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Canada's Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and the Imperative for a More Inclusive Perspective

John G. Hansen

University of Saskatchewan, john.hansen@usask.ca

Emeka E. Dim

University of Saskatchewan, emeka.dim@usask.ca

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Abstract

The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) emerged to bring attention to the overrepresentation of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. It has raised awareness about systemic racism and sexism as well as social and economic conditions experienced by Canada's Indigenous population. Yet, research shows that Indigenous males are the most likely to be murdered in Canada (Mulligan, Axford, & Soecki, 2016). Since Indigenous men are going missing and are murdered in disturbing numbers, and they are fathers, brothers, and sons to Indigenous women and girls, it is understandable that many in the Indigenous community wanted to include them in the inquiry. Our analysis explores how the MMIWG and discourses about inclusion and exclusion have been framed in ways that limit interpretations about the root causes of problems experienced by Indigenous people, especially when they exclude an important part of the Indigenous population—Indigenous males. We draw upon Indigenous perceptions of the inquiry and analyses of social norms and stereotypes in order to explore the conflicting positions and experiences associated with missing and murdered Indigenous people in Canada. We conclude by exploring the need for a more comprehensive inquiry. We recognize that a holistic model of inquiry that honours the voices of Indigenous communities is crucial to a proper investigation into missing and murdered Indigenous people in Canada.

Keywords

missing and murdered Indigenous people, justice, social exclusion, National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)

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Canada's Missing and Murdered Indigenous People and the Imperative for a More Inclusive Perspective

This article developed out of a need to critically discuss the problem of Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous people,¹ which is arguably one of the most crucial issues affecting the Indigenous Peoples in Canada. It is crucial in the sense that Indigenous Peoples go missing with alarming frequency in Canada; however, they receive little attention from the mainstream media and the justice system. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) began in the year 2015 after Prime Minister Trudeau supported calls from Indigenous women's organizations to address the problem of the disproportionate numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada (Government of Canada, 2016). The inquiry is supposed to engage Indigenous families and communities in discussions about the racist, sexist, and colonial violence against Indigenous women. Its central goals are to reduce the violence and to promote healing within Indigenous communities.

Despite calls for the inclusion of men in the inquiry, these requests have been rejected. According to officials, if men were to be included, it would only be to understand if their circumstances contribute to the vulnerability of Indigenous women and girls (Galloway, 2017b). In a position statement by the Chief Commissioner of the MMIWG Inquiry, British Columbia Judge Marion Buller:

The inquiry is looking at ways in which the testimonies and stories of men and boys can be “collected in safe, respectful, and efficient ways, insofar as this potential information may be relevant to its overall mandate of examining systemic causes of violence, including sexual violence, against indigenous women and girls.” (cited in Talaga, 2017, p. 2)

This statement by Buller demonstrates that there is a need to include stories and testimonies of men and boys in the inquiry. However, we have not observed evidence of these testimonies in government reports or scholarly literature.

There is definitely not enough knowledge on this issue, and it represents a lack of effort to examine the comprehensive issue of missing and murdered Indigenous people in Canada. This, in a way, is the central argument for this article. We confront statements of presumed sociological and scholarly fact, including prejudices and biases against Indigenous Peoples, and we attempt to demonstrate, with Indigenous voices and research, that an inclusive inquiry is beneficial for Indigenous women, men, families, and communities. Our basic argument is all missing and murdered Indigenous peoples matter. We do not argue for a separate inquiry for men—rather, the inclusion of men in an inclusive inquiry that has the potential to offer new insights into addressing the disturbing rates of missing and murdered Indigenous people. And it could help communities, families, and survivors heal.

The purpose of this article is to encourage the creation of an expanded inquiry, which the Indigenous community has requested (Paterson, 2016). We articulate the need to expand the MMIWG to include Indigenous men. We provide a brief knowledge background of the MMIWG followed by the rationale for expanding the scope of the inquiry. In our view, there should be a follow-up inquiry that is inclusive of Indigenous men, women, girls, and boys. Colonizers have long used strategies to divide Indigenous

¹ The terms Indigenous and Aboriginal are used interchangeably to describe First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples in Canada.

Peoples. Having a focus on Indigenous women could restrict the potential for communities to work together and this development was reflected in the MMIWG, which led to infighting. Therefore, this article recommends an all-inclusive inquiry. The article describes the knowledge shortage that points to the need to develop a more comprehensive inquiry. In reality, Indigenous males in Canada are at the highest risk of being victims of homicide (Miladinovic & Mulligan, 2015) and are therefore worthy of discussion.

The article deals with the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples based on knowledge garnered from published literature sources. Research results show that Indigenous males are the most likely to be murdered in Canada (Mulligan, Axford, & Soecki, 2016). Since Indigenous men are going missing and are murdered in disturbing numbers, and they are fathers, brothers, and sons to Indigenous women and girls, it is understandable that Indigenous communities want to include them in the inquiry. The Indigenous community also wants Indigenous males to be included in the inquiry because there are some similarities with missing and murdered Indigenous women, with the exception of experiencing sexism. Thus, a contradiction exists. There are unique factors to explain the lack of concern for Indigenous males that are related to stereotypes, including that they are criminals, violent offenders, as well as drunkards and gangsters (Adams, 2000; Blaut, 1993; Champagne, 2015; Charlton & Hansen, 2017; Comack, 2012; Hansen, 2015; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP], 1996; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). These negative stereotypes may explain why extending the inquiry to include Indigenous males does not generate much concern. Understood in this way, we provide discussion of the perceived lack of concern for Indigenous males. We maintain that including missing and murdered Indigenous males is necessary as it can foster insight and support pathways to addressing the problem of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Incorporating Indigenous males in the inquiry should include relational approaches to collaborative research methods that engage Indigenous males and females and their communities. We recognize that a holistic model of inquiry that honors the voices of Indigenous communities is crucial to a proper investigation into missing and murdered Indigenous people in Canada. This work is dedicated to missing and murdered Indigenous sisters in Canada.

Context

MMIWG Inquiry

The movement that led to Canada's MMIWG is dedicated to Indigenous women who ensured the search for their missing and murdered loved ones remained alive. At the same time, there is a lack of concern from the Canadian government, and by extension the Commission who have ultimately accepted the exclusion of Indigenous males, for the disproportionate number of Indigenous men who are murdered or go missing in the communities in which they live. The notion is both historical and contemporary. Indigenous males are seen as the "abusers of Indigenous women" (Dickson-Gilmore & LaPrairie, 2005).

The inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls advanced quite sluggishly (Galloway, 2017a). It was the efforts of Indigenous women that enabled more urgency to be given to the inquiry (Kirkup, 2017b). Many of the murders of Indigenous women are still unsolved. Indigenous women often experience sexism, racism, and marginalization in colonial society. Fortunately, Indigenous

justice proponents, such as the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and Jaime Black who launched the REDress Project in the year 2010, have worked to ensure the inquiry has progressed. The REDress Project is a response to the high number of missing and murdered Indigenous woman and girls (Black, 2014). It encourages public discourse as a way to address the violence against Indigenous females in Canada. These struggles are reflective of Indigenous Peoples' oppression in a colonial society. It also demonstrates that the women are the leaders in the Indigenous inquiry, which demonstrates the custom of Indigenous matriarchal society (Champagne, 2015; Hansen & Antsanen, 2017; TRC, 2015).

Indigenous communities perceive that there is a lack of research on missing and murdered Indigenous women because only a few studies exist (NWAC, n.d.a, n.d.b). They reported that Indigenous women are most likely to go missing in urban areas, and "are almost three times more likely to be killed by a stranger than non-Aboriginal women are" (NWAC, n.d.a, p. 5). The NWAC (n.d.a) observed:

Women involved in prostitution are extremely vulnerable and experience high levels of violence. NWAC has gathered information about prostitution in only a small number of cases. Of these cases, about half involve women who were not involved in prostitution, and about half involve women who were or were suspected to be involved in this area. (p. 5)

This passage suggests that involvement in the sex trade is a key risk factor, however, Indigenous women who are not involved in the sex trade are also more likely to be victims of violence in comparison to non-Indigenous women. Branded with racial stereotypes that cast them as promiscuous or sex trade workers, Indigenous women are then overrepresented as victims of violence in a male dominated and sexist society.

However, there has been considerable discussion in the media by Indigenous people who urged the inquiry to include missing and murdered Indigenous males (Oliver, 2017; Paterson, 2016; Sweetgrass, 2014). As Bernadette lahtail, the executive director of Creating Hope Society stated:

I don't want to continue doing this but I have to. There's nobody for our men and boys. It's like the Creator said, you must do it. So even when my boy is found I will continue doing this . . . The saddest part is that so many of our men and boys are missing and it's not talked about, it's not seen. (cited in Sweetgrass, 2014, p. 1)

Furthermore, April Eve Wiberg, whose organization Stolen Sisters Awareness March has been instrumental in bringing awareness to the number of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, stated, "There is definitely not enough awareness on this issue [missing and murdered Indigenous men] and it definitely speaks to the greater issue of our missing and murdered Aboriginal people" (cited in Sweetgrass, 2014, p. 1). By including their male comrades, an inquiry would more likely be able to develop the knowledge necessary to properly address the problem of missing and murder Indigenous Peoples. In other words, it is a voice from the margins calling for a holistic inquiry that is inclusive of Indigenous males. The discussion around this phenomenon speaks to the need to develop a more holistic inquiry into the subject of the missing and murdered Indigenous people.

Contemporary efforts to address the issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls are grounded in grassroots movements such as Walking with Our Sisters, led by Indigenous women. Such Indigenous-based movements assert the view that we must critically assess social problems in society

and prevent future violence against Indigenous women. These Indigenous initiatives are about community building and healing and have a rich cultural significance that reveals a substantial aspect of what Indigenous communities find so crucial about Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women. Indigenous Peoples are the fastest growing population in the Prairie Provinces (Kirkup, 2017a; Paperny, 2017; Turner, Crompton, & Langlois, 2013), and it is important to invest in assisting Indigenous Peoples to build a better future and build a more viable Canadian society.

The Criminal Justice System

The tense relationship between Indigenous people and the police goes back to the historical colonization Canada. It was the North West Mounted Police (now referred to as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police [RCMP]) that carried out the policy to force Indigenous children to attend residential schools, arresting their parents if they refused and also arresting Indigenous people when they left the reserve without a pass (Adams, 1975; Comack, 2012; Hansen & Antsanen, 2015; TRC, 2015). It is well documented that Indigenous people suffer from ongoing colonialism and systemic discrimination. As a result, violence against Indigenous people continues to increase and, although it is hoped that police will keep Indigenous people safe, the police have not produced a dramatic impact in terms of reducing the overrepresentation of Indigenous people among missing and murdered persons in Canada. According to CFNMP (2004), “young Aboriginal men and women have been beaten, disappeared and died while in police contact or shortly after police contact” (p. 5-2). These kinds of disappearances and deaths in and around contact with police suggests an intentional crime.

These trends continue today. Data from Munch (2012) revealed that Indigenous youths are overrepresented in custody:

In 2010/2011, a disproportionate number of youth entering the correctional system were Aboriginal . . . The disproportionate number of Aboriginal youth admitted to the correctional system was particularly true among females. In 2010/2011, Aboriginal female youth comprised 34% of all female youth in the correctional system, while Aboriginal male youth made up 24% of all male youth in the correctional system. (p. 7)

Beyond overincarceration, Indigenous Peoples are also overrepresented as victims of crime, including non-spousal violent victimization. Perreault (2011) noted:

Aboriginal people are more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be the victim of non-spousal violence. In 2009, 12% of Aboriginal people reported being the victim of at least one non-spousal violent crime, more than double the proportion of non-Aboriginal people (5%). In total, Aboriginal people self-reported 173,600 non-spousal violent incidents representing a rate of 198 violent incidents for every 1,000 Aboriginal people. (p. 7)

The number of cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women continues to grow in Canada even as the criminal justice system develops strategies to work with Indigenous communities to achieve a safer society. However, the criminal justice system has a long way to go as the high rates of violence against Indigenous people in Canada continues to increase and expand (Hansen, 2015; TRC, 2015). Many Indigenous communities believe that the police are part of the problem (Commission on First Nations and Métis People [CFNMP], 2004; Green, 1998; Hansen, 2013; Hansen, & Hetzel, 2018; Linden,

2016; Ross, 1996). Research concerning Indigenous–police relations reveals that Indigenous Peoples are singled out by police and treated like criminals. Indigenous Peoples have been victims of police violence (CFNMP, 2004; Comack, 2012; TRC, 2015). For example, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, two police officers were found guilty of driving an Indigenous man out of town and leaving him in freezing cold temperatures without proper clothing, which has been termed the Starlight Tours (Radford, 2015; Siegel & McCormick, 2012).

In terms of the relationship between the police and the Indigenous community, the police often view Indigenous males as criminal types—violent gangsters and drug dealers—while Indigenous women are stereotyped as prostitutes (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, 1999; Charlton & Hansen, 2016; Comack, 2012; Hansen & Antsanen, 2015; TRC, 2015). It is apparent that police have used these criminal and racial stereotypes as an excuse to treat Indigenous Peoples badly (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, 1999; Comack, 2012; TRC, 2015). The stereotyping of Indigenous Peoples has invariably led Indigenous homicide victims to receive less attention in the media and the justice system than mainstream Canadians who are victims of homicide. Sociological research suggests that Indigenous women who are victims of crime are seen as less-worthy victims. For example, is there any other reason why non-Indigenous women who are victims of homicide have an 84% chance of having their cases solved compared to Indigenous women for whom almost half of murders remain unsolved (cited in Siegel, Brown, & Hoffman, 2013)? Indigenous visions of justice are about community building and healing Indigenous communities. It envisions more encouraging possibilities for justice. From this perspective, we would see that initiatives to help prevent the murder of Indigenous women can also be applied to Indigenous men.

On a regular basis in Canada, Indigenous people have gone missing and there has been very little action towards addressing the issue. Schmallegger and Volk (2013), in their analysis of missing and murdered women in Vancouver, drew a parallel between victimized Indigenous women and the lack of police effort in investigating those cases.

In 2007, Robert Pickton was convicted of the murders of six women and charged in the deaths of an additional twenty women (stayed in 2010), many of them prostitutes and drug users. The Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, established in 2010 by the B.C. Lieutenant Governor, released a report that identified blatant police failure triggered by systemic bias against poor, vulnerable women of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside as the reason that Pickton was able to evade arrest for so many years. (Schmallegger & Volk, 2013, p. 33)

This passage demonstrates the lack of concern for victims of crime who are from marginalized Indigenous communities. It also suggests that police relations with Indigenous people are unhealthy. Research shows that Indigenous people are less likely to report being the victim of a crime because they do not trust the police (Cao, 2014; Christmas, 2012; Comack, 2012; Cotter, 2015; Hansen, 2015; TRC, 2015).

Indigenous Peoples have compelling reasons to not trust the police (Cao, 2014; Christmas, 2012; Cotter, 2015). Whether this perspective is acceptable or unacceptable is not the issue; rather we need to develop the knowledge required to understand the vibrant relationship between Indigenous Peoples, the police, and the criminal justice system, with the goal of providing new insights into how we can envision and

improve the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples. One way to call attention to the overrepresentation as homicide victims is to examine social reality from an Indigenous perspective.

The Overrepresentation

The overrepresentation of missing and murdered Indigenous people is a crucial concern for Indigenous communities. Through exploring the issue of Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous people, one can develop an understanding of how to address this widespread problem.

In 2015, 148 of 604 homicide victims, or 25%, were reported by police as being Aboriginal people. Overall, Aboriginal people were victims of homicide at a rate that was about 7 times higher than that of non-Aboriginal people, with 8.77 victims per 100,000 in the Aboriginal population versus 1.31 victims per 100,000 in the non-Aboriginal population. Aboriginal males were at greatest risk of being the victim of homicide (Mulligan et al., 2016). In 2015, they were 7 times more likely to be the victim of a homicide compared with non-Aboriginal males (12.85 per 100,000 population versus 1.87). They were also 3 times more likely to be a victim than Aboriginal females (4.80 per 100,000; Mulligan et al., 2016). The homicide rate for Aboriginal females was 6 times higher than for their non-Aboriginal counterparts (4.80 per 100,000 versus 0.77).

The rate of Aboriginal persons accused of homicide in Canada was close to 10 times higher than the rate for non-Aboriginal persons, with 10.13 Aboriginal people accused per 100,000 population compared with 1.10 per 100,000 among non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people accounted for 61% of females accused of homicide in 2015, and 29% of males accused of homicide (Mulligan et al., 2016). We would expect that there is a corresponding increase in the likelihood of being convicted of murder and other violent offences. Given that Indigenous men were accused of murder in 71% of cases involving an Indigenous male victim (Department of Justice, 2017), we can assume they are also much more likely than any group to be found guilty of murdering Indigenous men. It is not certain how many Indigenous women have been murdered by Indigenous men, but it is safe to say that it is too many. Since it is very likely that Indigenous men have murdered the majority of Indigenous male murder victims, it would appear that many Indigenous men have been victimized while others have been victimizers (and many have been both). Understanding lateral violence in the Indigenous community requires a discussion of Indigenous men as both victims and victimizers.

It is important to note the distinction between the violence Indigenous women and men are involved with is so similar that it warrants Indigenous men's inclusion rather than their exclusion. The argument suggests that there are common factors related to colonialism that increase the risk of being a victim and being a perpetrator of violence. Some of the ways that Indigenous females and males experience common factors that increase the risk of being a victim and a perpetrator of violence are rooted in conditions and implications of historical colonization. Royle (2017) noted, "In the waves of settlement in Canada, European men were sexually violent towards Indigenous women; creating a transformative property in the lives of Indigenous women in that Indigenous women faced a shift from a reputation under egalitarian values to a reputation under patriarchal values" (p. 2). Colonization resulted in generations of Indigenous children forced into residential schools where they experienced abuse, imperialism, racism and patriarchy. The effects of residential schools include addictions issues, low self-esteem, and male dominated communities. The present circumstances related to impoverished

Indigenous communities in Canada contribute to violence and crime. The criminal justice system and the mainstream media treat Indigenous victims of crime as marginal, while at the same time Indigenous accused of criminal offences generally receive harsher sentences than mainstream offenders (Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, 1999; Champagne, 2015; Hansen, 2015; TRC, 2015).

Furthermore, there is very little knowledge about the number of missing and murdered Indigenous men in Canada. The findings of the Inquiry are informed by numbers from the RCMP. The RCMP (2014) provided a report on the homicide rate and homicide-solve rates for the Indigenous women, but not for the men (see also Jones, 2015²). Perhaps the exclusion of Indigenous males from the RCMP report is because males are outside the scope of the MMIWG inquiry. It may also be related to the stereotyping of Indigenous males as violent criminals, which makes it understandable, but not acceptable, that their murders and disappearances receive very little attention. This lack of attention makes the expansion of the inquiry more imperative in order to collect and analyze these data among Indigenous men. These statistics tell us that there is a knowledge gap that needs to be closed.

Developing an understanding of missing and murdered Indigenous people as whole has the potential to address the issue of MMIWG more effectively. The inquiry is an important window into Indigenous culture; more than just research, it can be considered an unofficial statement of what the elite decision makers in the inquiry think is best for Indigenous communities in Canada.

Exploring Canada's MMIWG serves to advance an Indigenous interpretation of the topic and to enhance our knowledge of violence against Indigenous women and girls; it presents a critical analysis of Indigenous consciousness, narratives, and life experiences. The NWAC was instrumental in creating the MMIWG. They worked for some 40 years to unmask the systemic violence against Indigenous females, families, and communities. The work by the NWAC (n.d.a) shows that Indigenous women are more likely to be murdered by strangers than non-Indigenous women and, when they are murdered, their killers are less likely to be convicted in comparison to non-Indigenous women:

Aboriginal women were more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be murdered by a stranger. Most of the Aboriginal women who go missing are or are murdered are under the age of 31, and more than two-thirds were living in cities. Almost half of the murders of Aboriginal women remain unsolved, compared to an 84 percent clearance rate for murders of non-Aboriginal women. (Siegel et al., 2013, p. 209)

For the NWAC, the inquiry should be culturally appropriate for Indigenous communities. The inquiry needs to embrace community-based research that privileges the voices of Indigenous Peoples. The NWAC (n.d.b) observed, the issue of "family violence represents one of the most urgent issues impacting Aboriginal women. However, there is also a need for more research and awareness about

²Dr. Adam Jones is a professor of political science at the University of British Columbia. He has demonstrated much concern for the lack of attention for missing and murdered Indigenous people, particularly men. Since there is a lack of literature documenting the large numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous men, we have cited his work. We want to note that we do not intend to base our arguments on Adam Jones' (2015) conclusion. The only information we draw upon from his op-ed in the National Post are the facts and quotes that were provided in the article. We would like to state unequivocally that we do not accept the conclusions made by Adam Jones or any other men's rights activists.

other forms of violence—particularly violence perpetrated by strangers or acquaintances” (p. 4). All of this means that Indigenous women experience violence and victimization inside and outside of their communities and, therefore, the voices of Indigenous families and communities is central to the inquiry.

Although MMIWG was a crucial issue for Indigenous communities in Canada, former Prime Minister Stephen Harper stated in a national news interview with Peter Mansbridge that Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women “isn't really high on our [government's] radar” (“Full Text of Peter Mansbridge's Interview,” 2014, “There Seems to be Some Indication” section, para. 1; see also Kappo, 2014). Such attitudes and actions are reflected in a sociological conflict theory. As Siegel and McCormick (2012) note:

Conflict theorists show that the criminal justice system is quick to take action when the victim is crime is wealthy, Caucasian, and male but is uninterested when the victim is poor, a member of a minority group, and female, indicating how power relations affect justice. (p. 321)

Confronted with these disappointing realities, it must be recognized that the MMIWG extend beyond the scope of the police. The problem remains because of the impact of colonial domination on Indigenous people is all-inclusive and extends beyond the scope of the Canadian criminal justice system. Still, there is a crucial need to investigate social inequality as it relates to Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women and this attitude is reflected among the grassroots people (Charlton & Hansen, 2017; Hansen & Antsanen, 2015). What is important to observe from an Indigenous perspective, as demonstrated by the NWAC, is the need for an inquiry into the widespread pattern of Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous women. This approach seeks to offer a culturally grounded interpretation of the incredible violence against Indigenous women and it hopes to bring forth the experiences and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, which are essential to building a successful shared future. Fortunately, Parliament, under Prime Minister Trudeau, demonstrated concern for the critical overrepresentation of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada and launched the inquiry.

Although the violence experienced by Indigenous women and men is manifest differently, the causes are likely to be very similar. In terms of the MMIWG inquiry, the commissioners will likely make recommendations that are directed at Indigenous women, such as the need to increase and sustain funding for support for survivors of abuse and for women's shelters, but it is also likely to make recommendations that are directed at men because they are the perpetrators of most of the violence towards women. Since many Indigenous women experience violence from Indigenous men, there will very likely be recommendations directed at Indigenous men. Perhaps they will recommend Indigenous restorative justice programming because, in Indigenous communities, justice means restoring balance, repairing harm, and healing victims, offenders, and communities (CFNMP, 2004; Hansen, 2013; Hansen & Hetzel, 2018; TRC, 2015).

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Men and Men's Issues in Canada

One of the core aims of Indigenous perspectives is to broaden the discourse around missing and murdered Indigenous people to include male victims. This approach takes the discourse about missing and murdered Aboriginal people to a broader dimension as this line of inquiry includes structural factors that are associated with the victimization experiences of Indigenous people. While our assertion that Indigenous men should be included in the inquiry would have been stronger if it was made 10 or 15

years ago (and it is important to note that Indigenous women have been advocating for this issue for at least that long), the result has been that the majority of Indigenous men have been silent not only about the violence experienced by Indigenous women but also the violence men face. However, we hope that this work provides an avenue through which to expand the discourse on missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples. It has also provided an avenue to contribute to rethinking the notion of the missing and murdered Aboriginal people as a women-only issue. The data has shown that most men are far less likely than women to report their victimhood experiences to friends or to the police (Burczycka & Ibrahim, 2016; Dutton & White, 2013; Dim & Elabor-Idemudia, 2018; Nagesh, 2016; Robertson & Murachver, 2009) because they do not see their victimhood experiences as worthy of reporting.

Today, there is a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which excludes men. Data from Statistics Canada have shown that, between 1982 and 2011, 71% of Aboriginal homicide victims in Canada were men (cited in Jones, 2015). In terms of the missing Aboriginal people, the RCMP (2014) documented that there were about 105 missing Aboriginal women in 2014 but it declined to compile statistics on missing Aboriginal men. In the report, the RCMP revealed that about 1,017 Aboriginal women had been murdered since 1980. The report also noted that the “solve rates” for murders involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women were similar, about 88% and 89% respectively. However, the report did not address male murder victims.

When asked about broadening the inquiry to all Aboriginal people rather than only women, RCMP Spokesperson Greg Cox said: “The RCMP does not have plans to broaden the National Operational Overview on missing and murdered aboriginal women to include all Aboriginal Peoples” (cited in Andrew-Gee, 2014, para. 16). Also, as Mr. Mònijâw, a blogger on these issues, asserted:

Aboriginal men are murdered extremely often, relative to all other groups, and their homicides are more rarely solved. And nobody really cares. And you can even say you don't care in public, as a representative of the police. Because you know nobody else really cares either. (cited in Jones, 2015, para. 9)

In other words, the lives of Aboriginal men are dispensable. However, arguments for inclusion based on claims made by men's rights activists may work to undermine Indigenous perspectives. For example, Adams Jones (2015) seems to place the blame on the exclusion of Indigenous men from the inquiry on Indigenous feminists. Such theorizing does not take into account social and cultural interpretations within Indigenous communities. Since most Indigenous women who advocated for the inquiry would not consider themselves feminists, probably because Western feminists, although recognized as allies, do not speak for the Indigenous community (Hansen & Antsanen, 2015; Hookimaw-Witt, 2010).

Although the arguments made by men's rights advocates raise important issues, such as high rates of male suicide, job related deaths, social issues, and so on, they typically blame feminists for the fact these issues are not receiving much attention. However, it is important to keep in mind that feminists do not control what men can talk about. In reality, men generally do not talk about the issues they face, including the actual causes of the violence and destructive behaviours that men exhibit. So, the neglect of the missing and murdered Indigenous men represents one of the issues within a broader context of social problems that men generally tend to face in society, which tend to be undermined and receive less attention (Kay, 2015; Urback, 2015).

In view of the social stigma men may face in society regarding their perceived lack of machismo and other denigrations of their masculinity, they are reluctant to reveal their experiences of victimization (Dim & Ogunye, 2017; Lupri & Grandin, 2004; Migliaccio, 2001). This also adds to the common narrative that men's issues are negligible, including Aboriginal men. Statistics Canada also revealed that, as of 2009, men are 3 times more likely to commit suicides than females (17.9 deaths per 100,000 for men; 5.3 per 100,000 for women; Navaneelan, 2015). The rates of suicide for Aboriginal men is higher than the general population. According to 2008 to 2010 data from the First Nations Information Governance Centre, Aboriginal men had a suicide rate of 12 per 100,000 people (Shulman & Tahirali, 2016).

In Canada, men are victims of more than 97% of all workplace deaths (Todd, 2011). According to data from the 2016 Labour Force Survey, among people aged 25 to 64 years, 8.5% of men were high school dropouts compared 5.4% of women (Uppal, 2017). Furthermore, 20.1% of Aboriginal boys were high school dropouts, which was the highest percentage in that category. Similarly, attainment of university degrees was 29.6% for men compared to 41.8% of women (Uppal, 2017). For Aboriginal men, the figure was 9.1%, which represented the lowest percentage in that category. Males accounted for 85% of persons admitted to provincial and territorial correctional services (Correctional Services Program, 2015). According to the Canadian Center for Justice Statistics data from 2008, women were less likely than men to be convicted of crimes and more likely to receive lighter sentences for the same charges (Kerr, n.d.). Furthermore, about 63% of the homeless population are men (Gaetz, Donaldson, Richter, & Gulliver, 2013) and studies have shown a link between homelessness and incarceration (Metraux, Roman, & Cho, 2007; Walsh, MacDonald, Rutherford, Moore & Krieg, 2011). Given the fact that proportion of people who are homeless are Aboriginal men (Patrick, 2014), this points to one of the reasons for the disproportionately high incarceration rates among Aboriginal men. Men are also more likely to be victims of physical assault, physical assault in a public place outside the home, and homicide than women (Vaillancourt, 2010).³

In Canada, attempts to create men's issues awareness groups have been met with resistance or have been outright rejected (Urback, 2015). Yet, these groups can create the intellectual space where critical discourse can be furthered on the issues men face in Canadian society and the world at large. According to the Justice Centre for Constitutional Freedoms (JCCF), men's issues groups have been denied certification at the Simon Fraser University (in 2012), Queens University (in 2014), and Ryerson University (in 2012 and 2015; Urback, 2015). It is important to note that highlighting these facts does not, in any way, indicate that women do not face challenges in society, however, this article seeks to promote a more-inclusive gender approach in the general discourse of the human condition, and missing and murdered Indigenous people in particular.

³ To be clear, the presentation of the above-mentioned facts is not in any way intended to lay blame about the issues men face in the Canadian society. This article seeks to commence a conversation about the need to include missing and murdered Indigenous men in the inquiry, within the broader context of the social problems men face in Canadian society. It is said that men rarely talk about these issues and this article seeks to start that conversation without laying blame on any group, ideology, or persons.

Conclusion

There is a crucial need to address Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous people. In effect, it is necessary to appreciate how issues pertaining to violence against Indigenous people are influenced by social forces that go beyond policing. Perhaps the most important need at this time is the need to explore the social forces that lead to the widespread pattern of missing and murdered Indigenous people, such as racism, sexism, historical and contemporary forms of colonization, social and economic disparities, systemic discrimination, and so on. The exploration of Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous people needs to emphasize social change, where we must consider, among other things, how violence against Indigenous people is influenced by racial inequality, poverty, the effects of colonialism, intergenerational residential school effects, and social exclusion. These collective forces are interconnected in historical and contemporary times and have rich social significance and reveal a great deal about what we find so crucial about studying Canada's missing and murdered Indigenous people. On the research topic that concerns us—that of elaborating on the ways in which Indigenous men and women have shared risk in order to justify looking at the issue from an Indigenous perspective first and foremost, as opposed to a gendered perspective—take into account the following: Historical research concerning Indigenous peoples has been written primarily by non-Indigenous scholars whose views and interpretations were a major factor in the development of colonial research that served to silence Indigenous voices. Colonizing research was not in the past, nor is it today, interested in honouring Indigenous voices or perspectives. Fortunately, current Indigenous research tends to challenge the Eurocentric theories presented in colonial research. Today, efforts to decolonize Indigenous research is very concerned with presenting Indigenous voices and perspectives. Such scholarship is committed to Indigenous explanations for much of the crucial issues pertaining to Indigenous communities. The complexities presented in our discussion requires Indigenous perspectives that ask for the inclusion of male victims.

Recommendations

Based on our review of the literature, we recommend that the federal and provincial governments bolster support for Indigenous healing initiatives designed to address intimate partner violence in Indigenous communities. More specifically, Indigenous healing requires increased funding to provide culturally sensitive and success outcomes.

Further, we recommend increasing social justice and educational programs designed to meet the needs of the economic and cultural issues experiencing by Indigenous communities. Without these supports, Indigenous people will continue to experience marginalization, racial discrimination, social exclusion, and lack of opportunities in the Canadian society.

We recommend that governments review and increase funding measures for programs, particularly those programs that have demonstrated positive results in Indigenous communities, to help to deal with violence that Indigenous men commit and are victims of.

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