

Stories of Violence against Indigenous Women in Canada: Understanding Helen Betty
Osborne's Story



Dedicated to Helen Betty Osborne:
The Woman Who Continues to Teach

Lacy Bateman
Major Research Paper
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Abstract

This MRP examines the story of Helen Betty Osborne's life and death. Osborne was an Ininiw woman from Norway House, Manitoba. She had dreams of becoming a teacher, but achieving this goal meant leaving her home to pursue her education in The Pas, Manitoba. While in The Pas, four white men brutally murdered Osborne. Canadian historians have spent little time considering the history of Indigenous women in Canada. They have spent even less time reflecting on violence and the role of colonialism in that ongoing violence, and there has been almost no attention given to trying to understand this history from Indigenous perspectives. Helen Betty Osborne's story raises several important historical questions: What is Helen Betty Osborne's story? How should historians understand her life and murder? What does her story tell us about the history of Indigenous women in late twentieth to early twenty-first century Canada? To answer these questions I examine both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources such as police and governmental reports, provincial legal inquiries, newspapers, stories, and poems. I argue that an examination of Helen Betty Osborne's story, through Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources, showcases historical and ongoing power relations between white and Indigenous communities; it challenges assumptions about 'how things are' and 'how things were' for both communities; and pushes historians to understand Indigenous women's experiences and stories in different ways. Historians have not told Helen Betty Osborne's story. This MRP starts this necessary conversation. Currently, there are 1200 missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada. The statistics tell us more than we think. They tell us that Helen Betty Osborne's story is a story about the past and a story of today; it should not be. This is a second key contribution of this study. The violence and corresponding silence around Helen Betty Osborne's story is not just situational or historical, but ongoing.

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Introduction

Helen Betty Osborne was born on July 16, 1952, in Norway House, Manitoba to her Ininiw parents Joe and Justine Osborne.¹ The eldest of ten children, she worked hard around the house, cleaning, babysitting, and helping with the cooking. She often looked after her siblings: Isaiah, Billy, Kelvin, Douglas, Mark, Cynthia, Cecilia, Joe, and Tommy. This experience, in particular, shaped her interest in teaching.² Osborne began school at the age of seven, attending Neckoway Roman Catholic Elementary School in Norway House until grade eight.³ At that point, like many Indigenous children across Canada, Osborne and her family had to decide whether she should leave home to attend high school.⁴ It was a tough decision, but in 1969, at the age of seventeen, Helen Betty Osborne moved 208km to The Pas, Manitoba. While in The Pas, Osborne attended Margaret Barbour Collegiate.⁵ During grade nine, she lived at Guy Hill Indian Residential School, which was a twenty-nine kilometre bus ride from her new school.⁶ In

¹ Helen Betty Osborne was known as Betty Osborne to her friends and family. The term Ininiw is the Cree word for people. In this paper, I use Ininiw to respect the language of Helen Betty Osborne's family, community, and nation. Lisa Priest, *Conspiracy of Silence* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Inc., 1989), 23.

² Priest, 22.

³ A secondary school was not established in Norway House until 2003, when the Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Resource Centre K-12 was built. University of Manitoba, "School Experience Options" (February 12, 2015), http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/education/current/practicum_options.html, last accessed: March 4, 2015. This website provides information on teaching practicum experience options in Manitoba. It explains that Helen Betty Osborne Ininiw Centre is one of two schools in Norway House and one of the largest K-12 schools in Western Canada.

⁴ Associate Chief Justice A.C. Hamilton and Associate Chief Judge C. M. Sinclair, "The Death of Helen Betty Osborne," *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba: Volume 2* (Winnipeg: Province of Manitoba, August 12, 1991), 91.

⁵ A small commuter plane flew Indigenous students to The Pas, Manitoba. By car, the commute was roughly 437 km and took around seven hours. Priest, 21-22.

⁶ Osborne was exhausted by the commute and the living conditions at Guy Hill Indian Residential School. After the completion of grade nine, she requested to be moved closer to Margaret Barbour Collegiate. At the start of grade ten, the Department of Indian Affairs placed her with Patricia and William (Bill) Benson. Priest, 38-39.

grade ten she boarded with Patricia and Bill Benson, a white working-class couple who lived two minutes from her school.⁷ The Bensons received an allowance from the Department of Indian Affairs for this service.⁸

While away at school, Osborne made many friends and fell in love with Indigenous student, Cornelius Bighetty. He became her boyfriend.⁹ Osborne spent time with Indigenous students from The Pas Indian Reserve and maintained a group of twenty close friends. Friends described her as strong-willed, bright, shy, and humorous. She knew how to have fun and study hard. Like other teenagers, Osborne attended sporting events, went to parties, danced, and babysat for the Benson family.¹⁰ While out one night with friends, she ran into Bighetty and a girl named Lillian Michelle. Upsettingly, Michelle turned out to be Bighetty's girlfriend too. This broke Osborne's heart. She told her friends she was going to walk home. She needed some time to think. She never made it.¹¹

Margaret Barbour Collegiate. At the start of grade ten, the Department of Indian Affairs placed her with Patricia and William (Bill) Benson. Priest, 38-39.

⁷ Priest, 27, 38-39. I will be using the terminology of my sources throughout my paper. The word "white" is used in sources rather than "Caucasian."

⁸ Priest, 38.

⁹ Bighetty was a member of the Mathias Colomb Indian Band at Pukatawagan. He met Helen Betty Osborne at the age of seventeen while he was attending Margaret Barbour Collegiate. Hamilton and Sinclair, 40.

¹⁰ Priest, 33.

¹¹ On Friday, November 12, 1971, at 6:00 p.m., Helen Betty Osborne arrived home for supper with Patricia Benson. An hour later, she went to St. Anthony's Hospital to visit a friend. The name of the friend is not mentioned in the sources. While at the hospital, Osborne met up with George Ross, another childhood friend. Osborne phoned Patricia Benson to ask if she could bring Ross home for a visit. Benson agreed. Osborne and Ross stayed at the Benson's until 10:00 p.m., when they decided to leave and meet up with friends. Osborne and Ross went to the downtown area of The Pas. While passing by the Cambrian Hotel Lobby, Osborne saw her boyfriend, Cornelius Bighetty, with some of his friends. At this time, around 11:00 p.m., Osborne and Bighetty argued because he was with Lillian Michelle. At 11:10 p.m. Osborne and Ross left the hotel lobby to meet up with their friends at the Northern Lite Café. During the justice inquiry, Osborne's friends described her as being "upset and distracted," but she stayed with them until 2:00 a.m. before wanting to head home alone. Osborne was last seen walking west on Edward

Early in the morning of November 13, 1971, Helen Betty Osborne was abducted and brutally murdered.¹² She was 19 years old. Several months later, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) concluded that four young white men were involved in the murder: Dwayne Archie Johnston, James Robert Paul Houghton, Lee Scott Colgan and Norman Bernard Manger.¹³ The teenagers were partying while driving around looking for “an Indian girl with whom to drink and have sex.”¹⁴ Though Osborne

Street; see Hamilton and Sinclair, 13. Patricia and Bill Benson reported Helen Betty Osborne missing to the RCMP on the morning of November 13, 1971. Priest, 39-40.

¹² For the purposes of this MRP it is important to conceptualize and provide a definition of violence. For Indigenous women, gender-based violence is shaped not only by gender discrimination within Indigenous and non-Indigenous arenas, but also by “a context of ongoing colonization and militarism; racism and social exclusion; and poverty inducing economic and “development” policies. These phenomena are interactive and mutually reinforcing, as are the various aspects of identity that shape women’s experience of violence, and their strategies of resistance.” United Nations, “Mairin Iwanka Raya: Indigenous Women Stand Against Violence—A Companion Report to the United Nations Secretary-General’s Study on Violence Against Women,” *Foro Internacional De Mujeres Indigenas (FIMI)* (New York: Madre Inc., 2006), 17, <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/vaiwreport06.pdf>, last accessed: November 1, 2014. Though this is a current definition, it can be applied historically to the case of Helen Betty Osborne. While Osborne experienced physical acts of violence that resulted in her murder, she also experienced ongoing colonialism, racism, and social exclusion within the media and white community of The Pas, before and after her death. It is important to note that the *FIMI*, established in 1999, also known as the International Indigenous Women’s Forum, works to bring together Indigenous women leaders representing Asia, Central and South America and the Caribbean, Africa, North America, Europe, and the Pacific region. *FIMI* works for the advancement of Indigenous women’s human rights at the local, national, and international levels. For more information visit: <http://www.fimi-iiwf.org>.

¹³ Regardless of the source, the four men involved in Osborne’s murder are always listed in this exact order.

¹⁴ Hamilton and Sinclair, 14. On Friday, November 12, 1971, at 8:00 p.m., Lee Colgan borrowed his father’s car. The car was a white, 1967, two-door Chrysler. Colgan drove around The Pas, picking up Houghton and Manger. The men purchased beer and continued to drive around. After finishing the beer, they broke into a friend’s apartment and took wine. The friend’s name is not listed in sources. The three men then visited a dance at the local Legion, where they continued to drink. At 1:30 a.m. they left the legion to go “cruising for Indian women.” See Hamilton and Sinclair, 14. At roughly 2:00 a.m. they picked up Dwayne Johnston from the Cambrian Hotel. Houghton was driving at this point and Manger was in the passenger seat. Colgan and Johnston sat in the back. At roughly 2:30a.m. the four men abducted Helen Betty Osborne on Third Avenue, where she was walking home. Osborne was first taken to a cabin belonging to Jim Houghton’s parents at Clearwater Lake. At the cabin she was pulled from the car and beaten by Dwayne Johnston while the other three men stood watching and drinking wine. Osborne continued to struggle and scream. Her assailants, fearing they might be heard,

was murdered in 1971, it took sixteen years for the Crown to sentence one man, Dwayne Johnston.¹⁵ The judge sentenced Johnston to life imprisonment for Osborne's murder.¹⁶ He served ten years of this term.¹⁷ James Houghton was acquitted.¹⁸ Despite

forced Osborne back into the car and drove even further from town to an abandoned pump house near Clearwater Lake. At the pump house one or more of her assailants took her from the car. Osborne was then beaten, sexually assaulted, and stabbed with a screwdriver fifty-six times. The evidence suggests that two people then dragged her body deep into the bush. Her clothes were hidden. The four men returned to town. On the morning of November 13, 1971, Steve Gurba, and his son, Kenneth Gurba, found Osborne's body. The father and son had been fishing when fourteen-year-old Kenneth Gurba grew restless and decided to go rabbit hunting. Instead, he found Osborne's body. They reported their discovery to the RCMP and the investigation began. The *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* concluded that if it was not for Gurba's discovery, it is likely that Osborne's body would not have been discovered until the following spring, if at all. Hamilton and Sinclair, 3-24.

¹⁵ On March 9, 1988, three months after the trial of Houghton and Johnston, J.J. Harper, executive director of the Island Lake Tribal Council, was killed in an encounter with a City of Winnipeg police officer. Both Osborne's and J.J. Harper's cases increased public attention and demands by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Manitobans for an inquiry into the justice system's treatment of Indigenous peoples in Manitoba. Manitobans voices were heard. On April 13, 1988, by Order-in-Council, the Provincial Government established the Public Inquiry into the Administration of Justice and Aboriginal People. See Hamilton and Sinclair, 3-4. For more information on Volume 1, 2, and 3 of the Report see: Associate Chief Justice A.C. Hamilton and Associate Chief Judge C.M. Sinclair, *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*, (Winnipeg, Province of Manitoba, 1991). Volume 1 discusses the legal system and its treatment of Indigenous peoples in Manitoba. Volume 2 and 3 offer specific case studies of Helen Betty Osborne and J.J. (John Joseph) Harper.

¹⁶ Colgan's testimony placed Johnston in the car when Osborne was abducted. Colgan described Johnston's assaults on Osborne in the car, at the cabin, and at the pump house. He placed Johnston alone with Osborne outside of the car at the pump house and told of Johnston coming back to the car to obtain a screwdriver. Though Houghton contested Colgan's testimony, it was deemed suitable for trial. At trial, Johnston refused to testify. Johnston also declined to meet with the inquiry council in 1989. Hamilton and Sinclair, 16.

¹⁷ The National Parole Board started counting Johnston's time served from the moment he was arrested rather than when he was convicted. In March 1994, Johnston was released on day parole in Abbotsford, British Columbia. On October 27, 1996, he was eligible for full parole. Johnston was granted full parole despite the evidence implicating him in Osborne's murder, his admission of participation, and the protest of fifty Indigenous men, women, and children, including Osborne's seventy-year-old mother Justine Osborne, from Norway House, marching over 800km to Winnipeg against Johnston's parole. After obtaining his freedom, Johnston moved to British Columbia and opened an upholstery business. For more information on Johnston's admission of guilt and the evidence against him, see the following newspaper articles: Catherine Mitchel, "Stabbing was a seal on 'pact'," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 4 December 1996, 9 and "Osborne's Killer's revelations lack credibility, RCMP say," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 12 February 1999, 8. For further information on Indigenous protest against Johnston's parole, see the following newspaper article: Tim Friesen and Bruce Owen, "A March Against Freedom," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 November 1995, 4.

initially being charged for first-degree murder, Lee Colgan went free, as he had received immunity from prosecution in return for testifying against Houghton and Johnston.¹⁹

Norman Manger was never charged.²⁰

Between 1971 and 1987, there was over-whelming silence in mainstream media and in the white community of The Pas about the story of Helen Betty Osborne's life and death.²¹ Many people are still unaware of her story.²² Until quite recently, national

¹⁸ Colgan testified that Houghton was in the vehicle the evening of November 12 to the early morning of November 13, 1971. This was the only evidence Colgan supplied. It was deemed insufficient evidence in court. Houghton did not testify at his trial. He did speak to the council for the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*; however, when asked about his involvement in Helen Betty Osborne's murder his only response was that he had "no recollection". To be clear, he did not deny that he was involved in Osborne's murder, only that he could not remember. The inquiry council did not believe Houghton. Hamilton and Sinclair, 20-21.

¹⁹ The *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* believed that Lee Colgan was less than truthful in the re-telling of the "facts" of Helen Betty Osborne's murder. The inquiry council believed that Colgan omitted evidence to protect Houghton because they were childhood friends. The inquiry council did believe Colgan's evidence pertaining to Dwayne Johnston. They also believed that Lee Colgan was more involved in Osborne's murder than he admitted. Lee Colgan's ex-wife, Arlene Demmings, reported Colgan often spoke of the murder when drunk. Many other residents of The Pas told similar stories. Hamilton and Sinclair, 19-20.

²⁰ When questioned by police and the inquiry council for the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*, Manger continually stated that he was so drunk he had very little recollection of the events of the evening; yet he also refused to take a polygraph test. Manger denied having any knowledge of Osborne's murder until he agreed to testify at the trial of both Houghton and Johnston. At both trials, Manger admitted to being in Colgan's car with the other three men. Despite the RCMP questioning Manger a number of times throughout the sixteen years of the investigation, they concluded that there was not enough evidence to charge him with any crimes. Hamilton and Sinclair, 1-18.

²¹ Newsworthiness is defined as "what makes a story worth telling." Yasmin Tiwani, *Discourse of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender and Violence* (British Columbia: UBC Press, 2011), 38. Dr. Kristen Gilchrist argues that news items are not simply selected, but constructed. Rather than "objectively reporting events and facts, newsmakers engage in a highly subjective and selective process of news production based on socially and culturally constructed criteria. Notably, decisions about whom and what is newsworthy are filtered through a predominately Western, white, hetero-normative, middle-class, male lens." Kirsten Gilchrist, "Newsworthy Victims?' Exploring Differences in Canadian local press coverage of missing/murdered Aboriginal and White Women," *Feminist Media Studies* Volume 10, Issue 4, (2010), 2. <https://ipsmo.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/newsworthy-victims-gilchrist-2010-missing-murdered-aboriginal-women.pdf>, last accessed April 10, 2015. Based on Gilchrist's criteria, Helen Betty Osborne was not deemed newsworthy by the media or the community of The Pas because she was Indigenous and female.

newspaper coverage of Helen Betty Osborne could not be found.²³ On a provincial scale, specifically in Manitoba and Alberta, newspaper coverage of her murder does not appear until 1987. This is more than sixteen years after her murder and any discussion of her life before this time does not exist.²⁴ On a local scale, in The Pas, only one brief, fifty-word article appeared in 1971, providing details of her death, but nothing about

²² Gilchrist's 2010 study, "Newsworthy Victims?" examined six cases of murdered women that received provincial news coverage in Canada. Three of the cases focused on the coverage of missing/murdered Indigenous women from Saskatchewan, which was contrasted with coverage of three missing/murdered white women from Ontario. The objective of her study was to explore whether there were identifiable differences in provincial press reporting of missing/murdered Indigenous women and white women. Upon examination, Gilchrist discovered that the White women were mentioned in the local press a total of 511 times whereas the Indigenous women were mentioned 82 times. There were 135,249 words published in relation to the white women's disappearances/murders whereas there were 28,493 words about the Indigenous women. Headlines printed about the white women referred to them by first and last names and even nicknames whereas headlines regarding Indigenous women often referred to them impersonally and rarely by name. Overall, many disparities were found. Though this study focuses on the twenty-first century, there are many connections to the minimal coverage of Helen Betty Osborne's life and murder. Out of 127 newspaper articles ranging in date from 1987-1999, Helen Betty Osborne's name was never mentioned in the headlines, articles were brief, and they mention details about the four white men responsible for Osborne's murder rather than providing details about Osborne's life. For more information on Gilchrist's study see Gilchrist, "Newsworthy Victims?" 1-24.

²³ Public awareness about missing and murdered Indigenous women has drastically increased in recent years. This brought attention to Osborne's story. For more information see: The Globe and Mail, "One Native Families Haunted History," 26 June 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/one-native-familys-haunted-history/article25120972/>, last accessed 6 July 2015.

²⁴ Generally speaking, "newsworthy events are those considered to be dramatic, unusual, or fit with a continuing news theme. Additional features such as conflict, action, and deviance increase the likelihood of an event being deemed newsworthy. Severe violence, especially murder, is seen as most newsworthy, and young and elderly white females in particular receive considerable attention. Sexually motivated homicides perpetrated by someone unknown to the victim will invariably receive substantial, often sensational attention." See Gilchrist, 2-3. In 1987, when Johnston and Houghton's cases moved to trial, Osborne's murder began receiving media attention in Alberta and Manitoba. Newspapers often reported that Osborne had been "slayed," "gruesomely murdered," "gang raped," or "stabbed more than fifty times." The details within this news coverage always focused on the brutality of the murder and the four men responsible, rather than who Osborne was as an individual. The newspapers also got details of Osborne's experience wrong. Osborne was not "gang raped." Osborne was sexually assaulted by men who were previously unknown to her. Using Tiwani and Gilchrist's framework, it is apparent that the various newspapers reporting on Osborne's story were sensationalizing her murder to gain media attention rather than reporting on her life and the socio-historical nature of her death.

Osborne's life.²⁵ Helen Betty Osborne remained a statistic, an unknown, and for most people in Canada, easy to ignore.

Unlike the silences evident in mainstream society, Indigenous communities in Norway House, The Pas, and the surrounding areas, put pressure on the RCMP to resolve the case. They knew Helen Betty Osborne's story. They wanted it told. In December 1987, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported, "Indian leaders have called for an inquiry to see why it took so long to punish Osborne's killer. Indian leaders have suggested that it may have been because Osborne was native and her alleged killers were white."²⁶ Similarly, the Canadian Alliance in Solidarity with the Native Peoples (CASNP) also urged, "the Attorney-General of Manitoba [should] institute a public inquiry into the administration of justice with respect to the case involving Helen Betty Osborne in The Pas."²⁷ Indigenous leaders and community members marched to the Legislative Building in Winnipeg, Manitoba, protesting for an inquiry. While at the Legislative Building, Joy Guy Wood, a spokesman for the Interlake Tribal Council stated, "we will have to review the extent and content of the public inquiry and only if we're satisfied will we support it."²⁸ Likewise, the Indigenous Women's Collective in Manitoba, "a group representing Metis, status, and non-status Indian women," made clear their sentiments about a public inquiry.²⁹ Doris Young, past president of the collective stated, "We'll come out again and again, telling people in this society that

²⁵ Priest, 2. Priest mentions the article, but the original cannot be found in this source or online.

²⁶ "Outcry grows over The Pas Murder," *Brandon Sun*, 9 December 1987, 2.

²⁷ Doreen Hunter and Kathy Mallett for CASNP Winnipeg Group, "Inquiry Urged," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 1 March 1989, 6.

²⁸ Ilana Simon and Catherine Mitchell, "Natives optimistic about justice system probe," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 17 March 1988, 3.

²⁹ "Native women's collective aims to flex political muscle," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 May 1989, 3.

we're not going to go away [about Helen Betty Osborne].”³⁰ The *Winnipeg Free Press* further reported, “fifty native women from across the province gathered for [the] candle-lit vigil at the Legislative Building...[where] the group was singing hymns and telling stories of native injustice.”³¹ Tomson Highway, an Indigenous playwright from Manitoba, explained he had “a keen interest in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry as [he] went to the Guyhill Indian Residential School with J.J. Harper near The Pas and Helen Betty Osborne was two years behind [him].”³² Highway further noted, “in both *The Rez Sisters* and its sequel, *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*... He had Osborne in mind when he wrote...[because] it's so outrageous what happened to her...[he] had to write about her because the anger in [him] was so fierce that [he] had to find some outlet.”³³

Indigenous protest led to greater awareness of legal inaction in the Osborne case. As such, newspapers reported “the Osborne case had become such an embarrassment to the [police] force that Urbanoski was assigned to it full-time and instructed to get it into court.”³⁴ Many Indigenous voices made it clear that there was not silence around Helen Betty Osborne's story. The Ininiw and Anishnaabe communities challenged, and still challenge, the overwhelming silence surrounding the story of Helen Betty Osborne's life and murder in mainstream society.

³⁰ “Native women's collective aims to flex political muscle,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 6 May 1989, 3.

³¹ “Native women's collective aims to flex political muscle,” 3.

³² Kevin Prokosh, “Long-ignored native theatre gets attention under Highway,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 4 November 1989, 31.

³³ Prokosh, 31.

³⁴ Fred McGuiness, “Book takes close look at Pas murder,” *Brandon Sun*, 24 February 1989, 14. Constable Robert (Bob) Urbanoski was from the Thompson, Alberta RCMP detachment. Hundreds of officers worked on Osborne's case between 1971 and 1987; however, Bob Urbanoski “achieved more resolution for the Osborne case in the two-year span that he worked on it than all other officers in the previous fourteen years who had been working on the case.” Hamilton and Sinclair, 2-24.

Helen Betty Osborne's story raises several important historical questions: What is Helen Betty Osborne's story? How should historians understand her life and murder? What does her story tell us about the history of Indigenous women in late twentieth to early twenty-first century Canada? To answer these questions I examine both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources such as police and governmental reports, provincial legal inquiries, newspapers, stories, and poems. An examination of Helen Betty Osborne's story, through Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources, showcases historical and ongoing power relations between white and Indigenous communities; challenges assumptions about 'how things are' and 'how things were' for both communities; and pushes historians to understand Indigenous women's experiences and stories in different ways.

Historiography and Methodology

Mary Jane Logan McCallum argues Canadian historians have spent little time considering the history of Indigenous women in Canada.³⁵ Historians have spent even less time reflecting on violence and the role of colonialism in that ongoing violence, and there is almost no attention given to understanding this history from an Indigenous perspective.³⁶ Historical literature on Indigenous men and women in Canada is "heavily

³⁵ Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940-1980* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 225-230.

³⁶ While critiquing the tendency of historians to emphasize 'Indigenous absence,' McCallum does not deny the very real history of marginalization and colonization of Indigenous people in Canada. Instead, McCallum attempts to show how marginalization and displacement did exist simultaneously with other experiences, such as agency, resistance, and renewal. See McCallum, 230-240. Having introduced the term 'colonialism' and using it throughout my MRP, I will provide a definition. I use Mary Ellen Kelm's definition from her work *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-50* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998). Kelm uses the term 'colonialism' to describe "a process that includes geographical incursion, sociocultural dislocation, the establishment of external political control and economic dispossession, the provision of low-level social services, and, finally the creation of ideological

weighted on the eras of early contact and the fur trade.”³⁷ Within this field, historians focus on Indigenous labour history, where scholarly debate centres on whether Indigenous cultures and communities “declined” or “persisted” after the fur trade period.³⁸ These “decline or persist” studies typically focus on Indigenous men rather than Indigenous women because economic and political historians have long perceived Indigenous women as secondary players in history.³⁹ However, the scarcity of histories

formulations around race and skin colour, which [has been historically understood as positioning] the colonizers at a higher evolutionary level than the colonized.” See Kelm, xviii-xix. Kelm argues that Indigenous voices have always existed and challenged colonial strategies for assimilation and control. Along with resisting, Indigenous people were sometimes able to maintain distinct identities for themselves, their communities, and their cultures. In many ways, it can be argued that Indigenous people never gave up their power; rather they maintained a power to resist, to create, to control, and to survive. Kelm, xviii.

³⁷ McCallum, 9.

³⁸ Other variables of the “decline or persist” debate include continuity, equality, co-operation, autonomy, accommodation and partnership, as well as coercion, dependence, and dominance. See McCallum, 4-5. The histories of the fur trade range from macro to micro; from Canada’s fur trade in its entirety to collective or individual urban or rural communities’ relationship with the fur trade. For a broad understanding of the fur trade in Canada see: Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984). For specific information on Indigenous women and the fur trade in Canada see: Celia Haig-Brown and David A Nock, *With Good Intentions: Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal Relations in Colonial Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006); Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1980).

³⁹ In recent scholarship, Canadian historians focus has centered on Indigenous peoples of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries; however, this scholarship “stops at around 1940, leaving the study of the 1950s and the 1960s largely to sociological research.” The few historians who have explored the 1940s-1960s are largely political historians, who typically focus on “the White Paper, Indian political organizations, modern treaties, and land claims.” McCallum, 10-12. McCallum commends and criticizes work in this field. She argues that there is considerable room for growth in this specific field and in the entire field of Indigenous women’s history. For more information on Indigenous peoples and treaties see: James Rodger Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Harold Lerat and Linda Ungar, *Treaty Promises, Indian Reality: Life on a Reserve* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2005). For information on Indigenous peoples and political organizations see: Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). It is important to note that all women in Canadian history were seen as secondary characters. With the growth of the field of Women’s History in the 1970s, and later, Gender History, historians have produced scholarship fore-fronting the experiences and roles of women in Canadian society while simultaneously challenging perceptions of these experiences and roles as ahistorical. Since the

of Indigenous women was, and is, challenged. Sylvia Van Kirk directly confronts the notion of Indigenous women as secondary characters. Van Kirk explains that Indigenous women had greater agency in fur trade society than previously noted in Canadian history.⁴⁰ She argues Indigenous women must be recognized and brought to the forefront of fur trade history and society.⁴¹ Van Kirk's emphasis on Indigenous women and their agency led to, and influenced, further scholarship on Indigenous women by gender historians.

Gender scholars since Van Kirk have examined the intersections of gender, race, and class, and how they in turn, shape identity in colonial contexts. Sarah Carter argues that the Canadian state, during times of early settlement, "promoted a cluster of negative images of Aboriginal women."⁴² Central to these images were depictions of Indigenous women as "dissolute, dangerous, and sinister."⁴³ She describes how these

1990s, the field has grown exponentially and there have been a wide variety of approaches to Gender History.

⁴⁰ Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 1-9. Van Kirk's work revolutionized the historical understanding of the North American fur trade and introduced entirely new areas of inquiry in Women's, Social, and Indigenous history. Christine McFarlane, "Review of Finding a Way to the Heart," (March 2012), <http://www.ammsa.com/content/2012-review-finding-way-heart>, last accessed April 15, 2015. Also see: Brown, *Strangers in Blood* as well as Haig-Brown and Nock, *With Good Intentions*.

⁴¹ Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 9-13. For more information on Indigenous women in Canadian history see: Robin Jarvis Brownlie and Valerie Korinek eds., *Finding a Way to the Heart: Feminist Writings on Aboriginal and Women's History in Canada* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2012). This scholarly work examines race, gender, identity, and colonization from the early 19th century to the late 20th century.

⁴² Sarah Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion: Constructing the 'Indian Woman' in the Early Settlement Era in Western Canada," *Great Plains Quarterly* 13 (1993): 147. For more information on historical representations of Indigenous women see: Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1997); Jo-Anne Fiske, "By, For, and About: Shifting Directions in the Representations of Aboriginal Women," *Atlantis* 25.1 (Fall/Winter 2000), 11-27; Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992).

⁴³ Carter, "Categories and Terrains of Exclusion," 147. Adele Perry also argues that race and gender were central to the making of colonial and national identities. She explains how imperial

negative images fell into a binary of “the Indian Princess/Indian Squaw.”⁴⁴ Carter notes the ‘Indian Princess’ was the positive image, as she was often depicted “as saving or aiding white men while remaining aloof and virtuous.”⁴⁵ Her opposite, the ‘Indian Squaw,’ was often depicted negatively as “squalid and immoral,” living on the edge of town as those in power claimed, “her physical removal or destruction can be understood as necessary to the progress of civilization.”⁴⁶ Authorities used this ‘Indian Squaw’ characterization to define Indigenous women and justify racial segregation in settled communities.⁴⁷ Carter explains that the either/or binary leaves little room to consider the diversity of Indigenous women or the complex identities and roles of these women in

reformers encouraged Indigenous groups to conform to European standards and to occupy racially segregated spaces. Adele Perry, *On The Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 2-5. For a broad understanding of constructions of feminine and masculine identities in Canadian history see: Nancy Forestell, Kathryn McPherson, and Cecilia Morgan, eds., *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays on Femininity and Masculinity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

⁴⁴ For further information on the “Indian Princess/Indian Squaw” binary see: Rayna Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex: The Image of Indian Women in American Culture,” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women’s History*, ed. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990), 15-21; Janice Acoose, *Iskwewak-Kah’ Ki Yau Ni-Wathankik—Neither Indian Princess nor Easy Squaws* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1995).

⁴⁵ Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion,” 146-147.

⁴⁶ Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion,” 147. To further inform my analysis I use Mark Anderson’s, *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers*, as it is the first book of its kind to examine the role of Canada’s newspapers in perpetuating the myth of Indigenous inferiority; Mark Anderson, *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2011), 1-2. Anderson argues that newspapers in Canada have continually imagined Indigenous women within the “stereotypical binary of the ‘Indian princess/Indian squaw.’” He notes that newspaper coverage of Helen Betty Osborne’s murder had implicit representations of the ‘Indian Squaw,’ as her case reveals extreme racism and sexism and places Osborne at the edges of the white community. Anderson explains that stereotypical images of ‘Indian princesses’ or ‘Indian squaws’ falsify Indigenous women’s realities and suggest that these stereotypical images are accurate representations. As a consequence, these images foster cultural attitudes that encourage sexual, physical, verbal, or psychological violence against Indigenous women. See Anderson, 193-194. For further media and discourse analysis pertaining to the “Indian Princess/Indian Squaw” binary see: Acoose, *Iskwewak-Kah’ Ki Yau Ni-Wathankik*; Carter, *Capturing Women*; Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion”; Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex.”

⁴⁷ Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion,” 158.

Canadian society.⁴⁸ Carter concludes that the image of Indigenous women as ‘immoral and corrupting influences’ predominated in non-Indigenous society.⁴⁹

Likewise Jean Barman argues during settlement in Canada, particularly when white colonial women were absent, it was generally accepted that Indigenous women could be used to satisfy what was perceived to be natural sexual needs.⁵⁰ Barman notes the colonial campaign to tame Indigenous sexuality “so profoundly sexualized Aboriginal women that they were rarely permitted any other form of identity.”⁵¹ Much like Carter, Barman explains that negative images of Indigenous women have proved extraordinarily persistent throughout history. In particular, Indigenous women’s sexuality was portrayed as “wild and out of control,” often making Indigenous women appear provocative in their actions.⁵² I build on these works, along with others in the field, to contextualize how gender, power, race, and identity came together in a manner that made it possible for four white men to be in a position of power where they could act

⁴⁸ Acoose’s, *Iskwewak--kah' Ki Yaw Ni Wahkomakanak* challenges the historical and socio-cultural creation of the ‘Indian Princess/Indian Squaw’ binary, arguing that the binary is not an accurate depiction of Indigenous women while simultaneously providing histories of Indigenous women in Canada. Acoose, 1-5.

⁴⁹ Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion,” 158.

⁵⁰ Jean Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900,” *BC Studies: The British Columbian Quarterly* 115-116, (Fall-Winter 1997-98): 272.

⁵¹ Barman, 288.

⁵² Barman, 289. Franca Iacovetta also examines how values were placed on all Canadian women’s bodies based on their race. She argues that throughout Canadian history, being female as well as being members of a specific racial, ethnic, or class group, affected what women could or could not do, how they saw themselves and others, and in turn, how others saw them. She contends the historical experience of marginalized women was one of struggle as society characterized marginalized women as “strangers” in Canada. Franca Iacovetta, *Sisters or Strangers: Immigrants, Ethnic, and Racialized Women in Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 15-40.

violently toward Helen Betty Osborne and turn her into a “squaw” for their own sexual gratification.⁵³

Scholarship on constructions of gendered-racialized identities has led to further analysis of violence against Indigenous women and studies of gendered-racism in the legal system. Sherene Razack examines the murder of Pamela George, an Indigenous female from Saskatchewan. Razack argues Pamela George’s two male murderers, the judge and jury, and the white community in Saskatchewan, believed George belonged to a space of prostitution and Aboriginality. This socially-constructed space dehumanized George as “the gendered, racial, other,” resulting in her murder.⁵⁴ Razack explains that white settlers, specifically males, benefitted from colonialism as it placed white men in a position of power. In the cases of Pamela George and Helen Betty Osborne, the white men responsible for these women’s murders inscribed a gendered and racial ideal of “easy Indian women” on their bodies.⁵⁵ This construction made

⁵³ I use discourse analysis to examine headlines, articles, accompanying photographs, language used to describe and memorialize Osborne and her murderers, the general tone and themes in the coverage, and information that was present in some articles, but missing in others. To inform my analysis, I turn to gender historians such as Natalie Zemon Davis, Joan Scott, and Kathleen Canning to answer questions about gendered identity. For more information see: Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History, Revised Edition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) and Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class, and Citizenship* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006). Natalie Zemon Davis argues that when examining sources, historians must respect their subjects and their sources, and be careful to not treat them as “neither a passive victim of historical injustice nor as constant heroines struggling to change society.” Natalie Zemon Davis, “‘Women’s History’ in Transition: The European Case,” *Feminists Studies*, Vol. 3 No. 3/4 (Spring-Summer 1976): 86. When analyzing newspapers, I am cognizant of Davis’ argument to not replicate the binary of “passive victim/constant heroine” in my work.

⁵⁴ Sherene Razack, Chapter Five, “Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George,” in *Race, Space and The Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2002), 123-156.

⁵⁵ I use the body as a method of historical analysis as it is one of the key ways that scholars can consider the impact of colonialism on the lives and in the stories of Indigenous women. Mary Ellen Kelm argues that even though “the body is a social construction [that] is not to say that the body is unreal, but simply that it is unfinished, always under construction by the forces of society

George and Osborne vulnerable to violence, as their murderers believed these women were sexually available based on their race and gender.⁵⁶ Similarly, Joan Sangster argues racial stereotypes of Indigenous women as “weaker in moral outlook and more sexually promiscuous” fundamentally shaped the sexual regulation of Indigenous women through the law.⁵⁷ I build on these works, along with others in the field, to

and culture.” The idea of the body as a subject of study closely coincided with the growth of imperialism where theories of evolution and racial differences became linked. As a result, notions of “whiteness” emerged alongside the creation of the “other,” and “whiteness” became equated with power. She further notes the “white, male, middle-class, heterosexual body” was considered more valuable and more normal than any other. See Kelm, xvi-xvii. As such, Indigenous women’s bodies were double burdened by the racism and sexism of patriarchal colonialism. Kathleen Canning argues bodies can act as inscriptive surfaces, “on which laws, morality, values, [and] power, are inscribed.” See Canning, 169-171. I build on these works, along with others in the field, to better understand how social-constructions of gendered-racial identities were inscribed on Helen Betty Osborne’s body. For more information on the field of ‘body history’ see: Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Emily Martin, *The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987); Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick eds., *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1999); Bryan S. Turner, *The Body and Society* (London: Sage, 1996). For more information on the historicized body in a Canadian context see: Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality”; Sangster, “Native Women, Sexuality and the Law”; Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas eds., *Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013) and Myra Rutterdale and Katie Pickles, eds., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada’s Colonial Past* (British Columbia: UBC Press, 2011). Canadian scholars such as Jean Barman and Joan Sangster explore the various ways that Indigenous women’s bodies and sexuality were historically constructed. Both scholars draw on the work of Foucault and feminist writers such as Ann Laura Stoler to emphasize the significance of gender, race, sexuality, and colonialism as interrelated systems of inequality.

⁵⁶ For a broad understanding of violence against women see: Karen Dubinsky, *Improper Advances: Rape and Heterosexual Conflict in Ontario, 1880-1929* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Dubinsky provides one of the first books to explore the history of sexual violence in Canada. Her work explores the stories of four hundred Ontario women, whose experiences of sexual violence appeared before the courts between 1880 and 1929. Over half of these women left the courtroom with no resolution, their stories disbelieved, and their intimate lives subjected to scrutiny by police, jury, judge, and court reporters. Dubinsky argues that there is a link between masculinity, sexuality, and domination, with regard to sexual conquest and violence against women. Dubinsky, 1-10.

⁵⁷ Sangster, 317. Similar to Sangster’s work, Constance Backhouse examines how police have under-protected women and in some cases how these women have been the objects of police abuse. She argues that this under-protection exemplifies gendered-racism within the legal system. See Constance Backhouse, *Carnal Crimes: Sexual Assault in Canada, 1900-1975*

analyze gendered-racism in the legal system in The Pas and to understand the gendered-racialized violence Helen Betty Osborne experienced.

For some scholars, Indigenous women have been hard to find and hard to hear. This is not, however, because Indigenous women were not speaking. Throughout Canadian history, Indigenous women expressed themselves clearly, to one another, to their families and communities, to the world around them in all its diversity, and to fur traders, missionaries, Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments, and historians.⁵⁸ Given this, it is not surprising that Indigenous women have written a significant body of literature forefronting Indigenous women's stories and experiences. Most recently, Indigenous scholars are producing 'situated knowledge' about the past that "stresses and validates the importance of lived experiences and...incorporates these experiences within theory and history."⁵⁹ Indigenous historians insist scholarly work cannot replicate colonialism in its research questions, conceptual practices, methodologies, or modes of representation.⁶⁰ Kim Anderson examines how non-Indigenous groups historically define Indigenous women, how this sense of identity was influenced by European culture, and how Indigenous women have resisted these negative images.⁶¹ Likewise,

(Toronto: Irwin Law, 2008), 55. See also: Warren Goulding, *Just Another Indian: A Serial Killer and Canada's Indifference* (Markham, ON: Fifth House Publishers) and Dara Culhane, *The Pleasure of the Crown: Anthropology, Law and First Nations* (British Columbia: Talon Books, 1998).

⁵⁸ Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend, "In the Days of our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada—Introduction," in *In The Days of our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada*, ed. Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 3.

⁵⁹ Kelm and Townsend, 4.

⁶⁰ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (New York and London: Zed Books, 1999), 151.

⁶¹ Kim Anderson, *A Recognition of Being: Reconstructing Native Womanhood* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2000), 2-7. Similar to Anderson's work, Christine Miller discusses the problems and issues that confront Indigenous women in Canada, as well as how these women

Mary Jane Logan McCallum argues, “in many ways Indigenous men and women have been cast in static, pre-modern, and one-dimensional identities, and their twentieth-century experiences have been reduced to a singular story of decline and loss.”⁶²

McCallum explains that the “singular story” is not representative of Indigenous men and women’s history.

McCallum highlights the importance of telling individual stories and showcasing Indigenous men and women’s agency in Canadian society. While this means hearing Indigenous perspectives in traditional historical sources such as census material, newspapers, and the like, it also means listening to these voices in Indigenous stories and poems, both oral and written.⁶³ Though historians have long broadened their source base to include a variety of perspectives and voices, they have not often heard

have resisted colonialism. Miller argues that Indigenous women have been subject to many hardships throughout Canadian history. Despite these considerable obstacles, Indigenous women have always actively worked to recreate their identity and improve the quality of life in their community. Christine Miller, *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom and Strength* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 1-8. See also: Lina Sunseri, *Being Again of One Mind: Oneida Women and the Struggle for Decolonization* (British Columbia: UBC Press, 2010); Gail Guthrie Valaskakis ed., *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community and Culture* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2011) and Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence, *Strong Women Stories: Native Women and Community* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003). For information on Indigenous communities in urban settings, see Bonita Lawrence, *Real Indians and Others: Mixed-blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). For a broad understanding of Indigenous women in Canada, see: Mary Ellen Kelm and Laura Townsend eds., *In The Days of our Grandmother’s*.

⁶² McCallum, Back Cover.

⁶³ As Helen Betty Osborne’s murder was only covered provincially, primarily in Manitoba and Alberta, the following papers contain the most information: *The Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Brandon Sun*, *The Dauphin Herald*, *The Selkirk Journal*, *The Swan Valley Star and Times*, *The Lethbridge Herald*, and *The Medicine Hat News*. When searching for information on the life and death of Helen Betty Osborne, I conducted a key word search of her name in *Newspaper Archives*, the largest national online newspaper database. For more information visit: www.newspaperarchives.com. This database allows researchers to search by name, date, or publication. I have collected, transcribed, and analyzed 127 newspaper articles ranging in date from 1987-1999. I have chosen this date range based on availability and relevance to the life and death of Helen Betty Osborne.

Indigenous voices in these sources or reflected on Indigenous ways of sharing and understanding the past. If historians pay attention to these sources, they will realize Indigenous peoples have been talking for a long time. Christine Miller argues research should bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous historians together in their work.⁶⁴ I build on both non-Indigenous and Indigenous historians to situate Osborne's story within broader stories of Indigenous women's experiences in Canadian history.⁶⁵ To be clear, the power relations that are inherent between scholars and those they study are not easily undone. The historian's use of sources and the way they write about these

⁶⁴ Miller, *Women of the First Nations*, 16.

⁶⁵ There is currently no available data for the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Manitoba in 1971. However, in 2014, there were 111 missing or murdered Indigenous women recorded in Manitoba. Eighty-three of these women were murdered in the past fifty years. Though the specific years are not recorded, a range is provided from 1961-2014, which equals 111. About a third of the murders are unsolved. Twenty-eight women are currently missing, including eighteen in the last decade. The average age of the missing and murdered women is twenty. Maryanne Pearce, "An Awkward Silence: Missing and Murdered Vulnerable Women and the Canadian Justice System," PhD Dissertation (Ottawa, Canada, 2013): 3, <http://www.ruor.uottawa.ca/handle/10393/26299>, last accessed November 2, 2014). There has never been a provincial study done on Manitoba in connection to Helen Betty Osborne and the many missing and murdered Indigenous women's cases that followed hers, let alone a study that provides historical context and Indigenous perspectives and methodologies. There have been many sociological and provincial studies of missing and murdered Indigenous women in British Columbia that I build on. I use these studies as a framework to analyze the historical context of The Pas, Manitoba, in correlation to the murder of Helen Betty Osborne, as well as the silence surrounding her story in both the community and the media. See: Leslie Robertson and Dara Culhane, *In Plain Sight: Reflections on Life in Downtown Eastside*, (Vancouver: Talonbook, 2005); Maya-Robin-Ghanie, "An Olympic Failure: At least 137 Native Women Murdered or Missing in B.C. since 1980," *The Dominion* 64 (Feb 12 2010), 30-31. www.dominionpaper.ca/articles/2982, last accessed January 19, 2015 and The Pacific Association of First Nation's Women and Ending Violence Association of BC Women's Hospital and Health Centre, "Researched to Death: B.C. Aboriginal Women and Violence," (Vancouver: Ending Violence Association of BC, 2005). For information on the sociological and provincial studies of missing and murdered Indigenous women in British Columbia see: Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, "Highway of Tears Symposium Recommendations Report: A collective voice for the victims who have been silenced" (British Columbia: June 16, 2006); Wally T Oppal, "Forsaken: The Report of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry Executive Summary" (British Columbia, November 9 2012) and the Vancouver Police Department, "The Tragedy of Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada: We Can Do Better," (Vancouver: June 2011), <http://vancouver.ca/police/assets/pdf/reports-policies/missing-murdered-aboriginal-women-canada-report.pdf>, last accessed December 5, 2014.

sources can sometimes “continue to work to veil the ‘epistemic violence’ that has occurred between Indigenous and colonial settlers in Canada’s history.”⁶⁶ As such, creating space for a plurality of voices within our written work is of the utmost importance.⁶⁷ I use both Indigenous and Western sources in my work to respect and contribute to this change.

⁶⁶ Kelm and Townsend, 6.

⁶⁷ Lisa Priest started her career at the *Windsor Star*, moved to the *Ottawa Citizen*, and later covered the Osborne murder and subsequent trial for the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Her first book, *Conspiracy of Silence*, was based on the outgrowth of her coverage. In February 1989, after publishing *Conspiracy of Silence*, she did a cross-Canada promotional tour of her “true-crime” book. Throughout her work, Priest’s tone is journalistic. She provides the “facts” of the crime and works to expose injustice; however, for a book that is about the murder of an Indigenous woman, much of the book is focused on Osborne’s four murderers. There are no mug shots of Osborne’s killers. Instead, the four teenagers are shown with smiles, wearing shirts and ties. Priest provides in-depth information on their childhoods, education, their marriages, jobs, and relations with townspeople during the sixteen years after Osborne was killed. Priest also does not employ any citations for all of the sources that she uses. When using Priest in my MRP, I use community members’ names in the paper and cite their quotations under Priest in my footnotes. Colgan testified that within six months of Osborne’s murder he had told Arthur Fishman, his boss at the time of the murder, of his involvement in the crime. As such, much of Priest’s information on the level of public knowledge of the murderers identities came from Fishman. See Hamilton and Sinclair, 47. Despite its limitations, there is value to Priest’s work. Priest portrayed Osborne as “a warrior who fought four men the best she could.” Jorge Antonio Vallejos, “Breaking the Silence About Canada’s Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A review of ‘Conspiracy of Silence,’” *Black Coffee Poet*, (February 14, 2011), <http://blackcoffeepoet.com/2011/02/14>, last accessed May 20, 2015. Priest also attempts to include Indigenous voices in her work, mainly Osborne’s brother Isaiah, sister Cecilia, and mother Justine. *Conspiracy of Silence* is titled appropriately. Priest tells the story of the *now* most well known case of an Indigenous woman murdered in Canada and how a town helped cover it up. She attempts to provide the historical context of The Pas, but lacks understanding and analysis of this colonial context and how it relates to the murder and the following silence of the Helen Betty Osborne case. In a May 5, 1989 interview with the *Medicine Hat News*, Priest commented, “this story is just so bizarre, so unbelievable.” See Bruce Cheadle, “Shocking story describes Manitoba murder,” *Medicine Hat News*, 5 May 1989, 23. My MRP places The Pas, Manitoba in historical context, as Osborne’s story is not bizarre. It is very believable given the history of colonialism in Canada, and the particular local history of The Pas. I also include Indigenous voices found in stories, poems and newspapers to provide details of Osborne’s life and death. For more information on Indigenous sources that specifically address Helen Betty Osborne see: Marilyn Dumont, “Helen Betty Osborne,” in *A Really Good Brown Girl* (London, ON: Brick Books, 1996), 20. Dumont is an Ininiw poet that has written a variety of works on ending violence against Indigenous women. In 2008, a graphic novel titled *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne: a Graphic Novel*, written by David Alexander Robertson and Madison Blackstone was published. To aid in the creation of the novel, the Bensons, the family that

Though the newspaper coverage of Helen Betty Osborne does not provide many details of her life, this does not mean that details of her life are non-existent. Murray Sinclair, Indigenous Judge and Associate Commissioner for the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*, spoke about the significance of Helen Betty Osborne's story. He said:

Every life is a story and in each life there are teachings. Towards the end of the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry's* examination of the murder of Helen Betty Osborne, we observed that the tragedy of her death would not only be in her dying or that she was murdered, but the tragedy would also be if we forgot her. If we did not remember what she was about and if we did not learn from her life and from what happened to her.⁶⁸

I use a range of oral and written Indigenous stories and poems to understand details of Helen Betty Osborne's story from the Indigenous perspectives.⁶⁹ This includes stories about Indigenous women and those that help me understand story as method and story

Osborne lived with, as well as many of her friends, and Indigenous Judge Murray Sinclair, who co-wrote the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*, came together to share stories about, and feelings toward, "a beautiful young woman they loved very much." For further details on Osborne's story, see: David Alexander Robertson and Madison Blackstone, *The Life of Helen Betty Osborne: A Graphic Novel* (Winnipeg: In a Bind Publications, 2008), 1-29.

⁶⁸ Sinclair was asked to speak at the 2008 release of a graphic novel titled, "The Life of Helen Betty Osborne" because of his work on the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry*. Associate Chief Judge C.M. Sinclair, "The Life of Helen Betty Osborne," *YouTube* (November 2, 2009), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5-X2hUTI9s>, last accessed February 15, 2015.

⁶⁹ Waubgeshig Rice, *Legacy* (British Columbia: Theytus Books, 2014); Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree, Critical Edition*, (Winnipeg: Portage and Main Press, 1999); Louis Bird, "00-30-Our Voices-Traditional Education," *Bird Number: 615*. James Bay Area, (2003), 2. *Our Voices*. <http://www.ourvoices.ca/>, last accessed February 15, 2015; Louis Bird, "00-27-Our Voices-Original Cree Culture," *Bird Number: 507*, James Bay Area, (2002), *Our Voices*. <http://www.ourvoices.ca/>, last accessed February 15, 2015; Joseph Boyden, "Hey Boys," in *Kwe: Standing With Our Sisters*, (Amnesty International Publications, 2014); Helen Knott, "Invisible," Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women, (9 December 2013), www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications, last accessed March 5, 2015 and Dumont, "Helen Betty Osborne."

as an Indigenous way of knowing the world.⁷⁰ I live, work, and learn on the Anishinaabe territory of Nipissing First Nation. Helen Betty Osborne lived, learned, and worked on Ininiw territory. As such, I listen to Louis Bird, an Ininiw Elder and storyteller, to try to understand Helen Betty Osborne's worldview.⁷¹ In doing this I work to understand Helen

⁷⁰ Historians must look to Indigenous voices and sources. If, as historians, we do not turn to Indigenous sources to develop an understanding of the past from Indigenous perspectives, then we perpetuate the silence in the media and historiography of Indigenous women. This means looking at Indigenous stories, poems, and plays that Western historians may characterize as fiction or mythology, but for Indigenous peoples, these sources are honoured and recognized sources of history. Indigenous knowledge is varied and complex. It changes depending on the individual, community, and territory. For Anishinaabe and Ininiw peoples, stories are central to understanding the world. Stories are a way of knowing. Indigenous knowledge is often shared orally through methods that Indigenous researchers identify as "storytelling, yarning, talk story, re-storying, re-remembering, and the conversational method." Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 40. See also: Jill Doerfler, Heidi Kilwetinesipiik Stark, and Nilgaanwewidam James Sincalir, eds., *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013), xvii. Stories exist along a broad spectrum, from traditional or sacred to histories and news. Story is a method used to teach about cultural beliefs, values, customs, rituals, history, practices, relationships, and ways of life, while simultaneously honouring the past, recognizing the present, and providing visions of the future. Though story as method is found within Western qualitative research, when used in an Indigenous framework, story as method invokes several distinctive characteristics. Story as method within an Indigenous framework is often linked to a particular Indigenous epistemology or knowledge, it comes from the land, it most often involves an Indigenizing aim, and focuses on remembering, remaking, and rewriting stories with an emphasis on agency, resistance, and resurgence. Margaret Kovach, "Conversational Method in Indigenous Research" *First Peoples Child and Family Review: An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives, and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews*. Vol. 5 No. 1, (2010), 40-48. For further information on Indigenous Methodologies see, Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2008) and Leanne Simpson. "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, and Society*. Vol. 3, No. 3. (2014), 1-25.

⁷¹ Louis Bird, Omushkego storyteller and Elder, lives in Peawanuck, Ontario, near the mouth of the Winisk River on Hudson Bay. During the first twenty years of his life, he received a traditional cultural education from his parents and Elders. In his adult years, he took various jobs ranging from a tractor operator, line cutter, economic development officer, and translator. These jobs took him to various communities along the west coast of James and Hudson Bay, allowing him to meet Elders and learn more stories. Bird is cited as a "gifted performer" and has been invited to storytelling gatherings across Canada, the United States, and the Netherlands. He is currently working on the University of Winnipeg's Centre for Rupert's Land Studies, "Omushkego (Swampy Cree) History Project," in hopes that he will be able to record and preserve Omushkego language, cultural heritage, and stories. Bird's recordings comprise more than 340 hours of material, which is the largest collection of such recordings. To access all of

Betty Osborne's story in ways respectful of her worldview, cultural beliefs, values, customs, rituals, and history. The utilization of Indigenous methodologies and non-Indigenous methodologies insures that a plurality of voices are heard when telling Helen Betty Osborne's story.

Understanding Helen Betty Osborne: Her Life Before The Pas, Manitoba

Helen Betty Osborne grew up on the Norway House Indian reserve with her friends and family.⁷² One of Osborne's brothers, Isaiah, described the family home as a log cabin with "one giant bedroom and a stove in the middle."⁷³ It was warm, comfortable, and allowed everyone to be together. Helen Betty Osborne's mother, Justine Osborne, explained, "Helen used to clean up all the time and help me with the kids."⁷⁴ One of Helen Betty Osborne's sisters, Cecilia Osborne, recalled that, "Helen was always there for us...we'd play outside, playing hide and seek."⁷⁵ When Osborne was not looking after her siblings, or helping her mother around the house, she and her brother Isaiah Osborne would run home from school, drop off their belongings, and

Louis Bird's stories, or for more information on the project, visit the website:
<http://www.ourvoices.ca>.

⁷² The Norway House Cree Nation, part of the Omushkego First Nation, is located between the Nelson River and Playgreen Lake. Two communities share the name Norway House: Norway House Indian Reserve and the adjacent non-treaty community of Norway House. The Norway House Cree First Nation received its name when the Hudson Bay Company established a post near the northern outlet of Lake Winnipeg in recognition of the Norwegian labourers that built the post. Norway House was a key point in the Hudson Bay Company's transportation system. The Swampy Cree people of the area participated in the fur trade as cargo handlers and trappers. In 1952, when Helen Betty Osborne was born, the population of both Norway House and the Norway House Indian Reserve totaled 2,700. See Priest, 24. As of 2011, which is the most recent statistic, the total Indigenous population was 4,758. The main source of employment is fishing, trapping, hunting, and logging. For more information see: The Government of Manitoba, "First Nation Community Profiles, Manitoba Region: Norway House" (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2011), 86-89.

⁷³ Priest, 23.

⁷⁴ "Osborne's Pain Remains 21 Years After Murder," *Brandon Sun*, 23 February 1992, 2.

⁷⁵ Catherine Mitchell, "Cecilia Osborne weeps for Helen, doubts Johnston is telling the truth," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 December 1996, 3.

head to “The Bay;” a yellow and green store on Rossville Island. At “The Bay,” the Osborne siblings listened to local stories of births, deaths, and community legends told by Elders.⁷⁶

While at “The Bay,” Osborne may have heard stories similar to the ones that Louis Bird has recorded. She may have heard stories where “the wind, the storm, the weather, and the things that are on the land, or the seasons, or the water, or in each animal...is a spirit, and has a spirit.”⁷⁷ She likely learned about living on the land, as “survival training or everyday training” was central to life for Ininiw people. She would have been “encouraged to learn the responsibilities of a home: to help, to assist, to participate, and in the nighttime to sit and listen to the elders.”⁷⁸ Through the stories she heard, Osborne built connections to the land that she grew up on. She learned to:

Develop a spiritual belief in dreams. Dreams play a very important part of development...a young person is trained to start when [they] are about ten or even five, to try to sleep away from their mother and father, so in that way, to overcome the fear. As we know it, every young person is afraid to be away from [their] parents when they are small. That fear is the first thing to conquer of the young person.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Priest, 23.

⁷⁷ Bird, “00-30-Our Voices-Traditional Education,” 2. The land, animals, and weather in correlation to spirits, was a very common theme in Bird’s stories. For more information, listen to Louis Bird, “00-27-Our Voices-Original Cree Culture.”

⁷⁸ Bird, “00-30-Our Voices-Traditional Education,” 3.

⁷⁹ Louis Bird, “00-30-Our Voices-Traditional Education,” 2-3. Bird explains that legends and stories can be divided into at least six stages or six versions for the audience. Legends can be used in such a way so that they can be educational for children, teenagers, adults, and Elders. Bird describes that stories are “a medium to be able to bring out something that is necessary for the individual to understand, or to be aware of.” Bird, “00-30-Our Voices-Traditional Education,” 4.

Leaving her family and territory as a young woman to go to The Pas for school may well have been a fear Osborne had to conquer.

When Helen Betty Osborne was growing up in Norway House she had many dreams and aspirations. Isaiah Osborne recalled his sister “liked school and didn’t want to stop...she wanted to make something of herself and she was smart enough to do it...she wanted to work and have a family.”⁸⁰ Similarly, her mother explained, “Betty’s dream was to finish high school and go on to university...she tossed around the idea of being a nurse, teacher, or lawyer.”⁸¹ Both of Osborne’s parents spoke Cree and English while she was growing up. Her experiences with dual languages made it easier for her in school, as the teachers delivered their lessons in English.⁸² Osborne chose The Pas rather than Thompson, Manitoba for her high school experience because she had a relative, Marion Osborne, living on The Pas Indian reserve.⁸³ While away at school, Helen Betty Osborne spent a lot of her time with her friends and boyfriend, Cornelius Bighetty. Osborne and Bighetty shared similar dreams, as they both wanted to go to Brandon University after high school. Bighetty and Osborne loved to play cards and Ping-Pong at the Indian Affairs office. They made an interesting pair at Ping-Pong as

⁸⁰ Priest, 23.

⁸¹ Priest, 21.

⁸² Priest, 32.

⁸³ Hamilton and Sinclair, 21. Indigenous communities have inhabited The Pas, Manitoba for at least five thousand years. Its name reflects its Indigenous history as well as its geography. The origin of The Pas is thought to be from the Cree word *W’passkwayaw*, which translates as “like a wooded narrows.” See Hamilton and Sinclair, 6. The Pas is situated at the convergence of the Saskatchewan, Pasquia, and Carrot Rivers, which made it a natural centre for trade. Henry Kelsey was the first European to visit the area and camp there in 1689 as an employee of the Hudson’s Bay Company. In 1749, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, French Canadian fur trader and explorer, visited the area with his sons and built a fort, naming it Fort Paskoyac. The Pas became a major trading post and remained so throughout the fur trade era. The Government of Manitoba, “First Nation Community Profiles, Manitoba Region: Norway House” (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 2011), 86-87.

Bighetty was over six-feet and Osborne was five-foot one.⁸⁴ On most weekends, Bighetty and Osborne would either take the train to visit his relatives in Pukatawagan or she would go to watch Bighetty play basketball or volleyball at their school.⁸⁵ Though Helen Betty Osborne developed a strong community while away at school, life in The Pas was not always an easy place for her.

Spatial and Racial Segregation in The Pas, Manitoba

Beginning in 1989, in the aftermath of the Osborne trial, but at the onset of the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*, the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported, “Helen Betty Osborne was a person in the wrong place at the wrong time.”⁸⁶ The newspaper also claimed, “it was Helen Osborne's fate to be roaming the streets of The Pas alone, distraught over an erratic romance with another native, on one night that was wilder than usual.”⁸⁷ And yet, in a population of just 8000 people, “an average of 45 arrests on any given weekend night,” was a common occurrence in The Pas.⁸⁸ Helen Betty Osborne’s murder was far more complicated than her simply being a victim of bad timing. In 1971, The Pas was both geographically and racially divided by the Saskatchewan River.⁸⁹ On the north side of the river there were two “Indian” reserves

⁸⁴ Priest, 34-35.

⁸⁵ Priest, 35-36.

⁸⁶ Scott Van Wynsberghe, “Saga of murder and racism.” *Winnipeg Free Press*. 25 February 1989, 24.

⁸⁷ Wynsberghe, 24.

⁸⁸ Wynsberghe, 24.

⁸⁹ The Indigenous bands around The Pas signed an adhesion to Treaty 5 in 1876. In 1882, their reserve was surveyed and set aside. In 1906, when the railway was being extended to The Pas, the band surrendered 500 acres, which made up a major part of the town site. The land was to be divided into lots for sale to those who would settle in the area. The band maintains that the department improperly handled the sales and the proceeds. Currently, The Pas Band claims it has not received its full entitlement of reserve land owed by the government under the treaty. Hamilton and Sinclair, 6-7.

and one Metis settlement.⁹⁰ On the south side there were the “white” residences, as well as the shops, the hospital, government offices, churches and most of the schools—all run by a predominantly white population. Few Indigenous citizens were employed in the town, although the white community relied on Indigenous men and women as consumers.⁹¹ Many of the homes on the south side, or the white side of the river, were small aluminum-sided ones that were occupied by working-class families. In contrast, on the north side, or the “Indian” side of the river, there were visibly smaller, pastel-coloured homes.⁹² The four white men who were responsible for Osborne’s murder lived on the south side of town and within that space they rarely saw Indigenous community members. That is unless it was through government initiatives such as boarding students for school. Helen Betty Osborne boarded with the Bensons, on the south side of town. Irrespective of the presence of young Indigenous peoples like Osborne, segregated housing was evident and alongside this were feelings of “fear, suspicion, and dislike” in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community of The Pas.⁹³

These feelings were enacted and sustained in the local restaurants and the movie theatre. Indigenous people were told to sit on the left side of the theatre otherwise the usher would remove them from the building.⁹⁴ Claudia Butler, a local resident of The Pas, recalled that “a native friend of [hers] was asked to return to the

⁹⁰ In 1971, two thousand Indigenous peoples lived on The Pas Indian reserve. Hamilton and Sinclair, 5-6.

⁹¹ The Pas was both an industrial and tourist centre. Many of the white residents were employed within these industries. The Pas also had a substantial farming and logging economy in the area. The logging economy led to a major-government sponsored pulp and sawmill complex. Hamilton and Sinclair, 7.

⁹² Wynsberghe, “Saga of murder and racism,” 24.

⁹³ Hamilton and Sinclair, 7.

⁹⁴ Leann LaSalle, “Inquiry witness recollects segregation in The Pas,” *Brandon Sun* 9 August 1989, 2.

roped off area for Indians in the Gateway [hotel] when he was invited by [my husband and I] to sit...the waiter [came] over to tell him he had to go sit on the other side and took him by the arm.”⁹⁵ Such examples make clear that many white citizens viewed Indigenous people as temporary and transient rather than accepted citizens of “their” community on the south side of town. Conceptions of ‘community’ helped shape this understanding. Benedict Anderson proposed the following definition of a nation: “it is an imagined political community...[that] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”⁹⁶ In The Pas, the white population imagined themselves as a separate and distinct community from the Indigenous population. Though the separation was ideological and imagined, the division between the communities was also “real.” Racialized boundaries were so powerful that they created a well-defined “us” opposed to, and distinct from, an alien “them.” The imagined differences in the white community of The Pas created the “other,” in the Indigenous population. The “othering” of the Indigenous population was dangerous as it gave the white community power and made Indigenous men and women, like Helen Betty Osborne, more vulnerable to police scrutiny and regulation, injustice, sexualization, and violence.⁹⁷ The “othering” of the Indigenous population was also evident in the education system in The Pas.

⁹⁵ LaSalle, 2.

⁹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 6.

⁹⁷ Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies*, xvii.

Helen Betty Osborne attended Margaret Barbour Collegiate, which maintained a population of both Indigenous and white students.⁹⁸ Vel McAdams, a teacher at the school in 1971, explained, “there was a fair amount of animosity between the older white and Indian kids...and there were a lot of [white] parents who were resentful of [Indigenous] kids who were getting their way paid.”⁹⁹ The hostility in the hallways and in the white community toward Indigenous students can be attributed, in part, to the history courses that these students would have studied. In Beatrice Culleton Mosionier’s *In Search of April Raintree*, we learn that April Raintree’s history lessons characterize Louis Riel as “a crazy-half breed.”¹⁰⁰ She learns about “the Indians and the various methods of tortures they had put the missionaries through. [It was] no wonder they were known as savages” as well as the “fact” that “Metis and Indians were inclined to be alcoholics.”¹⁰¹ Based on the “history” Raintree learns and the experiences she has in school and in foster care, she feels “being a half breed meant being poor and dirty. It meant being weak and having to drink. It meant being ugly and stupid. It meant living off

⁹⁸ Margaret Barbour Collegiate was named after a long serving The Pas high school teacher. The school was expanded in 1968, one year before Osborne arrived, to accommodate a large body of both Indigenous and white students. Hamilton and Sinclair, 6-7.

⁹⁹ Priest, 31. It is a common misconception that Indigenous peoples have their way “paid” in school. This misconception stems from a lack of understanding about treaty rights and obligations, and the significant and ongoing ideological and structural inequalities in access to formal education for Indigenous peoples. For more information see: Marie Battiste, *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (Sakatoon: Purich Publishing, 2013); Verna J. Kirkness, Sheena Selkirk Bowman, and Canadian Education Association, eds., *First Nations and Schools: Struggles and Triumphs* (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1992) and Lorna Williams, “Urban Aboriginal Education: The Vancouver Experience,” Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (Ottawa, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Beatrice Culleton Mosionier, *In Search of April Raintree, Critical Edition* (Winnipeg: Portage and Main Press, 1999), 42. Mosionier tells the story of Cheryl and April Raintree, who lived in Norway House and later moved to Winnipeg with their family before being placed in foster care. The two sisters endure many hardships, as well as many achievements, as they grow up. See Mosionier, 24-38. One of the many merits of this work is that it provides a powerful view of the effects of racism in Canadian society, and how Indigenous worldviews, through storytelling, can reveal that racism.

¹⁰¹ Mosionier, 42, 46.

white people. And giving your children to white people to look after.”¹⁰² Similarly, in Waubgeshig Rice’s work *Legacy*, Indigenous student Eva May Gibson’s teacher tells her, “there’s no reason your communities should be poor. There should be more of your peers in classes like this. The problems your people have are completely self-perpetuated.”¹⁰³ The education system in Canada has told an unbalanced and racialized story that has created misconceptions of Indigenous people throughout Canadian history.

These misconceptions shaped many of the white communities’ perceptions of Indigenous people living in The Pas. Members of the white community often called Helen Betty Osborne a “squaw” when she walked to school.¹⁰⁴ Though Osborne and every other Indigenous student attending Margaret Barbour Collegiate had their own unique identities, they were grouped together as “Indians” or “squaws” by the curriculum, their teachers, and their peers. They became “an image on which [white

¹⁰² Mosionier, 47.

¹⁰³ Waubgeshig Rice, *Legacy* (British Columbia: Theytus Books, 2014), 26. Waubeshig Rice is an Indigenous author as well as a journalist for the CBC who developed a strong passion for storytelling as a child while learning about being Anishinaabe. The stories his elders shared and his unique experiences growing up in Wasauksing First Nation, Ontario, inspired him to story-tell. *Legacy* is his second story published by Theytus Books, an Indigenous company out of British Columbia. On January 12, 2015, *Our Ottawa* interviewed Rice about *Legacy* and he explained that he dreamed up his characters so that they would be unique, but relatable to many Indigenous people living in Canada. Rice not only wanted to tell the story of struggle that many Indigenous people go through in Canada in the past and present, but also the story of strength, resistance, and resurgence among Indigenous people. As such, *Legacy* is a story of the Gibson family’s journey through a succession of tragedies and their reactions to those tragedies. The survivors within the Gibson family are trying to reclaim their identities as Anishinaabe people, move past the tragedies that they have endured, while also remembering their lost loved ones. The story is set on a First Nation reserve in Northern Ontario as well as the University of Toronto. These stories provide us with Indigenous understandings and perspectives. Waubgeshig Rice, “Waubgeshig Rice on his debut novel, *Legacy*,” *Our Ottawa* (January 12, 2015), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/waubgeshig-rice-on-his-debut-novel-legacy-1.2895333>, last accessed: February 17, 2015. See also: Waubeshig Rice, “About Waubgeshig Rice.” (June 19, 2014), <http://www.waub.ca/about/>, last ccessed February 17, 2015.

¹⁰⁴ Priest, 39.

students and the community] could attach all the stereotypes they learned growing up” about Indigenous people.¹⁰⁵ The colonial history of Canada was missing in all classrooms in The Pas, and yet, the colonial history of displacement, where Indigenous people were confined to reserves and forced to migrate in search of work, housing, and education, is what brought Osborne into contact with her four white male murderers.

Imagined Differences: Constructions of Indigenous Women Within The ‘Squaw/Princess’ Binary

The Pas was not only spatially and racially segregated, it was ideologically segregated. This had particular consequences for Indigenous women, as Helen Betty Osborne lived “in a town with fewer Indians than ideas about Indians.”¹⁰⁶ In the late twentieth century, newspapers, and many citizens alike, imagined Indigenous women within the “stereotypical binary of the “Indian princess/Indian squaw.”¹⁰⁷ The dangers of this binary, particularly for Helen Betty Osborne, are clearly demonstrated in a 1989 “Letters to the Editor” section of the *Swan Valley Star and Times*. In this section, Alex

¹⁰⁵ Rice, 21. Though *Legacy* was written in 2014, the story of Eva May Gibson’s life and murder in Toronto in 1989 can be connected to Osborne’s experiences in The Pas between 1969-1971. Eva May Gibson, born October 13, 1969, was an Anishinaabekwe student from the Birchbark Indian Reserve on the north shore of Lake Huron, almost halfway between Sudbury and Sault St. Marie, Ontario. In high school, Gibson decided that she wanted to become a lawyer, but to achieve this goal she would have to move off reserve to obtain her post-secondary education. See Rice, 7-8, 48. Much like Osborne, Gibson had to move to obtain her education. She travelled four hours south to attend the University of Toronto, where she enrolled in a General Bachelor of Arts program. While away at school, Gibson lived in a predominately white residence off of Spadina Avenue in Toronto, Ontario, with another Anishinaabekwe student, Melissa. The two girls believed that they were placed together because they were the only two Indigenous students in residence and the administration thought that they would share common backgrounds, making it easier to settle into the city life together. However, the girls felt that by pairing them together, it actually isolated them from the other non-Indigenous students, making it hard to build connections and friendships. Likewise, the girls experienced segregation not only in residence, but also in the classrooms on campus where they often sat alone at the right side of the classroom, or in the distinctly separated lounge titled, “the Native Student Lounge.” Rice, 9.

¹⁰⁶ Dumont, “Helen Betty Osborne,” 20.

¹⁰⁷ Anderson, *Seeing Red*, 193.

Young writes, “We’ll never know if [Helen Betty Osborne] was a promising youth looking for a better life, or if she was another Indian girl doomed to a life of raising children, collecting welfare cheques, and wallowing in alcohol. Whatever the case, she did not deserve to die.”¹⁰⁸ Osborne necessarily sought the life of the “Indian princess” and assimilation, as her own life could not have been satisfactory in this citizen’s estimation. Rather her only option was “wallowing in alcohol” or “selling her body” or “collecting welfare;” the degrading and meaningless life of a doomed “squaw.”¹⁰⁹

Indigenous authors have long been telling stories of this binary and the dangerous ways it leads to gendered-racial violence. Mosionier tells the story of a rape trial where the white defendants justified their actions on the basis that the woman was “Native and a prostitute.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, in Rice’s work, a man in an alley attacked Eva May Gibson, where he called her a “squaw” because she refused to have sex with him. The man murdered Gibson.¹¹¹ In many Indigenous stories, white citizens believed that Indigenous women were “squaws” that had “native girl syndrome,” which was described as:

¹⁰⁸ Alex Young, *Letters to the Editor*, “Dear Editor,” *Swan Valley Star and Times*, 4 May 1989, 12. The case of Catholic Bishop Hubert O’Conner provides further evidence of this binary. In July 1996, Catholic Bishop Hubert O’Conner defended himself against charges of having raped or indecently assaulted four young Indigenous women three decades earlier. O’Conner admitted to sexual relations with two of the women, but the inferences that “they had made him do it,” were very clear in his testimony. See Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality,” 269. O’Conner insinuated that the Indigenous women “had dragged him down and led him astray. The temptation exercised by their sexuality was too great for any mere man, even a priest and residential school principal, to resist.” Barman, 270.

¹⁰⁹ For further information on the “Indian Princess/Indian Squaw” binary see: Green, “The Pocahontas Perplex,” 15-21.

¹¹⁰ Mosionier, 127-128. On January 11, 1972, April Raintree was attacked and pulled into a car when attempting to retrieve Cheryl’s belongings from her place of residence. Mosionier, 123.

¹¹¹ Rice, 43-45.

Start[ing] out with fighting, then running away, [and] lies. Next come the accusations that everyone in the world is against [them]...And when [they] go on [their] own, [they] get pregnant right away, or [they] can't find or keep jobs. So [they] start with alcohol and drugs. From there, [they] get into shoplifting and prostitution, and in and out of jails. [They] live with men that abuse [them]. And on it goes. [They] end up like [their] parents, living off society.¹¹²

This “singular story” of the “Indian squaw” is not representative of Indigenous women’s everyday lives.¹¹³ And yet, the image of the “Indian squaw” was prevalent in the mindset of the white community of The Pas and in the media.

These ideas were clearly at work in discussions of Osborne’s murder. Newspapers stated her attackers were, “operating on the assumption that Aboriginal women were promiscuous and open to enticement through alcohol or violence.”¹¹⁴ In the minds of these four men, Helen Betty Osborne belonged in the “squaw” category, erasing her story, her life, and family in Norway House and The Pas. Based on the evidence and testimony of twenty-seven witnesses, what mattered to these four men was that Osborne was an Indigenous woman perceived as “compliant” and out alone “in the early-morning hours of Nov. 13.”¹¹⁵ The fear of being labeled as an “Indian squaw” was evidenced in Moisioner’s work when April explains that she is “happy that she doesn’t look as ‘Indian’ as Cheryl. She is glad that she can blend in better.”¹¹⁶ The

¹¹² Mosionier, 62. For further examples of “native girl syndrome,” see: Rice, *Legacy*; Boyden, “Hey Boys.”

¹¹³ McCallum, *Indigenous Women*, Back Cover.

¹¹⁴ Hamilton and Sinclair, 97-98.

¹¹⁵ Hamilton and Sinclair, 97-99.

¹¹⁶ Mosionier, 46.

restrictive nature of the “Indian squaw” identity that was inscribed on Indigenous women’s bodies in colonial societies made these women afraid to be themselves, as they were fearful of the consequences of understandings of them as sexual, vulnerable, and disposable. In her poem, “Helen Betty Osborne,” Marilyn Dumont writes, “Betty, if I set out to write this poem about you it might turn out instead to be about me or any one of my female relatives.”¹¹⁷ Dumont’s statement about the universality of violence against Indigenous women is echoed in each of the aforementioned stories and is inextricably connected to the “Indian princess/Indian squaw” binary. The binary made Indigenous women more prone to violence because it constructed an image of Indigenous women as easy, lower class, “Indians.”¹¹⁸ In the minds of the four men responsible for Osborne’s murder, she was never seen as “somebody’s daughter, never somebody’s mother, never an aunt, a sister, [and] a friend. Never [was she] seen as strong, as proud, as resilient.”¹¹⁹ Instead, the four men “believed native girls were easy and less likely to complain if a sexual proposition led to violence.”¹²⁰

Further perpetuating the binary, newspapers used language such as “compliant native” and “snatched off the street,” when discussing Helen Betty Osborne. This language suggests Osborne, simply because she was Indigenous, could be “snatched”

¹¹⁷ Marilyn Dumont, “Helen Betty Osborne,” 20.

¹¹⁸ In Joseph Boyden’s, “Hey Boys,” one of his friends Tanya who is “a performer for the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, a mother of two, and a talented singer” experienced the very real reality of this binary. Tanya was followed, in broad daylight, down the street and verbally assaulted “by a white man who made it clear to her that he wanted to fuck an Indian girl and she was the one. He went on, as she tried to walk quickly away, to describe all of the things he was going to do to her.” See Boyden, “Hey Boys,” 15. Tanya stated that “she [couldn’t] count how many times this has happened to her and to most of her friends. Her daily experience of simply walking down the street is like living in a horror movie, a movie you can’t escape from, one that doesn’t end.” Boyden, “Hey Boys,” 14-16.

¹¹⁹ Helen Knott, “Invisible,” 1.

¹²⁰ Dumont, “Helen Betty Osborne,” 20.

off the street without any struggle or resistance, and would be available and willing to have violent sex with these four men.¹²¹ This was not the case. Yet, when newspapers described Osborne as a “nude, bloodied body [that was] clad only in boots [and] had been severely beaten and stabbed about fifty times with a screwdriver,” she was reduced to a body rather than a person. This also suggests Osborne did not, or could not resist these men.¹²² Indigenous scholar Dawn Martin Hill argues, “Indigenous women in Canada are viewed as disposable and so brutal victimization against them is justified because victims are stigmatized as prostitutes, street people, and addicts—even if they are not.”¹²³ Helen Betty Osborne was abducted, sexually assaulted, brutally beaten, and murdered because she was a young, Indigenous, female that had stereotypes of prostitution inscribed onto her body by her murderers. This stereotype dehumanized her as the “gendered, racial, other,” resulting in her victimization and murder.¹²⁴ Contributing to this stereotype, the newspapers used language like “fate,” “wrong place,” “wrong time,” and “roaming the streets,” when describing Osborne’s murder, suggesting she victimized herself. Rather, the perpetrators made her a victim because of two circumstances beyond her control—she was born Indigenous and female; a potentially lethal combination in The Pas, Manitoba. Adding to this lethal combination was the white communities’ perceptions of the four men responsible for Osborne’s murder.

¹²¹ “Killers guilt unquestioned, judge says,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 10 September 1988, 3.

¹²² “Rape, slaying tied to drunken ride,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 25 November 1987, 2.

¹²³ Gilchrist, “Newsworthy Victims,” 4.

¹²⁴ Razack, “Gendered Racial Violence and Spatialized Justice,” 123-156.

Imagined Differences: The 'Innocent Boys/ Murderous Men' Binary

The four white men responsible for Osborne's murder were viewed either as upstanding citizens or victims of troubled childhoods. Either way, the white community did not want to admit that they were capable of murder. They continually described the men as *boys*, suggesting child-like innocence and uncertainty.¹²⁵ The *Brandon Sun* highlights the 'innocent boys/murderous men' binary, writing that "when [the] RCMP saw the nude, mutilated body of Helen Betty Osborne sixteen years ago near The Pas, they began looking for a mentally deranged killer, not thinking four boys could have been involved in the slaying."¹²⁶ This binary of boys or murderers shaped the RCMP's investigation and helped to construct an image of boyhood, which became equated with the four men. The binary is further evidenced in newspaper descriptions of the four men where "Jim Houghton [was] generally described as a good young guy; good student,

¹²⁵ Craig Heron describes masculinity as "a process of social construction in a particular time and place...it is a complex, fluid expression of practices, consciousness, and cultural representations historically associated mostly (though not always) with male subjects and through which most men come to be recognized as male or masculine." See Heron, "The Boys and Their Booze: Masculinities and Public Drinking in Working-Class Hamilton, 1890-1946," *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 86 No. 3, (September 2005), 412. During World War One and World War Two, and in the aftermath of these wars, Heron explains to maintain hegemonic masculine identity men had duties that they were to fulfill. Broadly, a man was identified as masculine if he was married, had children, and a home. Men also needed to provide for their families while simultaneously contributing to the economy, maintaining friendships with other-well respected men, and having a religious affiliation. In contrast to constructions of masculine identities was the construction of 'boyhood.' When men "who worked for their wages" were described as "boys" their responsibilities shift. These men were seen as living a "bachelor life," which celebrated a personal independence and freedom from responsibility or obligation, competitiveness among men, as well as the superiority of men over women, and self-expression through the body. See Heron, 417-419. Using Heron's framework, it is evident that the white community of The Pas, Manitoba saw these men as boys, which allowed these men freedom from responsibility. Heron notes that men expressed themselves through the body and in the case of Osborne the four men expressed themselves sexually and violently to the point of murder. However, the white community of The Pas, having constructed these men as boys, developed an all-forgiving "boys will be boys" mentality, which was dangerous for Helen Betty Osborne and other Indigenous women in The Pas, as it allowed men to behave carelessly and violently toward women.

¹²⁶ "Report details killings: Police sought deranged man," *Brandon Sun*, 24 February 1988, 2.

good curler, good golfer, good at baseball. If local students had such a vote, he'd have been elected most likely to succeed. His father was a salesman for a meat company.”¹²⁷ In the minds of the white community, Houghton was an upstanding citizen because he portrayed desirable, masculine qualities. He contributed to the economy and the community through his involvement in sports.¹²⁸ Newspapers also claimed, “Lee Colgan was a thief, an alcoholic, and a drug trafficker. After he left school he worked as a store clerk.”¹²⁹ Despite his questionable actions, newspapers noted that Colgan contributed to the economy and came from a well-respected, working-class family.¹³⁰ Regardless of the rumours about Houghton and Colgan’s involvement in the Osborne murder, it “didn’t stop townspeople from talking to the boys and their parents or inviting them out to parties, dinners, and Sunday barbecues.”¹³¹ In the community, Houghton and Colgan were “good boys.”

Compared to Houghton and Colgan, Johnston and Manger were depicted less favourably in the media and the community. Newspapers stated, “Dwayne Johnston was a brakeman for CN. He came from a broken home. He was fascinated by

¹²⁷ McGuinness, “Book takes close look at Pas murder,” 16. James Houghton lived across the street from Lee Colgan. In November 1971, Houghton was twenty-three-years-old and lived at home while attending technical school. The Houghton’s and the Colgan’s both had cottages at Clearwater Lake and Houghton had baby-sat Lee Colgan as a child. Despite the difference in their ages they were friends. Hamilton and Sinclair, 9.

¹²⁸ Colin Howell argues that sports helped shape masculinity as men were able to compete, challenge their strength and endurance, showcase their skills, display their dedication and loyalty to their team, and maintain sportsmanship. Colin Howell, “A Manly Sport: Baseball and the Social Construction of Masculinity,” in *Gender and History in Canada*, ed. Parr and Rosefeld, 187-210.

¹²⁹ Fred McGuinness, “Man denies killing girl, journalist tells inquiry,” *Brandon Sun*, 23 February 1989, 18.

¹³⁰ The *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* describes Lee Colgan as an eighteen-year-old student at Margaret Barbour Collegiate who worked part time at a local clothing store. He lived at home with his parents. His father managed the government liquor store and his mother was a music teacher. They were respected members of the community. Hamilton and Sinclair, 9.

¹³¹ Priest, 79.

motorcycles and travelled with a crowd of local bikers. He hated Indians and often bragged that he had killed five of them.”¹³² For the white community of The Pas, even though they protected all four men, it was more believable and fathomable that boys of troubled childhoods, such as Johnston, could commit a crime.¹³³ Based on the description, and perception, of Johnston as a “troubled boy,” the RCMP may have believed that they had a stronger chance of conviction for Johnston, rather than Houghton, and that is why the most effort was put into his case. While Johnston’s case was at trial, Andrea Wiwcharuk, a Crown witness, told the jury that when she was fourteen she was at a party with Dwayne Johnston. While at the party, Wiwcharuk overheard Johnston ask some party guests, “Do you know what it feels like it kill

¹³² McGuinness, “Book takes close look at Pas murder,” 18. The *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* explained that Dwayne Johnston was eighteen, the same age as Lee Colgan, in 1971. Johnston had dropped out of high school to work. He was a member of a motorcycle gang. His parents had separated and he boarded with a local family. The report noted that many Indigenous students testified at the inquiry that Johnston often made racial comments toward them. Hamilton and Sinclair, 10.

¹³³ Jonathan Swainger argues that, “in the aftermath of the Second World War [there was] panic over a perceived rise in teen trouble and juvenile delinquency.” See Swainger, “Teen Trouble and Community Identity in Post-Second World War Northern British Columbia,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol 47 No 2, (Spring 2013): 150. Though Johnston was a teenager, he was depicted as a boy in the community and media, and later described as a “biker,” which fell into the social deviant or juvenile delinquency category of behavior. Based on the rising panic over juvenile delinquency in postwar Canada, white community members of The Pas, Manitoba, could justify Johnston serving time because having him “off the streets” would better protect their own children and their community. Swainger, 151-152. For more information on masculine identities and constructions of boyhood see: Craig Heron, “The Boys and Their Booze,” 411-452; Bryan Hogveen, “‘Can’t You Be a Man? Rebuilding Wayward Masculinities and Regulating Juvenile Deviance in Ontario, 1860-1930,” *PhD Dissertation* (University of Toronto: Centre of Criminology, 2003); Stephen Maynard, “Horrible Temptations: Sex, Men, and Working-class Male Youth in Urban Ontario, 1890-1935,” *Canadian Historical Review* 78 (June 1997): 191-235; Thomas W. Dunk, “It’s a Working Man’s Town: Male Working-class Culture in Northwestern Ontario” (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1991) and Mark Rosenfeld, “‘It was a hard life.’ Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920-1950” *Historical Papers* (1988): 237-79.

someone? It feels great.”¹³⁴ Wiwcharuk also recalled “Johnston gesturing as if stabbing someone...[and] while Johnston made stabbing motions with his hands, he said: ‘I picked up a screwdriver and I stabbed her and I stabbed her and I stabbed her.’”¹³⁵ Wiwcharuk’s description of Johnston’s language and actions further placed him in “the troublemaker” category, making Johnston into a less acceptable citizen of the white community. Similar to Johnston, newspapers noted, “Norm Manger was a drunk and n'er-do-well. His father was a widower [and] a carpenter who apparently had little time for three sons and a daughter. Manger worked briefly at Churchill Forest Industries, but regular employment generally interfered with his drinking and marijuana-smoking.”¹³⁶ Manger was never charged for Osborne’s murder, which was surely connected to his whiteness and may have been related to the white communities construction of Manger as an abandoned child that needed protecting and saving from drug and alcohol abuse.¹³⁷ Regardless of their backgrounds, the aura of boyhood made it easier for the community to go silent and protect all four men. Yet, the evidence shows that the four men were not boys. Their actions were premeditated. They were out searching for “an Indian girl with whom to drink and have sex.”¹³⁸ The four men felt proud of their actions

¹³⁴ Lisa Priest, “Accused bragged about killing girl, murderer trial told,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 28 November 1987, 2.

¹³⁵ Priest, “Accused bragged about killing girl, murderer trial told,” 2.

¹³⁶ McGuinness, “Book takes close look at Pas murder,” 18. The *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* described Norman Manger as a friend of Houghton’s. Manger was twenty-five-years-old at the time of Osborne’s murder, which made him the oldest out of the four men responsible for her murder. Manger’s mother was an Indigenous woman who died when he was two years old and he didn’t see his father much when he was growing up. After completing grade twelve, Manger worked at a succession of jobs in Northern Manitoba and in Winnipeg. By 1971, he had not been working for a year and had been drinking heavily. He did not have a permanent home. Hamilton and Sinclair, 9-10.

¹³⁷ For further information on the regulation of “troublemakers” or juvenile delinquents see: Swainger’s “Teen Trouble,” and Heron’s “The Boys and Their Booze.”

¹³⁸ Hamilton and Sinclair, 14.

as “they bragged about what they had done,” when they were drunk.¹³⁹ Though they openly bragged, making their identities and involvement in Osborne’s murder very clear, the community protected these four men for sixteen years because they were white citizens of “their” community.

Conceptions of community are based on imagined constructions of communion.¹⁴⁰ The white community of The Pas adopted a racialized conception of community that was shaped by the colonial context they were living in. To understand the colonial context Sherene Razack explains:

A white settler society is one established by Europeans on non-European soil. Its origins lie in the dispossession and near extinction of Indigenous populations by the conquering Europeans. As it evolves, a white settler society continues to be structured by a racial hierarchy. In the national mythologies of such societies, it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus *become* the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship...Mythologies or national stories are about a nation’s origins and history. They enable citizens to think of themselves as part of a community, defining who belongs and who does not belong to the nation.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Fred McGuinness, “Book takes close look at Pas murder,” 16.

¹⁴⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

¹⁴¹ Razack, “Introduction,” *Race, Space, and The Law*, 1-2.

In The Pas, the power of whiteness that Razack describes is clearly evident.¹⁴² Many newspapers stated, “white society in The Pas closed ranks behind the murderers because they were white and Helen Betty Osborne was an Indian.”¹⁴³ Many white citizens insisted, “people still ask [us], come on, did everyone in town really know who the killers were? And I said, yeah, we all knew but we didn’t say anything.”¹⁴⁴ Whiteness enabled the community to be indifferent to Osborne’s murder.¹⁴⁵ Steve Maskymetz, a friend of Lee Colgan, claimed he did not go to the RCMP with information regarding

¹⁴² ‘Whiteness’ is a social construct applied to white human beings. The power of whiteness is manifested when racialized Whiteness becomes transformed into social, political, economic, and cultural behaviour. White culture, norms, and values in all of these areas become the standard against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured and usually found to be inferior. Racism is based on the concept of whiteness, which is enforced by power and violence. Whiteness is a constantly shifting boundary separating those who are entitled to have certain privileges from those whose exploitation and vulnerability to violence is justified by their not being white. For more information see: Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women*; David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1999).

¹⁴³ McGuiness, “Book takes close look at Pas murder,” 16.

¹⁴⁴ Priest, ‘Part One: Betty.’ In the aftermath of the Osborne murder, the local bookstore in The Pas originally did not want any copies of Priest’s work, but later agreed to a shipment of six books. Gordon Sinclair Jr., “Scuttlebutt,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 17 January 1989, 5.

¹⁴⁵ The 1889 murder of an Ininiw woman identified only as Rosalie is similar to the case of Helen Betty Osborne. In her analysis of Rosalie’s case, Sarah Carter notes that there were many in Calgary, Alberta who felt that “Rosalie was only a squaw and that her death did not matter much.” Instead, the murderer gained the sympathy and support of much of the town. Carter explains that the murderer, William ‘Jumbo’ Fisk, had confessed and given himself up to the authorities, yet there were problems finding any citizens willing to serve on a jury that might convict a white man of murdering an Indigenous woman. The crown prosecutor stated that he regretted having to conduct the case, as he had known the accused for several years as a “genial accommodating and upright young man.” See Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion,” 160-161. Fisk came from a well-established family and this influenced the outcome of the first set of the ‘Rosalie trials,’ as the jury found the accused ‘Not Guilty.’ Judge Charles Rouleau refused to accept this verdict. He ordered a re-trial and instructed the jury to “forget the woman’s race and to consider only the evidence at hand ... [as] it made no difference whether Rosalie was white or black, an Indian or a negro. In the eyes of the law, every British subject is equal.” Based on Rouleau’s advice, at the end of the second trial, the jury convicted Fisk of manslaughter. Judge Rouleau had intended to sentence Fisk to life in prison, but letters written by members of Parliament and other influential people in the community who had represented Fisk as a man with good character, combined with a petition from the most respectable people of Calgary, persuaded him to impose a lesser sentence. Carter, “Categories and Terrains of Exclusion,” 160-161.

Colgan's actions in Osborne's murder because "he thought they knew [about the murder], and, if they didn't, it wasn't his responsibility to tell them."¹⁴⁶ Though Maskymetz had relevant information pertaining to Osborne's murder he did not place enough importance on Osborne to take responsibility for his knowledge. As a result of this indifference, complacency, and silence in *The Pas*, the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* noted that none of the four men "faced charges of unlawful confinement, kidnapping, accessory after the fact, or sexual assault—three of the men walked away from murder without punishment."¹⁴⁷ The report's statement highlights the dangers of imagined differences and the ways in which they support and perpetuate violence and racism.

Gendered-Racism in the Legal System

Certainly, gendered-racism in the legal system also supported the outcomes of Osborne's case, particularly the fact that it took sixteen years to bring her case to trial, and once at trial, the Crown mishandled it.¹⁴⁸ In the aftermath of the trial, members of the Norway House Indian Band noted, "the [legal] system broke down and there is a perception [in Norway House] that the system may well have broken down...because [Osborne] was an Indian."¹⁴⁹ The Norway House Indian Band is correct in their assessment of the system breaking down because Helen Betty Osborne was Indigenous. Newspapers noted, "police conducted a sporadic investigation of the crime

¹⁴⁶ Priest, *Conspiracy of Silence*, 112.

¹⁴⁷ Hamilton and Sinclair, 10.

¹⁴⁸ For further information on gendered-racism in the legal system see: Backhouse, *Carnal Crimes*; Backhouse, *Colour-Coded* and Goulding, *Just Another Indian*.

¹⁴⁹ Bradley Bird, "Band seeks reserve hearings to soothe murder case feelings," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 17 December 1988, 2.

since 1971.”¹⁵⁰ They further explained, “many residents of The Pas knew who were involved in the murder, including Provincial Sheriff Gerald Wilson, who heard a confession by one of the men at a beverage room, but did nothing about it.”¹⁵¹ Wilson, “who had been sheriff in The Pas for 18 years,” felt “there was no legal obligation...to report a murder confession.”¹⁵² However, former Deputy-Attorney-General Tanner Elton explained that the conversation between Colgan and Sheriff Wilson “was not idle bar talk—this was a detailed confession to a person who is a sheriff.”¹⁵³ Chief Oscar Lathlin of The Pas Indian Reserve, when asked about Sheriff Wilson’s actions said, “it clearly indicates the system doesn’t work for native people...I think our people will continue to feel that they have one strike against them.”¹⁵⁴

Furthering the delay in the Osborne case, newspapers stated, “the police thought they knew who was involved in the killing, but a lack of physical evidence connecting the suspect to the crime kept them from making arrests.”¹⁵⁵ There was no lack of physical evidence. The RCMP received “an anonymous letter from Michigan in May of 1972, placing the four men at the scene of the crime.”¹⁵⁶ The RCMP also had “three

¹⁵⁰ “Rape, slaying tied to drunken ride,” 2.

¹⁵¹ “Report details killings: Police sought deranged man,” 2. Lee Colgan told Sheriff Gerald Wilson about Helen Betty Osborne’s murder and his involvement. Newspapers stated Sheriff Gerald Wilson “[would] not be fired.” See William Kelner, “Keeps job,” *Brandon Sun*, 23 February 1988, 2. This article did not consist of more than thirty words and was placed in the bottom left hand corner of the newspaper. When first searching this page of the paper for the article I found it difficult to find it. The article may have been small and located in the bottom corner in hopes that it would not receive a lot of attention. Gilchrist, “Newsworthy Victims,” 13.

¹⁵² Even though Sheriff Gerald Wilson was temporarily demoted, he was reinstated with back pay. Lisa Priest, “Demoted sheriff ordered reinstated,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 14 November 1988, 4.

¹⁵³ Priest, “Demoted sheriff ordered reinstated,” 4.

¹⁵⁴ Priest, “Demoted sheriff ordered reinstated,” 4.

¹⁵⁵ “16-year-old murder case ends,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 7 December 1987, 9.

¹⁵⁶ “Report details killings: Police sought deranged man,” *Brandon Sun*, 24 February 1988, 2. It was later discovered that Catherine Dick wrote the letter. Lee Colgan told Catherine Dick of the murder shortly after it occurred. Though the police knew who was involved in the murder, they

sets of footprints leading up to the body of Osborne,” and yet, newspapers noted, “they took no casts of the footprints nor did they take imprints of the shoes of the accused.”¹⁵⁷

The RCMP also collected “the zipper on a pair of green denim pants found near Osborne’s body [and noted it] was broken [and] a brassiere, also found near the pump house, was split in two.”¹⁵⁸ Additionally, the RCMP “knew whose car had been used, and in their examination of it they found strands of Osborne’s hair, and the clasp from her brassiere, which had been torn off in the struggle.”¹⁵⁹ The RCMP had more than enough evidence to proceed with arrests for all four men, and yet, the case was only checked on intermittently for sixteen years.¹⁶⁰

Local police officers also encouraged the RCMP to interrogate all Indigenous men and women as suspects before anyone else in the town, giving the four men responsible for the murder time to prepare their story and secretly consult with a lawyer.¹⁶¹ The *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* noted the RCMP discriminated when dealing with Indigenous people. The RCMP discriminated against Cornelius Bighetty, Osborne’s boyfriend, and Annaliese Dumas, a close friend of Osborne’s. Three days after Osborne’s murder, the RCMP went to Bighetty’s house and

felt they were unable to gather enough evidence to lay charges at that point in the investigation. Hamilton and Sinclair, 2.

¹⁵⁷ “Rape, slaying tied to drunken ride,” 4.

¹⁵⁸ “Rape, slaying tied to drunken ride,” 4.

¹⁵⁹ Fred McGuinness, “Book takes close look at Pas murder,” 16.

¹⁶⁰ The case was only checked on intermittently even though RCMP had two detachments in The Pas at the time of Osborne’s murder. The rural detachment consisted of nine officers and the town detachment had thirteen officers. Both detachments fell under the Dauphin Sub-Division, which provided detachments with support services including: Identification Services, a General Investigative Section (GIS) member, and a plainclothes officer. More GIS members and plainclothes officers, stationed in Thompson, Alberta, were also available to The Pas. The rural detachment of the RCMP was in charge of the Osborne investigation. Hamilton and Sinclair, 2-24.

¹⁶¹ Hamilton and Sinclair, 40-42.

brought him into the detachment without his parents' or a Department of Indian Affairs counselors permission. This treatment is in marked contrast to the RCMP's treatment of Lee Colgan. Colgan was a year older than Bighetty, and yet, the RCMP still asked for his father's permission to speak to Colgan.¹⁶² Without informing Bighetty about why he was being questioned, or of his girlfriend's death, he was instead shown a picture of Osborne's murdered body. Bighetty fainted at the sight of the photo. Similarly, the RCMP took eighteen-year-old Annaliese Dumas, who boarded in The Pas while attending school, to the morgue without obtaining consent. Dumas was asked to identify Osborne's body. When she was unable to do so, she was thrown onto the hood of an RCMP car and continually questioned until she began to cry. At a later date, the RCMP took Dumas, again without consent, to a private spot to talk in the local countryside. This was unacceptable RCMP behaviour as there was no written policy stating people could be interrogated outside of the RCMP station. Based on this experience, Dumas left school and sought counselling. She did not return to school for four years.¹⁶³

The gendered-racism in the legal system is also clear in the case of Rebecca Ross. Ross was an Indigenous student who was the last person to see Helen Betty Osborne alive.¹⁶⁴ When police asked Ross about the night of Osborne's murder, "an assumption was made that as a native person, [she] was supposed to be heavily

¹⁶² Hamilton and Sinclair, 41.

¹⁶³ The inquiry council heard countless retellings of young Indigenous people being stopped by the RCMP for no apparent reason. At times, the RCMP stopped Indigenous students when they were walking on the street and Indigenous students were required to account for their actions. It was noted that the same inquiries were not made of white students. The council also reported white men threw many Indigenous men off the bridge in The Pas into the Saskatchewan River, but these crimes were never reported so the RCMP did not feel the need to investigate. Hamilton and Sinclair, 8.

¹⁶⁴ Hamilton and Sinclair, 40-41.

involved in alcohol.”¹⁶⁵ Police also wanted to know “how often [she] went out to a dance or a bar?”¹⁶⁶ Police made assumptions based on Ross’s identity. They assumed she liked to drink and was “weaker in moral outlook and more sexually promiscuous,” simply because she was Indigenous.¹⁶⁷ The Pas RCMP officers also informed the council for the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* that “[police] were aware of white youths’ cruising the town, attempting to pick up Aboriginal girls for drinking, parties, and for sex [but] it was not in the RCMP practice to stop the cars to see if the [Indigenous] girls were of age or if they were going willingly.”¹⁶⁸ The negligence and assumptions made by police officers made it dangerous for Indigenous women like Rebecca Ross and Helen Betty Osborne to be living in The Pas. Here, as with elsewhere in colonial contexts, the blame automatically fell on them for being out late and alone on the streets. It should not have mattered to police whether Helen Betty Osborne, or her friends, were out drinking, partying, or walking alone. It also should not have mattered that Helen Betty Osborne was a young, Indigenous female, but for police officers in The Pas, it clearly did matter. It mattered so much they mishandled the evidence and the case, causing a sixteen-year delay and securing one out of four convictions for Osborne’s murder. The gendered-racism within the legal system, exemplified in Helen Betty Osborne’s case, shows the dangers to Indigenous women if police under-protect them based on assumptions or ideologies they have inscribed on their bodies.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Heidi Graham, “1979 slaying haunts band,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 November 1988, 10.

¹⁶⁶ Graham, “1979 slaying haunts band,” 10.

¹⁶⁷ Backhouse, *Carnal Crimes*, 158.

¹⁶⁸ Hamilton and Sinclair, 8-9.

¹⁶⁹ Backhouse, *Carnal Crimes*, 159-60. See also: Sangster, “Native Women, Sexuality, and the Law.”

Racism was also evident in the courtroom. There were no Indigenous people on the juries that tried Houghton and Johnston as each of their counsels challenged all of the Indigenous people who were called for jury duty. The systematic exclusion of Indigenous people from a jury in an area where Indigenous people make up a significant proportion of the population shows racism in the legal system.¹⁷⁰ The jury is supposed to be representative of the area where the crime occurred. Of the subpoenas sent to potential jurors in The Pas, twenty-four percent were sent to Indigenous persons. Indigenous persons made up eighteen percent of the jury panel before they were peremptorily removed; however, evidence from *The Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba* indicated, “the percentage of Indigenous people in the area from which the jury was drawn was in excess of thirty percent.”¹⁷¹ Since the panel, in this case, was not representative of the population of Indigenous people in The Pas, the

¹⁷⁰ Hamilton and Sinclair, 85. The panel for the trial of Houghton and Johnston was drawn from the Judicial Centre in The Pas. The Judicial Centre includes the town and the reserve community of The Pas, as well as the city of Flin Flon, and the Indigenous communities of Pukatawagan, Sherridon, Moose Lake, Easterville, Brochet, and Grand Rapids. The 1987 jurors’ roll for the Judicial Centre of The Pas consisted of 800 names, of which it is estimated that 224 were Indigenous. It was decided that 100 people would be required for the panel for the Osborne case. Consequently, 247 subpoenas were sent out and 194 people responded. Eighty-nine were given exemptions by the sheriff and 105 people were placed on the panel. Of the 247 who were sent subpoenas, it is estimated that sixty-one were Indigenous. It is not possible to determine the actual number with certainty because that information is not included in the jury roll. Twenty-two of the Indigenous people on the list did not respond. Another twenty-two Indigenous people were excused from duty, for various reasons. The reasons included, but were not limited to, medical circumstances, no longer being a resident of the jury district, and some of the people subpoenaed were deceased, as well as eight people were exempted on the basis of difficulty with the English language. The language barrier was also an issue of racism in the legal system and should not have been permitted. Instead an interpreter or translator should have been provided. Eighteen Indigenous people were called and appeared as members of the panel of 105 people. Hamilton and Sinclair, 86.

¹⁷¹ It is also important to note that as of 1989, at the end of the *Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba*, Associate Chief Judge C.M. Sinclair was the only Indigenous judge in Manitoba. “Native Justice Hearings End,” *Brandon Sun*, 29 April 1989.

jury was not representative in both Houghton and Johnston's trials.¹⁷² The danger of an all-white jury in both Houghton and Johnston's trials was evidenced by an anonymous jury member's comment who stated, "there were measures [Helen Betty Osborne] could have taken to save her own life, but out of stupidity or sheer foolishness, she decided to die...she had been given fair warning that she should consent to having sex with the four or die."¹⁷³ The gendered-racism evident within this comment and in the legal system in The Pas was demonstrated in many ways in the Osborne case. Gendered-racism was apparent by the manner in which the police questioned only Indigenous students, while also failing to obtain consent from their parents. When Indigenous students were brought to the morgue to view Osborne's body and were also shown graphic photos of her, it showed a lack of respect for the deceased and the Indigenous students' wellbeing. This indifference amounted to racism. The RCMP's mishandling of evidence and deferential treatment of the four men responsible for Osborne's murder also appeared to be based on their race and community status.¹⁷⁴

*Conclusion: "Helen Betty Osborne's story is timeless—and it shouldn't be"*¹⁷⁵

In 1989, CBC bought the rights to Lisa Priest's *Conspiracy of Silence*, allowing the book to be turned into a movie. In the movie, "viewers are spared the actual

¹⁷² Hamilton and Sinclair, 86-87. When the inquiry council reviewed other trials where crimes were committed against Indigenous people they found similar discrepancies with jury panels throughout Manitoba. The jury chosen for Johnston's trial consisted of two women and ten men. Four of the jurors were from The Pas and the remaining eight were from surrounding areas. Information on the jury for Houghton's trial was not available. "Judge scolds forgetful jury candidate," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 28 November 1987, 4.

¹⁷³ Priest, *Conspiracy of Silence*, 79.

¹⁷⁴ Hamilton and Sinclair, 93.

¹⁷⁵ Ininiw writer, David Robertson, inspired the title of my conclusion. For more information see: David Robertson, "Helen Betty Osborne's story is timeless—and it shouldn't be," (6 May 2015), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/helen-betty-osborne-s-story-is-timeless-and-it-shouldn-t-be-1.3093684>, last accessed May 30, 2015.

stabbing, but most everything else seems to be there—the woman’s wild screams for help, the sadistic laughter in reply, her blood-spattered face, her half-dead body being dragged into the bush, and a re-creation of the beating.”¹⁷⁶ The sequence of the beating, “was about eight minutes near the end of the movie [and] has to be one of the most harrowing ever shot for network TV.”¹⁷⁷ In addition, “there’s a glimpse of the nearly nude, purplish corpse...and as the investigation unfolds, several shots linger over the grisly photos.”¹⁷⁸ For a movie that was supposed to be discussing racism in Canada, the film instead focused on the shock-value of the murder. Bernard Zukerman, executive producer of the film reasoned that, “none of [Conspiracy of Silence] was exploitive or even especially graphic... if you go through that murder scene slowly, it’s all psychological.”¹⁷⁹ Zukerman is wrong. For Helen Betty Osborne, that murder scene was far more than psychological; it was real, it was racist, it was gendered, it was classist, it was exploitive, it had colonial roots, and it was deadly. The emphasis on the dramatization of her murder, and the lack of the necessary socio-historical context needed to understand it, further perpetuates the stereotype of Indigenous women as “squaws”. The colonial “squaw” stereotype profoundly shaped Helen Betty Osborne’s experiences in The Pas. The colonial, racist, sexist, and classist ideologies engendered in this particularly damaging stereotype of the ‘Indian squaw’ not only increased Indigenous women’s risks of violence, as evidenced in Helen Betty Osborne’s story, it also “pre-packages” Indigenous women as “bad/unworthy” victims, and influences

¹⁷⁶ Bill Anderson, “Mini Series will shock television viewers,” *Brandon Sun*, 30 November 1991, 19.

¹⁷⁷ Anderson, “Mini Series will shock television viewers,” 19.

¹⁷⁸ Anderson, “Mini Series will shock television viewers,” 19.

¹⁷⁹ Anderson, “Mini Series will shock television viewers,” 19.

media and societal responses to their victimization.¹⁸⁰ This is made clear in Lore Mirwaldi, president of The Pas Chamber of Commerce assertions that, “The Pas of 1971 was just that—1971. The Pas of 1989 has changed.”¹⁸¹ Mirwaldi’s comment implies that 1971 was a different time, a different place, and a rare occurrence. It further suggests Helen Betty Osborne was a “squaw” that was in the wrong place at the wrong time. If historians accept Mirwaldi’s argument that Helen Betty Osborne was merely a victim of bad timing or that The Pas of 1971 was a different time, place, and a rare occurrence, then they accept the premise that what happened to Osborne is rare. This assessment is fundamentally wrong.

As historians, we must understand that Helen Betty Osborne is much more than a murder statistic. We need to recognize and analyze Indigenous women’s experiences and stories in different ways, as I have done through my examination of Helen Betty Osborne’s story. Using both Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources to tell her story has challenged perceptions about ‘how things were’ in Canada, as Indigenous women’s stories are more than stories of “decline and loss.” They are also about agency, strength, and resiliency. Helen Betty Osborne was a strong Ininiw woman from Norway House Indian Reserve. Osborne’s family, friends, and surrounding community respected her, believed in her, and loved her. Osborne left her home to pursue her high school education because she dreamed of becoming a teacher, but also because of the colonial history of displacement of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This history of racial, spatial, and ideological segregation also contributed to her life being cut short.

¹⁸⁰ Gilchrist, “Newsworthy Victims,” 14.

¹⁸¹ “Murder to be focus of planned CBC movie,” *Lethbridge Herald*, 13 November 1989, 9. *Conspiracy of Silence* is a four-hour mini series that was filmed in Sturgeon Falls, Ontario because it was more accessible than the remote location of The Pas, Manitoba. Bill Anderson, “Osborne murder becomes series,” *Brandon Sun* 7 December 1990, 13.

Osborne's story has showcased historical and ongoing power relations between white and Indigenous communities. Four white men murdered Helen Betty Osborne. Her indigeneity was used to dehumanize her and protect the four white men who murdered her. This came from their constructed understanding of her as an "Indian squaw." The white communities degradation of Osborne confirmed their own identities, justified their occupation of Ininiw lands, and entitled them to the full benefits of citizenship. In the courtroom, Helen Betty Osborne was abstracted from her history, as were Johnston and Houghton. Whiteness protected the four men for sixteen years and diminished their accountability of their actions. As abstractions, neither Osborne nor her murderers could be understood in the colonial contexts in which they were rooted. The white community of The Pas attempted to silence Osborne's story and they had a history of colonialism supporting their silence. And yet, the Indigenous communities in Norway House, The Pas, and the surrounding areas would not be silenced. Osborne's community knew her story and they were telling it. I am able to write Helen Betty Osborne's story because of the resiliency of Indigenous voices.

Osborne's story has challenged assumptions about 'how things are' as Canada's colonial history is not securely tucked away in the past. There are currently 1200 missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada since Osborne's murder.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Over the past three decades, the number of Indigenous women recorded murdered or missing in Canada has been widely contested. Maryanne Pearce, a federal civil servant in Ottawa, used her PhD at the University of Ottawa's law school to create a public database of cases involving missing and murdered women. According to Pearce's research, 824 Aboriginal women have been documented as missing or murdered. Pearce spent seven years cross-referencing newspaper articles, police websites and reports, court documents and other public sources. See Pearce, "An Awkward Silence," 1-23. Her research and database provides a much-needed alternative to the Native Women's Association of Canada's (NWAC) database. The NWAC's database is widely criticized because it is private and therefore cannot be analyzed or validated. In 2010, the NWAC cited the number of missing and murdered

Each of these women's stories needs to be told. The statistics tell historians that Canada "is unsafe for the life-givers of the original peoples." They also tell historians that The Pas is not unique as violence against Indigenous women is still ongoing today.¹⁸³ The ever-increasing number of missing and murdered Indigenous women spans from East to West in this country. Tina Fontaine was Indigenous, from the Sagkeeng First Nation, and was living with her aunt and uncle before she ran away to downtown Winnipeg to see her mother. Fontaine was an excellent student who loved her family very much. The last time Fontaine was spotted "was by two cops who had pulled over a guy in his pickup truck. Fifteen-year-old Tina was his passenger. Despite her being flagged as a runaway, the cops let her go."¹⁸⁴ On August 17, 2014, Tina Fontaine's body was pulled from The Forks, the point where Manitoba's Red River and Assiniboine meet. Tina was missing for over a month before the police found her body. The police found her body stuffed inside a plastic bag. Tina Fontaine's case remains unsolved.¹⁸⁵ In February 2014, Loretta Saunders, a twenty-six-year-old Inuk Master's

Indigenous women at 582. In 2013, the NWAC increased the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women to 668. See NWAC, "What Their Stories Tell Us," 12-13. As of 2015, the RCMP stated the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women is over 1,200. RCMP, "Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview," 1-2.

¹⁸³ Jorge Antonio Vallejos, "Breaking the Silence About Canada's Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women."

¹⁸⁴ Joseph Boyden, "Hey Boys," 12. Joseph Boyden is a Canadian author of Irish, Scottish, and Anishinaabe heritage. Boyden writes about Indigenous heritage and culture. He has written three award-winning books, and edited, as well as contributed to, *Kwe: Standing With Our Sisters*. The anthology is 100 pages in length and has over fifty Canadian contributors. *Kwe* was conceived by Boyden as a way to raise awareness of the crisis facing Indigenous women in Canada. Boyden notes, "the idea for this book was born in November, from feelings of deep frustration, anger, and sorrow in the wake of yet another violent assault upon a First Nations woman...[Kwe] is a call for action. We're part of a rising chorus in this nation that demands that the federal government respond in a real way. I hope this collection draws much needed attention to the crisis." Joseph Boyden, "Kwe: Standing With Our Sisters," *Amnesty International*, (June 30, 2015) <http://www.amnesty.ca/our-work/issues/indigenous-peoples/no-more-stolen-sisters/kwe-standing-with-our-sisters>, last accessed July 2, 2015.

¹⁸⁵ Boyden, "Hey Boys," 12-13.

student who was writing a thesis about violence against Indigenous women went missing in Nova Scotia. Her body was found along a highway median in New Brunswick. It was later discovered that Saunders' roommates murdered her for money.¹⁸⁶ After the discovery of Fontaine and Saunders bodies, Saunders's cousin, Holly Jarett, logged onto Twitter and began using the phrase #AmINext, to advocate for a public inquiry into the fates of the missing Indigenous women.¹⁸⁷ As a result, the discovery of their bodies, along with the #AmINext campaign, reignited a national conversation about missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada.¹⁸⁸ Fontaine and Saunder's names became equated with the push for a national inquiry into the ever-increasing number of Indigenous women who are murdered or go missing in Canada each year.¹⁸⁹ Indigenous women make up about four percent of the population; yet, they represent sixteen percent of the nation's murder cases.¹⁹⁰ So, the blunt

¹⁸⁶ Grace Wyler, "Why are So Many Aboriginal Women Being Murdered in Canada? *Vice Press*, 28 May 2014, http://www.vice.com/en_ca/read/hundreds-of-aboriginal-women-are-being-murdered-in-canada-and-no-one-knows-why-0000311-v21n5, last accessed February 12, 2015.

¹⁸⁷ The now-famous phrase #AmINext was coined nineteen years earlier by Sarah de Vries, a victim of serial killer Robert Pickton who, in 2007, was convicted of murdering six women (though accused of murdering close to 50, most of them Indigenous) from Vancouver's downtown east side. In 1995, three years before Sarah disappeared, she wrote in a now-public journal entry: "Am I next? Is he watching me now? Stalking me like a predator and its prey. Waiting, waiting for some perfect spot, time or my stupid mistake. How does one choose a victim? Good question, isn't it? If I knew that, I would never get snuffed." Amnesty International, "Canada: Stolen Sisters—A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada," (October 2004), 53. <http://www.amnesty.ca/sites/default/files/amr200032004enstolensisters.pdf>, last accessed: November 14, 2014.

¹⁸⁸ "Am I Next?' Campaign Aims To Push Harper On Missing, Murdered Aboriginal Women," *The Huffington Post Canada*, 6 September 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/09/06/am-i-next-campaign-harper_n_5777178.html (January 17, 2015).

¹⁸⁹ Lyndsie Bourgon, "As murders and disappearances mount, Canadian women ask: 'Am I next?'" *The Guardian*, 27 September 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/27/canada-aboriginal-women-missing-fontaine-am-i-next>, last accessed October 9, 2014.

¹⁹⁰ In 2013, the RCMP created a database. This is not the first time someone has set out to catalogue the disappearances of Indigenous women. Independent organizations and researchers have expanded the often-cited list from the Native Women's Association of Canada, but the RCMP's work is the first instance of tracking data across all levels of the

message of the #AmINext campaign is not surprising then—for many young, Indigenous women, they really could be next.¹⁹¹

After reading this story about Helen Betty Osborne and those similar to her, you may be left asking “What more can we do?” Starting is not as complicated as you may think. Take in knowledge and when you’ve learned from that knowledge, give it to somebody else. Share Helen Betty Osborne’s story and consider the stories of the 1200 missing and murdered Indigenous women that came after her. Hear Indigenous voices and worldviews. Indigenous historian Christine Miller argues that research must provide information leading to the potential for change.¹⁹² With Miller’s words in mind, please reflect on this: “Helen Betty Osborne’s murder sparked the *Aboriginal Justice Inquiry*, and one of the report’s key findings was that indifference contributed to the tragedy of her murder and the miscarriage of justice that followed.”¹⁹³ What does that mean?

Canadian police force. The RCMP created the database after mounting concerns from human rights organizations and Native communities. Though the database provides new information, it does little to address the calls for an audit of missing persons cases that arose in March following the high-profile murder of Loretta Saunders, an Inuk woman. After her death, activists called on the government to stop commissioning studies and to take comprehensive action to address the epidemic of missing and murdered indigenous women. Some even said police were complicit in the disappearances and willingly ignored missing persons reports. RCMP, “Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview,” (Ottawa, 2013), 1-4.

¹⁹¹ On September 7, 2014, Sarah Rainville, a woman from Nahkawe territory, started the #ImNotNext campaign in response to the #AmINext campaign. Rainville notes that she respects the #AmINext campaign for the awareness it has brought to Canada’s missing and murdered Indigenous women and the need for a national inquiry. Building on this campaign’s awareness and call for a national inquiry, she urges Indigenous women to change the phrase to “ImNotNext so that it fosters an identity of strong Indigenous women. Rainville argues that more missing and murdered Indigenous woman should not be considered inevitable in Canada. The Huffington Post Canada, “‘I’m Not Next’ Responds to ‘AmINext?’, Reiterates Inquiry Call,” (17 September 2014), http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2014/09/16/im-not-next-missing-murdered-inquiry_n_5830830.html?utm_hp_ref=tw, last accessed 17 July 2015.

¹⁹² Miller, *Women of the First Nations*, 16.

¹⁹³ Robertson, “Helen Betty Osborne’s story is timeless—and it shouldn’t be.”

People needed to speak up. People still need to speak up. So it's your turn. I do it through writing. Find your way.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ My call for action was inspired by Cree writer David Robertson's blog, "Helen Betty Osborne's story is timeless—and it shouldn't be."

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