

# Missing And Murdered Indigenous Women And Colonial Violence: A Teach-In

## Outline

1. Introduction about gender-based violence.
2. Statistics of violence against Indigenous women
3. History of sexualized and gender-based violence being used a tool of colonization [and war].
4. Missing and Murdered – Breakdown scope of the problem
  - a. Initial disappearance
  - b. Disappearance from the media; no mass mechanisms of awareness about being missing. Or looking at the way media shapes negative narratives about Native women/people. Reinforcing ideas about deserving violence, not to care or take seriously.
  - c. Refusal for law enforcement to take it seriously [mention stereotypes that reinforce this], resulting in lack of formal reports, investigation, and search.
  - d. Describe jurisdictional issues, who would has authority to investigate/search especially with murder. Why is this intentionally not happening [mention history of laws].
  - e. Erasure of indigeneity in death
5. Prison system and more carcerality isn't working – Discuss the need to confront intergenerational trauma and violence with community alternatives.
6. The map and database – Show it, how to navigate it, and how to submit reports.

## Information

### 1. Gender-based violence

- Her/she language for any women/female identified persons [this includes trans and two-spirit women]. Gender-based, relationship, and interpersonal violence: Comprises emotional, mental, financial, sexual, and physical assault. Stalking, coercive control, and other behaviors that can lead to murder.
- Myths about IPV, victim-blaming, and abuse culture contribute to enabling and condoning violence.
- Much of this violence is normalized and romanticized.
- Dynamics of power and control: Sexual and interpersonal violence is not about sex or passion. It's an exercise of power and the need to control and punish your partner. Sexual and other interpersonal assaults [including stalking] are planned, they do not happen at random.

### 2. Statistics and Rates of Violence Against Indigenous Women

Currently Indigenous women are experiencing incredibly high rates of violence

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/pdfs/MazeOfInjustice.pdf>

- Native women overall are more likely to be killed by intimate partners. Murder rate is 10 times the national average and leading cause of death.
- Native women are more likely to be sexually assaulted more than other nationalities/races/ethnic groups. The national statistics demonstrate 1 in 3.
- Native women are seven times more likely to be victims of domestic violence than all other women
- “Every national study in the past 15 years that has looked at levels of victimization throughout society has put Native women at the top of the list.” – Sarah Deer

Sarah Deer’s “Criminal Justice in Indian Country - Understanding the Statistics”  
<http://open.wmitchell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1259&context=facsch>

### 3. History of Sexual Violence Used in Conquest

“Sexual assault rates and violence against Native American women did not just drop from the sky. They are a process of history.” – Jaqueline Agtuca

- Indigenous lands inherently invadable makes Indigenous bodies inherently rapeable.
- Sexual and reproductive violence used in massacres and land-clearing by settlers and U.S. army.
- Heteropatriarchy as a building block of democracy and U.S. empire
- Boarding Schools

### 4. Missing and Murdered – A Continent-Wide Problem

From Canada to the U.S. (and down to Mexico), missing and murdered Indigenous women continues to proliferate. This is to say the mass disappearances and deaths, the lack of tracking, searching, investigating, keeping of reports, and accurate of acknowledgements of identity presents a big picture of systematic violence [or femicide].

#### Triple Disappearance Phenomenon

When Native women go missing there is often very little that is taken seriously. Many times police will refuse to take a report because the woman is “just out partying, drunk, and will be back”. So there is no urgency to investigate or search for the missing person.

Laura Madison has given an explanatory analysis on some other finer details and problems. She details that there is not a uniform or standard policy in policing to address the reports [tracking and searching]. She also breaks down the media problems and that there is very little to zero news coverage of these deaths and/or disappearances. Also how the news and media shape public perceptions about Indigenous women not being deserving of care or community efforts to search for or find.

Madison also states, “Indigenous women go missing twice: Once in real life and a second time in the news.” Missing white women, she explains, are humanized with extensive articles, photos and interviews with grieving families. *If* missing indigenous women get media coverage at all, they are usually presented as runaways, drug addicts or sex workers, or portrayed in other ways

society sees as negative. As with Hanna Harris, many indigenous women are treated by law enforcement and media as undeserving of attention or care because they're supposedly "party girls," whether they were actually engaged in drinking and drugs or not. White women also get anniversary articles and reports, and what is seen as positive attention to create sympathy and make sure they are not forgotten.

We have discovered within our research Indigenous women are even going missing a third time — when their racial or tribal identities are ignored or misrepresented. If there are reports or official documentation (death reports or missing persons sites/lists) they are likely identified as White, Black, Latino, or "other". Tribe/Nation often absent from identity.

[http://www.salon.com/2014/02/14/the\\_missing\\_women\\_you\\_dont\\_hear\\_about\\_how\\_the\\_media\\_fails\\_indigenous\\_communities/](http://www.salon.com/2014/02/14/the_missing_women_you_dont_hear_about_how_the_media_fails_indigenous_communities/)

## 5. Prison system and incarceration

- Native women experience interpersonal and state violence. The criminal-legal system is not helpful in addressing sexual and relationship violence as it is also a perpetrator.
- Laws designed to punish, humiliate, and incarcerate victims. Especially mothers are positioned as abusers if they do not leave violent situations — regardless if they have the resources to or not [this is not to say that some mothers aren't abusive, this is how they become abusive in the eyes of the law with partners who are abusing *them*].
- Transgender and two-spirit people are more likely to be harassed and targeted by the police. <http://thefeministwire.com/2013/11/addressing-the-criminalization-of-disability-from-a-disability-justice-framework-centring-the-experiences-of-disabled-queer-trans-indigenous-and-people-of-colour/>
- Those who have disabilities experience higher rates of police brutality.
- Numerous missing and murdered Indigenous women are sex workers. The criminal punishment system is especially violent to them as they experience abuse by police, in police custody, and in trafficking raids [see: rescues, sweeps, mass arrests].
- Criminalization of women who defend themselves and fight back [see Yvonne Wanrow in "No Selves to Defend" project for example: <http://noselves2defend.tumblr.com/>].
- Mass incarceration through criminalizing drug use — criminalizing trauma. Many women who are abused [and possibly have or develop mental health related issues] resort to self-medication, especially due to lack of services and support] [https://www.socialjusticejournal.org/pdf\\_free/98Ross.pdf](https://www.socialjusticejournal.org/pdf_free/98Ross.pdf)
- Empirical proofs since the early 1990's that Indigenous women are not only differentially policed (i.e. police target Indigenous women more so than other races in areas where Indigenous women are populous) but the courts and judiciary also maintain levels of sentencing disparity. That is that Indigenous women who do break laws (many minor offenses) are given much harsher sentencing when facing judgment in the racist legal system. Within the carceral state and Prison Industrial Complex selective targeting, over-policing, criminalizing and sentencing disparity with Indigenous woman is a huge business.
- Strategizing new approaches to violence by who is most obstructed by the state <http://carceralfeminism.wordpress.com/framework/>

## 6. Map + Database

- Missingsisters.crowdmap.com
- Families using this as a tool to preserve lives of loved ones.
- Easy to submit own reports, especially if ones were never taken.
- Includes current disappearances/deaths as well as covering incidents from decades ago.
- As part the of “Triple Disappearance Phenomenon”, this violence and process of ongoing genocide of Indigenous people is not just the acts of violence or individual disappearances, it’s erasing these women from our consciousness. As we tend to think that mass violence and death is a very visual and vibrant event and that it’s supposed to be visually shocking and captivating, we conclude that’s not the case. These disappearances, deaths, minimal reports, media coverage, and erasure of indigeneity in death is a process of *quietly* carrying out genocide/femicide. It’s not hyper-visual and loud, the noiselessness of this mass violence is on purpose. This map provides a helpful and prominent illustration of the reality and severity of what is actually happening.

## More Resources, Information, Readings, and Handouts to Print and Use

Violence Breakdown: Understanding Abuser Logic, Tactics, and Behavior <http://save-wiyabi-project.tumblr.com/post/85330036466/violence-breakdown-understanding-abuser-logic>

Decolonizing the Anti-Violence Movement: An Overview <http://save-wiyabi-project.tumblr.com/post/84750719041/decolonizing-the-anti-violence-movement-an-overview>

Readings specifically about colonial violence and MMIW from Sexual Assault Awareness Month: <http://save-wiyabi-project.tumblr.com/post/81585507275/decolonizing-saam-colonial-violence-mmiw>

2/14: Global Day for Missing and Murder Indigenous Women and Community Accountability <http://freepdfhosting.com/3262cbec1f.pdf>

Andrea Smith: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Neg-RIbi764>

Save Wiyąbi Mapping Project: missingsisters.crowdmap.com