C. (2015, November 14). Lost girls: Emmanuelle Walter brings a national crisis into the public conscience. *The Globe and Mail*, p. R20.

- Ballingall, A. (2019, June 4). 'We accept the finding that this was genocide': Justin Trudeau acknowledges outcome of MMIWG inquiry. *The Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2019/06/04/we-accept-the-finding-that-this-was-genocide.html>
- Barker, J. (2008). Gender, sovereignty, rights: Native women's activism against social inequality and violence in Canada. *American Quarterly*, 60(2), 259-266.
- Barman, J. (2010). Indigenous women and feminism on the cusp of contact. In C. Suzack, S. M. Huhndorf, J. Perreault & J. Barman (Eds.), *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (pp. 92-108). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform and qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open*, 2, 8-12. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001>
- Bingham, B., Moniruzzaman, A., Patterson, M., Sareen, J., Distasio, J., O'Neil, J., & Somers, J. (2019). Gender differences among Indigenous Canadians experiencing homelessness and mental illness. *BMC Psychology*, 7(57), 1-12.
- Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2009). Intergenerational trauma: Convergence of multiple processes among first nations peoples in Canada. *Journal of Aboriginal Health*, 5(3), 6-47.
- Bombay, A., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2014). The intergenerational effects of Indian Residential Schools: Implications for the concept of historical trauma. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 51(3), 320-338.
- Borrows, J. (2013). Aboriginal and treaty rights and violence against women. *Osgoode Hall Law Journal*, 50(3), 699-736.

- Bourgeois, R. (2014). *Warrior women: Indigenous women's anti-violence engagement with the Canadian state*. (Doctoral Dissertation). Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto.
- Bourgeois, R. (2015). Colonial Exploitation: The Canadian state and the trafficking of Indigenous women and girls in Canada. *UCLA Law Review*, 62(6), 1426-1463.
- Bourgeois, R. (2017). Perpetual state of violence: An Indigenous feminist anti-oppression inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 253-273). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Bourgeois, R. (2018), Race, space, and prostitution: The making of settler colonial Canada. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 30(3), 371–397.
- Bruckert, C., & Law, T. (2018). *Women and gendered violence in Canada: An intersectional approach*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of war: When is life grievable?* London, UK; Brooklyn, NY: Verso.
- Bychutsky, R. (2017). *Social denial: An analysis of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada*. (Master's thesis). Ottawa, Canada: University of Ottawa.
- Canada Newswire. (2000, October 10). *Teenage girl's badly beaten body found in home on northern Quebec reserve*. Retrieved from Brock Library database.
- Canada NewsWire. (2008, December 6). *AFN women's council appeals to public and media for help in the search for Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander on national day of remembrance and action on violence against women*. Retrieved from Brock Library Database.

Carlucci, M. (2018, September 6). Police hope for new leads in disappearance of Kitigan Zibi teens. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/disappearance-shannon-alexander--maisy-odjick-10-years-1.4813286>

CBC News. (n.d.). Missing & Murdered: Shannon Mary Dale Alexander. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/mmiw/profiles/shannon-mary-dale-alexander>

CBC News. (2013a, September 6). Families mark 5 years since 2 teens disappeared. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/families-mark-5-years-since-2-teens-disappeared-1.1700163>

CBC News. (2013b, Dec, 03). Meet our team at CBC Aboriginal. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/meet-our-team-at-cbc-aboriginal-1.2449733>

CBC News. (2017a, July 7). *Quebec man charged with murder in 2000 slaying of Indigenous girl*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/rosianna-poucachiche-arrest-murder-cold-case-1.4194908>

CBC News. (2017b, July 19). *A family's 'mixed emotion' as tip prompts new search for Quebec teens*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/maisy-odjick-shannon-alexander-update-1.4211829>

CBC News. (2020). Yukon morning host resigns over lack of Indigenous, Black representation at CBC. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/yukon-morning-christine-genier-1.5613114>

Cherry, P. (2017, July 8). Suspect charged in long-unsolved homicide on Lac-Rapide First Nation. *Montreal Gazette*. Retrieved from <https://montrealgazette.com/news/suspect-charged-in-long-unsolved-homicide-on-lac-rapide-reserve>

- Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 38(41), 785-807.
- Comack, E. (2014). Colonialism past and present: Indigenous human rights and Canadian politics. In J. Green (ed.), *Indivisible: Indigenous human rights* (pp. 60-82). Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.
- Conlin, L., & Davie, W. R. (2015). Missing white woman syndrome: How media framing affects viewers' emotions. *Electronic News*, 9(1), 36-50.
- Craig, E. (2014). Person(s) of interest and missing women: Legal abandonment in the downtown eastside. *McGill Law Journal*, 60, 1-911.
- Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- CTV Montreal. (2017, July 7). Cold case cracked? Police arrest suspect in teen girl's 2000 murder. Retrieved from <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/cold-case-cracked-police-arrest-suspect-in-teen-girl-s-2000-murder-1.3493374>
- Culhane, D. (2003). Their spirits live within us: Aboriginal women in downtown eastside Vancouver emerging into visibility. *American Indian Quarterly*, 27(3), 593-606.
- Dean, A. (2011). Inheriting what lives on from Vancouver's disappeared women. In S. Brown, J. Perreault, J.A. Wallace & H. Zwicker (Eds.), *Not Drowning But Waving: Women, Feminism and the Liberal Arts* (pp. 351-368). Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press.
- Dhillon, J. K. (2015). Indigenous girls and the violence of settler colonial policing. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 4(2), 1-31.

- Dick, C. (2006). The politics of intragroup difference: First nations' women and the Sawridge dispute. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 39(1), 97-114.
- Doucet, A. (2008). 'On the other side of (her) gossamer wall(s)': Reflexive and relational knowing. *Qualitative Sociology*, 31, 73-87. doi: 10.1177/1468794106093636
- Dyer, E. (June 5, 2019). What does it mean to call Canada's treatment of Indigenous women a 'genocide'? *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/indigenous-missing-murdered-women-genocide-trudeau-1.5162541>
- Eberts, M. (2017). Being an Indigenous woman is a 'high-risk lifestyle.' In J. Green (Ed.), *Space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 69-102). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Elliott, C. (2016). *You will be punished: Media depictions of missing and murdered Indigenous women*. (Master's thesis). Waterloo, Canada: Wilfred Laurier University.
- Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skins white masks*. New York, NY: Grove Press, Inc.
- Farley, A. P. (1997). The black body as fetish object. *Oregon Law Review*, 76, 457-535.
- Farley, M., Lynne, J., & Cotton, A. J. (2005). Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence and the colonization of First Nations women. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 42(2), 242-271. doi: 10.1177/1363461505052667
- Feldman, A. (1994). On cultural anesthesia: From desert storm to Rodney King. *American Ethnologist*, 21(2), 404-418.
- Ferris, S. (2007). 'The lone streetwalker:' Missing women and sex work-related news in mainstream Canadian media. *West Coast Line*, 41(1), 14-24.
- Galloway, G. (Dec. 7, 2012). *AFN demands investigation of missing native women*. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A4.

- Galloway, G., & Stueck, W. (June 4, 2019). Trudeau vows action on MMIWG but declines to endorse inquiry's genocide finding. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/politics/article-trudeau-vows-action-on-mmiwg-stops-short-of-calling-deaths-a-genocide/>
- Gilchrist, K. (2010). "Newsworthy" victims? *Feminist Media Studies*, 10(4), 373-390. doi: 10.1080/14680777.2010.514110
- Gorelick, S. (1991). Contradictions of feminist methodology. *Gender & Society*, 5(4), 459-477.
- Green, J. (2017a). Taking more account of Indigenous feminism: An introduction. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (pp. 1-20). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Green, J. (2017b). ReBalancing strategies: Aboriginal women and constitutional rights in Canada. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* (pp. 166-191). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Green, R. (1975). The Pocahontas perplex: The image of Indian women in American culture. *The Massachusetts Review*, 16(4), 698-714.
- Hall, S. (1997). The spectacle of the 'other.' In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Hargreaves, A. (2017). *Violence against Indigenous women: Literature, activism, resistance*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Harper, A. O. (2006). Is Canada peaceful and safe for Aboriginal women? *Canadian Woman Studies*, 25(1-2), 33-38.

- Hesse-Biber, S. (2014). Feminist approaches to in-depth interviewing. In S.N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.), *Feminist research practice: A primer* (pp. 182-232). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Hong, J. (2020). Yukon morning hosts resigns over suppression of black, indigenous voices at CBC. *Yukon News*. Retrieved from <https://www.yukon-news.com/news/yukon-morning-hosts-resigns-over-suppression-of-black-indigenous-voices-at-cbc/>
- hooks, b. (2000). Racism and feminism: The issue of accountability. In L. Back & J. Solomos (Eds.), *Theories of race and racism: a reader* (pp. 373-388). London, UK; New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hugill, D. (2010). *Missing women, missing news: Covering crisis in Vancouver's downtown eastside*. Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Hunt, S. (2016). Decolonizing sex work: Developing an intersectional Indigenous approach. In E. V. D. Meulen, E. M. Durisin, & V. Love (Eds.), *Selling sex: Experience, advocacy, and research on sex work in Canada* (pp. 82-100). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Hurley, M. (2010, September 6). Families of missing girls cling to hope; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared two years ago today, and police are still stumped, reports Meghan Hurley. *Ottawa Citizen*, p. B1.
- Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. (2014). *Missing and murdered Indigenous women in British Columbia, Canada*. <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/reports/pdfs/indigenous-women-bc-canada-en.pdf>
- Jiwani, Y. (1999). Erasing race: The story of Reena Virk. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 19(3), 178–184.

- Jiwani, Y. (2009). Symbolic and discursive violence in the media representations of aboriginal missing and murdered women. In M. Guggisberg & D. Weir (Eds.), *Understanding violence: Contexts and portrayals* (pp. 63-74). Oxford, UK: Inter-Disciplinary Press.
- Jiwani, Y., & Young, M. L. (2006). Missing and murdered women: Reproducing marginality in news discourse. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 31(4), 895-917.
- Johnston, A., & Pauls, K. (June 03, 2019). No stone left unturned: MMIWG families skeptical police will change. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/mmiwg-inquiry-deliver-final-report-justice-reforms-1.5158223>
- Kennedy, B. (2008, October 5). Parents plead for girls' safe return; Friends went missing from reserve north of Ottawa last month. *Ottawa citizen*, p. A5.
- Kennedy, B. (2009a, March 9). The search for Maisy and Shannon; "I feel like I'm fighting this on my own," mother says. *Ottawa Citizen*, p. B1.
- Kennedy, B. (2009b, September 6). Without a trace; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared from the Kitigan Zibi-Maniwaki area one year ago leaving countless questions but no clues. Controversy and confusion plague an investigation that is also clouded with charges of racism. Day by day, the case grows colder. *Ottawa Citizen*, p. A6.
- Kovach, M. (2009). *Indigenous methodologies*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Kubik, W., Bourassa, C., & Hampton, M. (2009). Stolen sisters, second class citizens, poor health: the legacy of colonization in Canada. *Humanity and Society*, 33(1-2), 18-34.
- Kuokkanen, R. (2008). Globalization as racialized, sexualized violence: The case of Indigenous women. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 10(2), 216-233.

- Kuokkanen, R. (2017). Politics of gendered violence in indigenous communities. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 103-121). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Kupfer, M. (2017, July 8). 'She'll be able to rest in peace': Sister of cold case victim speaks after murder charges laid. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/rosianna-poucachiche-cold-case-murder-lac-rapide-1.4195934>
- Larmer, J. R. (2018). The highway runs east: Poverty, policing, and the missing and murdered Indigenous women of Nova Scotia. *Dalhousie Journal of Legal Studies*, 27, 89-136.
- LaRocque, E. (2017). My hometown: Northern Canada; South Africa. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 63-68). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Liebler, C. M. (2010). Me(di)a culpa?: The 'missing white woman syndrome' and media self-critique. *Communication, Culture & Critique*, 3(4), 549-565.
- Linklater, R. (2011). *Decolonising trauma work: Indigenous practitioners share stories and strategies*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. TSpace Repository. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/31696>
- Longstaffe, M. (2017). Indigenous women as newspaper representations: Violence and action in 1960s Vancouver. *The Canadian Historical Review*, 98(2), 230-260.
- Mathysen, I. (2011). *Ending violence against Aboriginal women and girls: empowerment, a new beginning*. Standing Committee on the Status of Women. <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.555338/publication.html>

- Matloff, J. (2016). A journalist's solo mission to cover native peoples across the globe. *Columbia Journalism Review*. Retrieved from https://www.cjr.org/b-roll/tristan_ahtone.php
- McCue, D. (2014). What it takes for aboriginal people to make the news. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/what-it-takes-for-aboriginal-people-to-make-the-news-1.2514466>
- McIvor, S., Palmater, P., & Day, S. (2017). Equality delayed is equality denied for Indigenous women. *Canadian Women Studies*, 33(1/2), 171-173.
- Miner, J. D. (2020). Informatic tactics: Indigenous activism and digital cartographies of gender-based violence. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1797851>
- Monchalin, L., Marques, O., Reasons, C., & Arora, P. (2019). Homicide and Indigenous peoples in North America: A structural analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 46, 212-218.
- Moral, P.G-D. (2011). Representation as a technology of violence: On the representation of the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women in Canada and women in Ciudad Juarez. *Canadian Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 36(72), pp. 33-63.
- Morton, R. (2016). Hitchhiking and missing and murdered indigenous women: A critical discourse analysis of billboards on the highway of tears. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 41(3), 299-326.
- Moss, J. L. (2019). The forgotten victims of missing white woman syndrome: An examination of legal measures that contribute to the lack of search and recovery of missing Black girls and women. *William & Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice*, 25(3), 737-762.

Mauthner, N. S. & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive accounts and accounts of reflexivity in qualitative data analysis. *Sociology*, 37(3), 413-31.

Native Women's Association of Canada. (2010). *What their stories tell us: Research findings from the sisters in spirit initiative*. <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/2010-What-Their-Stories-Tell-Us-Research-Findings-SIS-Initiative.pdf>

Native Women's Association of Canada. (2014). *Sexual exploitation and trafficking of aboriginal women and girls: Literature review and key informant interviews*. <http://www.mamawi.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/National-Task-Force-Research-Report-Sexual-Exploitation-and-Trafficking-of-Aboriginal-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls. (2017). *Interim report: Our women and girls are sacred*. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ni-mmiwg-interim-report.pdf>

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1a. (2019). *Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, Volume 1a*. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, Volume 1b. (2019). *Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, Volume 1a*. <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>

Ottawa Citizen. (2009, September 11). Missing Maisy and Shannon. p. 10.

- Palmater, P. (2015). *Indigenous nationhood: Empowering grassroots citizens*. Location: Fernwood Publishing.
- Palmater, P. (2016). Shining light on the dark places: Addressing police racism and sexualized violence against Indigenous women and girls in the national inquiry. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(2), 253-284. doi: 10.3138/cjwl.28.2.253
- Palmater, P. (2020). *Warrior life: Indigenous resistance and resurgence*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Pilieci, V. (2018). Quebec police hope to find new leads in search for young women missing 10 years. *Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved from <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/police-hope-to-find-new-leads-to-help-with-10-year-old-case>
- Pope, C. & Smiley, M. (Producers). (2014). Highway of tears [Documentary]. Canada: Finesse Films.
- Razack, S. H. (2002). Gendered racial violence and spatialized justice: The murder of Pamela George. In S. H. Razack (Ed.), *Race, space, and the law: Unmapping a white settler society* (pp. 122-156). Toronto, ON: Between the Lines.
- Razack, S. H. (2016a). Gendering disposability. *Canadian Journal of Women & the Law*, 28, 285-307. doi: 10.3138/cjwl.28.2.285
- Razack, S. (2016b). Sexualized violence and colonialism: Reflections on the inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 28(2), i-iv. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.28.2.i>
- Reid, J. (2015). Indian residential schools: A government assault on religious freedom. *Studies in Religion*, 44(1), 441-456.

- Royal Canadian Mounted Police. (2014). *Missing and murdered Aboriginal women: A national Operational Overview*. Ottawa, ON: Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- Saramo, S. (2016). Unsettling spaces: Grassroots responses to Canada's missing and murdered indigenous women during the Harper government years. *Comparative American Studies*, 14(3-4), 204-220.
- Savarese, J. (2017). Challenging colonial norms and attending to presencing in stories of missing and murdered Indigenous women. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, 29(1), 157-181.
- Seguin, R. (2010, September 6). Vigil to mark two years since native girls went missing. *The Globe and Mail*.
- Sethi, A. (2010). Domestic sex trafficking of aboriginal girls in Canada: Issues and implications. *Aboriginal Policy Research Volume IX Setting the Agenda for Change*, 9(9), 205- 225.
- Sibley, R. & Dimmock, G. (2014, May 20). 'Is she alive? Is she dead?': Nearly six years after his daughter, Shannon, vanished from a Maniwaki reserve, Bryan Alexander is frustrated by all the mixed messages on her whereabouts. *Ottawa Citizen*, p. A7.
- Sikka, A. (2010). Trafficking of Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. *Aboriginal Policy Research Volume VIII Setting the Agenda for Change*, 8(8), 201-231.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous people*. London, UK; New York, NY: Zed Books.
- Somers, J.M., Moniruzzaman, A., & Rezansoff, S.N. (2015). Migration to the downtown eastside neighbourhood of Vancouver and changes in service use in a cohort of mentally ill homeless adults: A 10-year retrospective study. *BMJ Open*, 6(1), 1-9. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-009043

- Sommers, Z. (2016). Missing white woman syndrome: An empirical analysis of race and gender disparities in online news coverage of missing persons. *The Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 106(2), 275-314.
- Spears, T. (2017, July 7). Man charged with first-degree murder 17 years after death of Algonquin girl. Retrieved from <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/man-charged-with-first-degree-murder-17-years-after-death-of-algonquin-girl>
- St. Denis, V. (2017). Feminism is for everybody: Aboriginal women, feminism and diversity. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 42-62). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Starblanket, G. (2017). Being Indigenous feminists: Resurgences against contemporary patriarchy. In J. Green (Ed.), *Making space for Indigenous feminism* (pp. 21-41). Halifax, NS; Winnipeg, MB: Fernwood Publishing.
- Stillman, S. (2007). 'The missing white girl syndrome': Disappeared women and media activism. *Gender & Development*, 15(1), 491-502.
- Tucker, A. (2016). *Media and the perpetuation of western bias: Deviations of ideality*. Institute for Community Prosperity.
https://www.mtroyal.ca/nonprofit/InstituteForCommunityProsperity/_pdfs/icp_angie_studentreport.pdf
- Vaismoradi, M., Jones, J., Turunen, H., & Snelgrove, S. (2016). Theme development in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. *Journal of Nursing Education and Practice*, 6(5), 100-110.
- Walia, H. (2013). *Undoing border imperialism*. Edinburgh, UK: AK Press; Washington, DC: Institute for Anarchist Studies.

- Walter, E. (2015). *Stolen sisters: The story of two missing girls, their families and how Canada has failed Indigenous women*. Toronto, ON.: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.
- Watson, B. (2020). Journalists of colour react to CBC host resigning over lack of Indigenous, Black representation. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/reaction-christine-genier-resignation-1.5616241>
- Watson, K. (2018). Missing and murdered Indigenous Women: The role of grassroots organizations and social media in education. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 33(1/2), 204–210.
- Wester, F. P. J., Pleijter, A. R. J., & Renckstorf, L. (2004). Exploring newspapers' portrayals: A logic for interpretive content analysis. *Communications*, 29(4), 495-513. <https://doi.org/10.1515/comm.2004.29.4.495>
- Wilson, K. J. (2018). Confronting Canada's Indigenous female disposability. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 38(1).
- Wolfe, P. (2006). Settler colonialism and elimination of the native. *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4), 387-409

Appendix A

Letter of Invitation

[22/01/2020]

Title of Study: The Impact of Media Coverage on the Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Student

Principal Investigator: Sana Shah, Master of Arts Student, Department of Social Justice and Equity Studies, Brock University

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Robyn Bourgeois, Assistant Professor, Department of Women's and Gender Studies, Brock University

My name is Sana Shah and I am currently a Master of Arts student at Brock University in the Department of Social Justice and Equity Studies. My research project is entitled *The Impact of Media Coverage on the Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. I would like to invite you to discuss your experiences with the media and its coverage of your missing and murdered loved one with me.

The purpose of this research project is to honour the stories of the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls (MMIWG), and 2SLGBTQQIA (Two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender, queer, questioning, inter-sex, and asexual) people. Specifically focusing on the media representations of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA people, and how they impact the families. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to discuss your experiences about how media accounts of your loved ones made you feel.

The expected duration of your participation will be around an hour to an hour and a half. You will have the option of reviewing written copy of the conversation afterwards to ensure that you are comfortable with the content that will be used for the final thesis paper, moreover, you will have the opportunity to withdraw any data.

You will also be provided with the final copy of the research to review. This research will provide you with the opportunity to share your stories on your own terms.

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact **Sana Shah and Dr. Robyn Bourgeois** using the contact information provided below. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [19-070 - BOURGEOIS]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you,

**Sana Shah– Principal Student Investigator
Master of Arts Student
ss13xi@brocku.ca**

**Dr. Robyn Bourgeois– Supervisor
Faculty Assistant Professor
rbourgeois@brocku.ca**

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Date: 22/01/2020

Project Title: The Impact of Media Coverage on the Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Faculty Supervisor:

Dr. Robyn Bourgeois, Assistant Professor
Department of Women's and Gender Studies
Brock University
905) 688-5550 Ext. 6650

Student Principal Investigator (SPI):

Sana Shah
MA Social Justice and Equity
Brock University

INVITATION

You are invited to participate in a research that involves the exploration of the media coverage of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls (MMIWG), and 2SLGBTQQIA (Two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans-gender, queer, questioning, inter-sex, and asexual) people. The purpose of this research is to explore how the families might be impacted by the media coverage of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA people, as both media and the government fail to acknowledge the voices of those most impacted. There is existing research concerning the rising cases of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA in Canada, however, no research focuses on the impact media coverage has on the families.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

As a participant, you will be asked to discuss your stories about how the media coverage of the cases of your loved ones made you feel. Your participation will approximately consist of an hour to an hour and half long conversation. You will have the option of reviewing a written copy of the conversation, to ensure that you are comfortable with the information you shared. This will also give you an opportunity to withdraw any information, if you choose to.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS

Possible benefits of participation include sharing accounts of your experiences and perspectives on your own terms. I am aware that the stories of individuals most impacted by the cases of MMIWG and 2SLBTQQIA are often not included in media accounts. There also may be risks associated with participation.

I understand that these accounts will not be easy to remember and talk about as it may resurface trauma. Given potential emotional risks, you will be provided with a list of services that you will be able to seek. If you would like to have a support system by your side during the interview (such as a family member or friend), I will welcome that arrangement. The interview will also be conducted in person, to ensure some in person support. Alongside potential emotional risks, this research may pose some social risks. There may be some descriptors that may make you identifiable, as there is a small group of families of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA people in the Niagara Region. Moreover, your

identity will not remain private if you choose to participate publicly, through waiving your anonymity.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Data collected through interviews cannot be considered anonymous; however, your data will be used anonymously in this study unless you choose to waive your right to anonymity and be identified in this study. If you wish to remain anonymous, you and the researcher can choose a pseudonym to be used during the interview and all reporting on this research. Any identifying characteristics that might indicate your identity will also be excluded from reporting on this research. If you decide to waive your right to anonymity and participate in this research, your name will be used in all reporting.

You are also indirectly giving consent on behalf of your missing and/or murdered loved one for this study, thus, it's your decision if you wish to share their name or opt to use a pseudonym.

Confidentiality for Interviews conducted in public locations (e.g.: coffee shop) cannot be guaranteed as it is possible for someone to overhear what you are saying. For this reason, if confidentiality is important to you, you may choose to complete this interview at your home or in a secure location at Brock University.

Otherwise your data will be treated as confidential. The interviews will be recorded on a tape recorder and will be transferred to a password protected laptop. Any printed copies of the interviews and any written notes will be stored safely in a locked filing cabinet at my home that only I will have access to. Access to this data will be restricted to myself, the principal student investigator of this research, and Dr. Bourgeois, the supervisor of this research. The consent forms will also be kept in a lockable file. I will keep the data for five years after the submission of the thesis, upon which the printed copies will be shredded, and the interview recordings and transcripts stored in the laptop will be deleted.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time. You will also have an opportunity to review the interview transcripts in case you wish to withdraw any information afterwards.

PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

The contents of the interviews and the finding will be the focus of my Master's thesis project. The results of this study may also be published in professional journals and presented at conferences. If you wish to receive updates regarding the research, I can send over research currently being done regarding media coverage concerning cases of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQA people. You will also be sent a copy of the transcripts, if you wish to review them. If not, a summary of the findings will be sent to you. You will be sent a copy of the final draft of the thesis project, to ensure that you are comfortable with how your stories and experiences are presented. If you choose not to comment on the data shared with you. i.e. transcripts, summary of findings, and the final draft of the thesis, it will be assumed that you are satisfied with the data as it is.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact **Sana Shah and Dr. Robyn Bourgeois** using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University [19-070 - BOURGEOIS]. If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at (905) 688-5550 Ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca.

Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Information-Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future.

- I wish to receive a written copy of the interview
- I wish to waive my anonymity and publicly partake in this research
- I wish to receive updates regarding current research concerning the cases of MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA peoples
- I wish to receive and review the final draft of the thesis project

I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide

List of things to bring to the interview:

- Two copies of consent form
- A printed copy of the interview guide
- A notepad and pen for notetaking
- A digital audio recorder
- Two copies of the handout with a list of services that participants can seek

Prior to starting the interview, complete the following steps:

1. Thoroughly go over the consent form with the participant. Ensure that they understand what waiving their anonymity entails. Secure informed consent, including permission for having the interview recorded. Make sure both copies of the form are signed, you keep one and the participant keeps one.
2. If the participant has not chosen to waive their anonymity, use pseudonyms (this applies for both, the participant and their missing/murdered loved one). These pseudonyms must be used throughout the interview and any notes accompanying the interview.
3. Give the participant a handout of the list of services that they can seek in the Niagara Region concerning any mental/psychological distress that they might experience following the interview.
4. If the participant has given consent for the interview to be recorded, turn the digital audio recorder on.

PART A – PERSONAL/CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS

1. Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. What nation do you belong to?
3. What is your relation to the missing/murdered person?
4. Did you read or hear anything about your missing/murdered loved in the media? Was there any coverage at all?
5. Were you contacted by any media personnel (i.e. journalist, news reporter etc.) regarding the case of your loved one?
6. Can you please share your experience with any media personnel?
7. Can you please identify the which media platforms covered the cases of your loved one?

PART B – MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

Can you please express and share your feelings about the media coverage of your missing/murdered loved one?

- What were the media representations of your missing and or murdered loved one like?
- If there was coverage, were the names of the individuals mentioned?
- How frequently was your loved one's case covered by media?
- Did you think the coverage was respectful?

PART C – CONCLUSION

Thank you for your participation and sharing your experience with me. I would like to ask, what would or could have been helpful?

Before we conclude this interview, is there anything else that you would like to add or share?

Again, I would like to thank you for your time and patience!

Appendix D

Support Information for Participants

The Impact of Media Coverage on the Families of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

SUPPORT INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Because this research asks you to recollect and share traumatic and emotional experiences, it is possible that you might experience emotional/psychological distress.

If you experience distress as a result of participating in this study, please consider accessing one of the following support services:

Organization	Contact Information	Services
Talk4Healing https://www.talk4healing.com/	1-855-554-4325	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text, talk and chat • Available 24/7 • Provide service in 14 Indigenous languages • For Indigenous women only • Offer crisis counselling and support
Inuit & First Nations Hope for Wellness Line https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/	1-855-242-3310	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone and online • Available 24/7 • Service available in Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut • For all Indigenous peoples • Offer immediate mental health counselling and support to Indigenous peoples across Canada
Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre https://www.fenfc.org/	1-905-871-8931	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all Indigenous people • Online and phone • Mental health services (intake form available online)
FOR IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE, PLEASE CALL 911 or VISIT YOUR NEAREST HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM		

Appendix E

Pictures of Rosianna Poucachiche



(CBC News, 2017a)

Appendix F

Pictures of Shannon Alexander



(CBC News, 2013a)



(Aske, 2017)



(CBC News, n.d.)



(CBC News, 2013a)



(CBC News, n. d.)

Appendix G

Article Analysis Charts – Rosianna Poucachiche

Article headlines:

Headlines	Year	Source	Clearly States Indigeneity	Clearly States Name
Teenage girl's badly beaten body found in home on Northern Quebec reserve	2000	Canada NewsWire	No	No
Suspect charged in long-unsolved homicide on Lac-Rapide First Nations	2017	Montreal Gazette	No	No
Cold case cracked? Police arrest suspect in teen girl's 2000 murder	2017	CTV Montreal	No	No
'She'll be able to rest in peace': Sister of cold case victim speaks after murder charges laid	2017	CBC News	No	No
Man charged with first-degree murder 17 years after death of Algonquin girl	2017	Ottawa citizen	Yes	No
Quebec man charged with murder in 2000 slaying of Indigenous girl	2017	CBC News	Yes	No

Appendix G Cont'd

Article Body:

Headlines	Year	Source	Personal Information about victim - Beyond name only	Included narratives of Family members	Mentioned colonial oppression or racism	Included picture(s) of the victim
Teenage girl's badly beaten body found in home on Northern Quebec reserve	2000	Canada NewsWire	No	No	No	No
Suspect charged in long-unsolved homicide on Lac-Rapide First Nations	2017	Montreal Gazette	No	No	No	No
Cold case cracked? Police arrest suspect in teen girl's 2000 murder	2017	CTV Montreal	No	Mentioned that family was critical of how the case was handled by the police.	No	No
'She'll be able to rest in peace': Sister of cold case victim speaks after murder charges laid	2017	CBC News	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Man charged with first-degree murder 17 years after death of Algonquin girl	2017	Ottawa citizen	No	Only mentions that family members had stated that police had given up on investigating the case.	No	No
Quebec man charged with murder in 2000 slaying of Indigenous girl	2017	CBC News	No	Only mentions that family was essential in searching for the suspect.	No	Yes

Appendix H

Article Analysis Charts – Shannon Alexander

Article Headlines:

Headline	Year	Source	Clearly States Indigeneity	Clearly States Name
Parents plead for girls' safe return; Friends went missing from reserve north of Ottawa last month	2008	Ottawa Citizen	No	No
AFN Women's Council appeals to public and media for help in the search for Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander on National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women	2008	Canada NewsWire	No	Yes
The search for Maisy and Shannon; 'I feel like I'm fighting this on my own,' mother says	2009	Ottawa Citizen	No	Yes
Without a trace; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared from Kitigan Zibi-Maniwaki area one year ago leaving countless questions but no clues. Controversy and confusion plague an investigation that is also clouded with charges of racism. Day by day, the case grows colder.	2009	Ottawa Citizen	No	Yes
Missing Maisy and Shannon	2009	Ottawa Citizen	No	Yes
Vigil to mark two years since native girls went missing	2010	The Globe and Mail	Yes	No
Families of missing girls cling to hope; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared two years ago today, and police are still stumped, report Meghan Hurley.	2010	Ottawa Citizen	No	Yes
AFN demand investigation of missing native women	2012	The Globe and Mail	No	Yes
Families mark 5 years since 2 teens disappeared	2013	CBC News	No	No
'Is she alive? Is she dead?'; Nearly six years after his daughter, Shannon, vanished from a Maniwaki reserve, Bryan Alexander is frustrated by all the mixed messages on her whereabouts	2014	Ottawa Citizen	No	Yes
Lost girls: Emmanuelle Walter brings a national crisis into the public conscience	2015	The Globe and Mail	No	No
The search for Shannon Alexander and Maisy Odjick	2017	CBC News	No	Yes
A family's 'mixed emotions' as tip prompts new search for Quebec teens	2017	CBC News	No	No
Police hope for new leads in disappearance of Kitigan Zibi teens	2018	CBC News	No	No
Quebec police hope to find new leads in search for young women missing 10 years	2018	Ottawa Citizen	No	No

Appendix H – Cont’d

Article Body:

Headline	Year	Source	Personal Information about victim - Beyond name only	Included narratives of Family members	Mentioned colonial oppression or racism	Included picture(s) of the victim
Parents plead for girls' safe return; Friends went missing from reserve north of Ottawa last month	2008	Ottawa Citizen	Gives descriptive information	Yes	No	No
AFN Women's Council appeals to public and media for help in the search for Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander on National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women	2008	Canada NewsWire	Gives descriptive information.	No	No	States that the pictures can be found on the Facebook site "Help Find Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander"
The search for Maisy and Shannon; 'I feel like I'm fighting this on my own,' mother says	2009	Ottawa Citizen	No	Yes	No	Yes
Without a trace; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared from Kitigan Zibi-Maniwaki area one year ago leaving countless questions but no clues. Controversy and confusion plague an investigation that is also clouded with charges of racism. Day by day, the case grows colder.	2009	Ottawa Citizen	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Missing Maisy and Shannon	2009	Ottawa Citizen	Yes	No	Yes	No
Vigil to mark two years since native girls went missing	2010	The Globe and Mail	No	Yes	Yes	No
Families of missing girls cling to hope; Maisy Odjick and Shannon Alexander disappeared two years ago today, and police are still stumped, report Meghan Hurley.	2010	Ottawa Citizen	No	Yes	Yes	No
AFN demand investigation of missing native women	2012	The Globe and Mail	No	No	Yes	No
Families mark 5 years since 2 teens disappeared	2013	CBC News	No	Yes	No	Yes
'Is she alive? Is she dead?'; Nearly six years after his daughter, Shannon, vanished from a Maniwaki reserve, Bryan Alexander is frustrated by all the mixed messages on her whereabouts	2014	Ottawa Citizen	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Lost girls: Emmanuelle Walter brings a national crisis into the public conscience	2015	The Globe and Mail	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
The search for Shannon Alexander and Maisy Odjick	2017	CBC News	No	Yes	No	Yes
A family's 'mixed emotions' as tip prompts new search for Quebec teens	2017	CBC News	No	Yes	No	Yes
Police hope for new leads in disappearance of Kitigan Zibi teens	2018	CBC News	Yes	No	No	Yes
Quebec police hope to find new leads in search for young women missing 10 years	2018	Ottawa Citizen	No	No	No	Yes