

NATIVE WOMEN ACTIVISM AND MOTIVATION: MISSING AND
MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

By

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NATIVE WOMEN ACTIVISM AND MOTIVATION: MISSING AND MURDERED
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Abstract: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) is a grassroots movement spearheaded by Indigenous women across Turtle Island (North America). Native women continue to put themselves in harm's way to protect our future generation, regardless of emotional, physical, and/or mental burnout. There is a chance our Native women and girls will never feel safe. The question arises, what motivates them to continue doing this work knowing that they may never see change during their lifetime? With this research I sought to share space and embrace Native women stories to highlight the motivation behind their continued strength as MMIW leaders/activists. Native traditionalism can be described as holding land and places as having the highest possible meaning with all our statements made with the land in mind. Storytelling is a form of ceremonial Native practice. Narrative Inquiry as a methodology utilizes stories and stored experiences of a small group of people as data. Data is developed using interviewing and reflexive journaling. The data was analyzed with thematic analysis, a qualitative method used to identify, report, and analyze data for the means produced in an emerge organically by people, situations, and events (Riessman, 2008). This study had a total of six participants with five completing two one-hour-long Zoom interviews and one completing a one-hour-long Zoom interview. Of the six participants, four opted to have their personal name and organization name included in the study. The interpretation of results was through the lens of an Anishinaabe Ikwe, Ojibwe woman. Although the Native women participants from this study do not all share their identity with the Ojibwe, as a Native researcher the themes organically surfaced through the collection of their stories. The results of this study highlight the overall spiritual and community driven resiliency these Native women hold. One main theme, Mindimooyenh, and four subthemes emerged from the study, Aakwa'ode'ewin, Nbwaakaawin, Mnaadendimowin, and Zaagidwin.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Before I start the colonial academic introduction to this research study it is important that I introduce myself and the reason I chose this topic to research. My name is Amanda Young, and I am Hidatsa of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation (MHA Nation) on the Fort Berthold reservation and I am Anishinaabe Ikwe, Ojibwe of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa tribe on the Turtle Mountain reservation. I grew up on the Turtle Mountain reservation with my mother and was surrounded by violence. Many of my peers experienced sexual violence and died in unnatural circumstances. If it wasn't for the love and protection of my mother, I would have as well. I personally did not know this was uncommon until I left my reservation and started to attend a predominately white college.

Starting college, I read more and more about the issues that plague Indian Country. I personally had not heard of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) while I was in my community even though we have been greatly impacted. The statistics about MMIW honestly scared me, although I knew of this reality, it was something about seeing it on paper that instilled an intense fear. What also scared me is the fact that just being a Native woman puts me and others at great risk for death. I knew that if someone wanted to hurt me, they could get me, and nothing would happen. I was always on edge. I sought out other Native women and

und strange comfort in our collective fear. My fear eventually turned to anger which prompted action.

We educated ourselves and sought out collaboration to help bring awareness to MMIW and possible change. Our journey so far has been filled with happiness as well as extreme pain. We lost two young Native women in North Dakota, both from my communities. Only one received national attention while the other young Native woman did not. Olivia Lone Bear is from Fort Berthold reservation. She was 32 years old and was last seen in October 2017. Her family reported her missing and the FBI was called. From personal experience I can say the FBI did not stay very long. After the FBI left, Olivia's family continued to search for her. They unfortunately found her body inside a truck that was submerged 21 feet under Lake Sakakawea, about 1 ½ miles from her home. To this day, there are still no suspects and no arrests in her murder. I used to go to the gas station where she was last seen, and I think of how easy it is for someone to come and take a life without repercussion. No one talks about Olivia except our community. People have forgotten about her. Now she is known as a statistic not the beautiful mother, daughter, sister, and aunty she was.

Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind was 22 years old when her life was taken. Savanna has family from Turtle Mountain and is also enrolled in the Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe. Savanna was 8 months pregnant when she went missing in August of 2017. Savanna's mother called the police and told them of the last person they knew Savanna had contact with, the woman who lives upstairs in their apartment complex. The police went to the apartment upstairs and supposedly investigated the apartment twice, finding nothing. Savanna was murdered by Brooke Crews and her boyfriend William Hoehn. Crews asked Savanna to model a dress she was sewing, once she arrived at Crews apartment she was attacked and knocked unconscious. Crews admitted to using

a kitchen knife, cutting into Savanna's abdomen, and pulling out her baby. Hoehn came home and proceeded to strangle Savanna with a rope to make sure she was dead. They hid Savanna's body in the bathroom closet during the days the cops "searched" the home. Hoehn confessed that each time the police arrived to search the apartment, he had Savanna's baby under the covers on the bed. After the third police visit, Hoehn and Crews threw Savanna's body into the Red River where she was found a few days after. In February 2018, Crews was sentenced to life in prison without the chance of parole and in September 2018, Hoehn was sentenced to life, but the sentence was overturned by the North Dakota Supreme Court. In October 2019 he was re-sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Both of these young women lost their lives in 2017. My communities still mourn these losses and I still feel pain when I think about them. Even with all the work we and many others have done, we are still powerless when someone wants to hurt us. The MMIW work we do will never end and I will never see the day when Native women finally feel safe. While in mourning, a Native woman mentor asked me why I continue to do MMIW work even though I consistently feel pain and loss. I was taken aback because I never thought about this before and I honestly could not answer her. I sat for days thinking about the question and the only answer I could come up with was "just because." This question prompted me to do this research. What keeps us Native women coming back to MMIW even though we know we will be hurt? What motivates us to push through pain and hurt in order to make a difference in our world?

Colonial Introduction

Native women continue to be targeted and have been for hundreds of years. An attack on a Native woman is not only an attack on the individual but also an attack on the community and on Indian Country as a whole. In the following introduction, I include a summary of this research

as proposed, extended literature review and methodology, as well as a commentary from me, the Native researcher. From this point on, I will also refer to settler colonization interchangeably with “colonial settlers, colonizers, colonial, and colonization.”

The Importance of the Native Woman

Native women held great respect from their communities and understood their existence as a part of a larger system. Prior to colonization, Native women were treated as respected equal members of the community. These women held great power and responsibility, they worked in many different roles, such as mothers, advisors, medicine women, midwives, and were the manufactures of skins, hides, clothing, and other instruments (Miheuah, 2003). They also owned property and oversaw the land for farming and economic production (Hilden & Lee, 2010). The formation and prosperity of the Native community relied heavily on the Native woman.

The importance of the Native woman extends past our physical world. There are many Native creation stories and traditions that emphasize the powerful spirit of the Native woman (Hilden & Lee, 2010). When Creator made the world, they modeled it after the Native woman; strong, caring, supportive, and beautiful. Mother Earth is our greatest teacher and is a living entity that maintains and nurtures all life (White Bison Inc, 2002). Creation stories focus on the Native woman and how she created the world and Turtle Island (North America). For example, Mohawk traditions state the world was one large never-ending ocean with no land in sight. One day, a pregnant woman fell from the stars to be helped by swans onto the back of a large sea turtle. Beavers swam to the bottom of the ocean and brought up a piece of soil and gave it to the woman for her to have dry ground to walk on. She walked and walked in a widening circle on

the back of the turtle, pushing the soil around. On the turtle's back, the earth became whole; Turtle Island (Laduke, 1999).

I have immense pride as I write this. I know of my traditions and how my people protected and praised Native women. It was hard to find literature that focused on the respect and protection of Native women because most literature only focuses on the pain and hurt Native women experience, not the strength. I hold this pride with me as I continue to write this because it reminds me of a time that was different.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Colonization Silenced the Native Woman

Native women have unanimously identified settler colonization as the root cause of all forms of violence committed against Native women and girls (Bourgeois, 2018). Settler colonialism is the forced domination of Native lands and peoples by non-Native peoples (white people) (Bourgeois, 2018).

Sexual Violence as a Tool of Genocide. Colonized settlers did not respect their women and only valued males. Witnessing Native men respecting Native women angered colonial settlers because they did not understand and disapproved of Native women having power (Nielsen & Robyn, 2014). Through colonial settler eyes, Native women were seen as “savage,” “uncivilized,” “sexual dark-skinned whores” and as only objects for fulfilling sexual desires (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019; Bourgeois, 2018). The oppression of the Native woman was essential for colonial settlers to colonize Native communities, who are not hierarchical in nature. To achieve this, colonizers needed to establish colonial hierarchy through instilling a patriarchal value system that prevented traditional systems that protected Native women against violence (Smith, 2005). During the wars, colonial soldiers would murder Native women and publicly rape them in the middle of their communities for all to see. Colonial soldiers also forced Native

women to perform sexual acts in exchange for food and other necessary supplies (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Bourgois, 2018). In addition to colonizers publicly shaming and harming Native women, they would force Native men to beat and rape their women. If the Native man refused, he would be publicly beaten and killed in the middle of the community for all to see (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Eventually, Native men were contaminated by this colonial sickness in an act of survival and continued to perpetrate violence on Native women.

Taking of the Land. Currently there are more than five hundred *federally recognized* Native tribes that consist of nearly three million people on Turtle Island. There are many tribes that receive no federal recognition but are still Indigenous to the land. We are all the descendants of the over fifteen million original inhabitants of this land (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). The original inhabitants of this land were purposely moved from their original lands to different lands in hopes they would slowly starve and die (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). The Indian Removal Act in 1830 gave Andrew Jackson the authority to negotiate treaties that required Natives to give up their homelands and move west (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). The most recognized and cited forced removal was the Cherokee Trail of Tears in 1831. The Cherokees had to battle bad weather, tough terrain, sickness, poor food, no medical care, murder, sexual and physical assault during their forced removal to the west. It is estimated 4,000 Cherokees died while traveling to their “new” territory. This devastating journey was named “Nunna daul Tsunvi” or the Trail of Tears (McCoy & Fountain, 2017).

Forced removal was expected to slowly kill off Native communities due to not being on their own lands. It was also thought that internal Native wars would begin, and the role of Native women was expected to diminish. To colonial surprise, Native women and Native communities adapted, working together for the strength of their now, sometimes, combined people (Hilden &

Lee, 2010). Native communities thrived and a new way of life started to set in for these Native communities. As time progressed, the discovery of oil and other valuable natural resources started to surface on Native's "new" established tribal territories. The colonial drive for colonial wealth, began the commoditizing of Native women through marriage (Deer, 2015). White men would marry Native women, not for love, but to gain access to their allotted Indian land or oil and/or other natural resources. Once they married, the Native woman would not only be stripped of their colonial wealth but also their Native identity. Many Native women lost tribal citizenship, tribal enrollment, and any association related to the tribe. Once they were married, the woman would be discarded, abused, or murdered (Deer, 2015).

Boarding Schools. Boarding schools started with Grant's Peace Policy in 1896. This federal policy was to turn over the administration of Indian reservations to Christian denominations. Congress set aside funds to start boarding schools run by churches and missionary societies (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). In an effort to save money, the U.S. government was supportive of boarding schools because they thought that cultural genocide was cheaper than physical genocide (Smith, 2005). The then commissioner of Indian Affairs estimated that it would only cost \$1200 to school a Native child for eight years as opposed to \$22 million to wage a war against Natives over a 10-year period. It would ultimately cost less than a quarter of the \$22 million to educate 30,000 Native children for a year.

Attendance was mandatory and Native children from tribes across Turtle Island were taken from their homes and the parents who resisted were imprisoned (Smith, 2005). A 2001 report, in Canada, maintained that churches and the federal government were involved in the murder of over 50,000 Native children through the boarding school system (Smith, 2005). The list of atrocities committed by church officials on our Native children included murder by

beating, poisoning, hanging, starvation, strangulation, and medical experimentation (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Torture was used to punish children for speaking their traditional Native languages and children were involuntarily sterilized (Smith, 2005). The report also found that a combination of the clergy, police, and government officials were involved in maintaining pedophile rings that mainly consisted of Native children that they took from the surrounding boarding schools. Survivors spoke out revealing that some schoolgrounds contain unmarked graveyards of murdered babies born to Native girls who were raped by priests and other church officials (Smith, 2005).

This environment normalized violence in such a manner that survivors of these horrendous schools then normalized this type of violence in their own homes. Adult survivors sexually and physically abused their children and as time progressed, their grandchildren. In addition, they engaged in domestic violence with their partners and other family members (Hargreaves, 2017). It is unthinkable, based on our traditions, that Native people would harm each other, young sacred souls, and themselves. The trauma not only brought violence into our communities but also, as you can imagine, brought extensive trauma and PTSD to our survivors. Former boarding school children are reported to have higher rates of drug use, alcohol use, depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal thoughts and attempts when compared to non-boarding school Natives (Evans-Campbell et al., 2017).

My grandmother, aunties, and uncles were all products of boarding schools. They were required by the state to attend, forcing them to leave their homes and not being allowed to come back for several years. My grandma and aunties tell me stories of the nuns in their schools, how they would lock Native children in closets for days and how some of their friends would one day leave and never return. When I asked my grandma of her time at the school, I know she is careful

of what to tell me and how to say it. My aunty, on the other hand, is not afraid and speaks up against the church. I think the difference is my grandma was older and took much of the abuse as a way to protect my younger aunties.

Forced Sterilization. In the U.S, during the 1970s, between 25-50% of Native women between the ages of 15 and 44 were unknowingly sterilized by non-Native contract Indian Health Services (IHS) physicians (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). Dr. Connie Uri, a Cherokee/Choctaw medical doctor was one of the first people to bring attention to this horrible medical treatment of Native women. In 1972, a young Native woman asked Dr. Uri for a “womb transplant” not knowing the hysterectomy operation she received for “birth control” at 20 years old, was irreversible. Another Native woman told Dr. Uri that she was advised to be sterilized for headaches. Dr Uri stated, “The doctor told the women she was afraid of becoming pregnant and advised a sterilization. The women agreed, but the headaches persisted, later finding out she had a brain tumor” (Smith, 2005, p. 81). Unfortunately, an investigation found that IHS performed 3,406 sterilizations during the years of 1973-1976 (Rutecki, 2011; Lawrence, 2000). This mass forced sterilization decreased the Native population by rates as high as 80% on some reservations (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). The Government Accounting Office (GAO) reported that “contract” physicians were not required to comply with federal regulations such as providing informed consent in the context of performing surgical procedures (Rutecki, 2010). This allowed IHS non-Native physicians to make dishonest “informed consent” forms that did not provide any medical information related to the irreversible operation (Lawrence, 2000). Those who did provide a written consent form, did not explain the repercussions of the surgery or coerced signatures by threatening the Native women (Rutecki, 2011).

The control of Native women's reproductive freedom did not stop with the "ending" of forced sterilization. IHS across Indian Country continue to give Native women unsafe, long-acting hormonal contraceptives: Depo-Provera (Depo) and Norplant. Depo is a birth control monthly injection with many harmful side effects. Some of the side effects are irregular bleeding, depression, weight gain, osteoporosis, loss of sex drive, breast cancer, sterility, cervical cancer, and headaches. As a result of taking Depo for a long time, many young Native women had uterine, cervical, or breast cancer, or had to undergo a hysterectomy as a result of a hemorrhage (Smith, 2005). In addition to Depo, we also are given Norplant, an implanted five-year rod birth control. Norplant's side effects include 82% of Native women experiencing 90-day consistent vaginal bleeding. This is especially problematic for Native women, because women are excluded from ceremonies while they are bleeding as their strength can make the men and other people in ceremony sick (Smith, 2005). Other side effects are blindness, hair loss, dizziness, nausea, headaches, strokes, heart attacks, tumors, and sterility. As a result, 30% of women want it to be taken out within the first year and the majority want it removed within the first three years of insertion (Smith, 2005).

Both of these forms of birth control were taken off the market or were altered due to the many side effects. The general public does not get the pre-altered versions, but IHS still, to this day, gives them to Native women (Smith, 2005). This 2005 Smith citation is 15 years old, however, I did not find "evidence" in the literature that Depo and Norplant are still being used but I know for certain that they are at my community's IHS. While writing this (2020), I called IHS to make an "appointment" for birth control and these two were a part of the options I was given. In addition, my mother recently stopped taking the Depo injection a year and a half ago due to extreme side effects. Also, my cousin is currently taking the injection for birth control.

I personally have a relationship with Depo birth control. When I was young, 13 years old, I was put on Depo. I gained well over 70 pounds during my six years on it. I stopped taking it and as a result I had several false positive pregnancy tests. I also stopped having my menstrual period and had a large mass form in my ovary. A few years ago, I had to have emergency surgery because this mass in my ovary was going to burst, taking my life with it. It is also troubling that amount of fear I felt when I went to the emergency room. When I arrived there, I was given extensive amounts of pain killers which caused me to drift in and out of consciousness. I do not remember much of that night, but I do remember the nurses and my doctor telling me that I needed to have emergency surgery to save my life. The doctor told me they suggest removing my whole uterus instead of the half of my uterus we previously agreed to. I screamed and cried, demanding that I keep half of my uterus, pleading not to be taken advantage of, not to be given a full hysterectomy. I told my husband not to let them take my ability to have children away from us. Then I fell back asleep awaking the next day in pain, not knowing whether I will be able to have children in the future. It is extremely hard to write this because I firmly believe that my uterine health issues were caused by the Depo birth control injection as well as reliving the fact that “my” doctor tried to go back on our previous arrangement minutes before my surgery. It is also hard to relive my reality that I may not have the ability to have children in the future. My future of being a mother was possibly taken from me before I even had the opportunity. Why? Because I am a Native woman.

Modern Day Colonization

This section is about what each of us Native women have to grapple with on a daily basis. I cannot explain the intense fear I felt, as a Native woman, when I first learned of these statistics.

Still to this day, I am afraid to leave my home alone. These are the numbers that I hope to one day see a decrease in.

Sexual Assault. Native women in the U.S. are 2.5 times more likely to be violently raped or sexually assaulted when compared to any other race of women in the U.S. (Flowers, 2015). Thirty-four percent of Native women reported surviving a completed or attempted rape at some point in their life. The horrible reality is that our women and girls are expected to experience sexual violence very early in life, with 44% of rapes experienced before 12 years old (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). These statistics are based only on reported cases. It is estimated that Native women in the U.S. experience a significantly higher rate of sexual violence. (Wahab & Olson, 2004).

These statistics alone are troubling. Young Native girls are sexually violated, their youth taken away from them forever. At the age of 12, girls in dominant society typically do not have to take this trauma on. Native girls need to be protected just like our women; their lives as just as sacred as any Native person's. When I think about this, I become upset. It is troubling to know that, if I am able to have children, my babies might have their childhood taken from them. It's also hard to know that many of my peers may have had to take this trauma on at a young age.

Sex Trafficking. Trafficking of any kind is difficult to research because of the invisibility of the victims. Although this is the reality, it is horrendous to see how much Native woman are represented in sex trafficking statistics. We can confidently assume that there are more Native women being used in sex trafficking than what the current statistics state. A 2000 Canadian study estimated that 70% of street prostitutes were Aboriginal women under the age of 26 (Culhane, 2003). Specifically, in Winnipeg, there are hundreds of teen and pre-teen Native girls, some as young as eight years old, who are working as sex workers (Deer, 2015). Four cities were

surveyed in the U.S and Canada (Minneapolis, Anchorage, Winnipeg, and Vancouver) and researchers found an average of 40% of these women who worked as sex workers, identified as Native or First Nations. To help put the severity into perspective, Native women do not represent more than 10% of the general population in these cities (NCAI Policy Research Center, 2016).

Missing and Murdered. Homicide is the third leading cause of death among Native women and girls between the ages of ten and 24 years old. We are murdered at ten times the national average, more than any other race (Daines, 2017). The National Crime Information Center reports that in 2016, there were a reported 5,712 missing Native women and girls and the U.S. Department of Justice only logged 116 of these cases (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). Unfortunately, there is not an exact number of how many Native women and girls are missing and/or murdered (Farley et al., 2011). Native women tend to go undocumented within the system due to a lack of good record keeping, racial misclassification, and lack of interest from those documenting these crimes (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). A recent Sovereign Bodies Institute (2019) report documented an additional 2,306 reported cases that involved missing Native women and girls just in Northern California. Almost 60% of these cases are homicides with 315 involving girls 18 years old and younger (Sovereign Bodies Institute, 2019). Most of the research conducted on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) involve urban Native women, although we know that reservation women and girls are also targets at large rates (Weaver, 2009).

The work I have done so far with MMIW is some of the most exhausting work I have done. Even writing this has taken a lot of my energy and a lot of my spirit. I want so much to protect all my sisters, yet I am also afraid to leave my house alone. I can only speak to my experience with MMIW but the stories I shared above, still feel like they happened yesterday. I

follow Native-run Facebook pages and online web articles. Almost every day a new young Native woman or girl is highlighted as missing. Most are never found, some are found dead, and very few are found alive. When I see them, I am reminded of when I first heard of Savanna and Olivia missing and what happened to them. I cannot explain the collective hurt I feel and that other Native women feel seeing these young women and girls being taken.

Tribal Law. To understand the violence Natives experience is to also understand tribal law and how the federal government continues to purposely work to silence Native women. The protection of our Native women is hindered by the 1885 Major Crimes Act, the 1953 Public Law 280, the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act, and the 1978 U.S Supreme Court Decision in the *Oliphant v. Suquamish* case (Deer, 2015). The 1885 Major Crimes Act provides the federal government with criminal authority on reservations, meaning that rape and/or murder cannot be handled within the tribal community but have to go through the many channels to get to a federal desk. The 1953 Public Law 280 relinquished federal control over Native territories in Alaska, Oregon, California, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and made them turn their law enforcement authority to state governments. Responding to rape and murder of Native women on Native land is now replaced by state government officials. The 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act placed a cap on tribal sentencing authority. This Act imposes a limit on the punishment a tribal court can impose, limiting them to only prosecute minor crimes, not major crimes such as sexual assault, murder, or kidnapping. Finally, the result of the 1978 Supreme Court Decision in the *Oliphant v. Suquamish* case means that tribal court cannot have any criminal jurisdiction over non-Natives. Non-Native offenders must be handed over to federal authorities (Deer, 2015).

A combination of these federal laws is what makes tribal land a “safe haven” for non-Native predators. Although the federal government made these laws and took responsibility over

these crimes, they frequently ignore or decline to prosecute on tribal lands. In 2011, the Justice Department only filed charges in 35% of sexual assault and 50% of murder cases that happened on tribal lands (Hilstorm & Webley, 2015). In addition, it is confusing as to where to report a crime. When Native communities encounter a crime, they must find out who was involved, where it happened, and what the crime was in order to figure out which jurisdiction is to investigate and/or prosecute the crime. Miscommunication between whose jurisdiction, tribal, state, and federal, a crime falls under and the lack of urgency from federal agencies leave Native communities helpless in protecting their own communities and their Native women.

Lack of Awareness. In addition to tribal law, there is a significant lack of awareness for MMIW. The media is unlikely to showcase violence against Native women as being an issue, but tends to focus on White, heteronormative, middle-class, attractive adults and children. This happens so frequently that observers have coined this phenomenon “the missing white syndrome” (Stillman, 2007). Stereotypes and derogatory views of Native bodies are used to help justify the general public’s dismissiveness and systematic normalization of the mistreatment of Native women. Native women are reduced to “savages, lustful, wild, sexy, helpless, and weak” (Fleming, 2006, p. 213-214). The dehumanization and commodifying of Native women’s bodies provide a “rationale” for Native bodies as “dirty,” and considered sexually violable and “rape-able” (Smith, 2005, p. 10).

Native Women’s Leadership/Activism

The hundreds of years of continued commodifying and murder of our Native women has not slowed her down. To colonial disbelief, the Native women continue to fight for and nurture our Native communities. Our Native women are stronger than words can describe, taking on the federal government and the many systems that hold up colonial power. Some influential Native

women activists are Madonna Thunder Hawk, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, Winona LaDuke, and Sarah Deer. These women tackle Native civil rights on a daily and have dedicated their lives to bettering Indian Country.

Madonna Thunder Hawk is a member of the Oohenumpa band of Cheyenne River Sioux, and she was/is a critical member of the American Indian Movement (AIM). She spent a large portion of her life committed to promoting Native human rights and continues to support Indian Country through the Native organization Women of All Red Nations (WARN). This organization focuses on fighting sexual violence perpetrated against Native women. She was also an important spiritual leader and community caregiver for the #NoDAPL (No Dakota Access Pipeline) Movement.

LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, is one of the women who started the revolution behind the #NoDAPL movement. She offered her land and sent a call to action to all tribes to help stop bulldozers from digging up sacred gravesites and polluting the water of Standing Rock (Randol, 2017). DAPL is a 1,172 pipeline that stretches from North Dakota to Illinois, a pipeline which would carry 460,000 to 570,000 barrels of oil per day. The residents of Bismarck, a white North Dakota city, protested against the pipeline stating it would pollute their water and demanded it be placed someplace else (LaDuke, 2016). Not only did LaDonna offer her land to house water protectors, she also lived among them, offering spiritual guidance and took her place as a traditional Native leader (Randol, 2017).

It's important to note, the actual hashtag of #NoDAPL was started by a young Native woman, Takata Iron Eyes, and her friends (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018). Our youth took control of their power and took charge. Fearing for their futures and the contamination of their

water, Lakota youth ran 2000 miles to Washington, D.C. carrying the prayers of their ancestors to demand the termination of the pipeline (Lane, 2018).

Winona LaDuke also played an active role in the #NoDAPL movement. Winona is an Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe) enrolled member of the Mississippi Band Anishinaabeg and is a land rights activist, environmentalist, economist, politician, and author. She arrived at Standing Rock and took on the responsibility of speaking with the different news outlets and educating those who opposed the mission of the No DAPL. Winona also lived at the camps and took her traditional role as a Native woman (Bures, 2018).

Both AIM and Standing Rock are Native Rights movements that received great media attention (see Appendix: Extended Literature Review). For the purpose of this introduction, I choose to focus on the Strong Native women who are documented in the literature, those who helped start or hold up these movements. I do this because no matter how much hurt we Native women encounter we will still walk into fire in order to protect the future of our communities. In this vein, I now highlight the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement and the work of these Native women leaders.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Movement. Native women connect the violence Native women experience to the introduction of colonization and argue that the awareness and justice needs to be brought forward with this truth in mind (National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, 2020). The MMIW movement was birthed from grassroot efforts of First Nations women and families in Canada. Dozens of First Nations women and girls have disappeared or been killed near British Columbia's Highway 16, a remote road that goes past thick forests and impoverished First Nation reserves on the way to the Pacific

Ocean. Because so many First Nations women and girls disappeared or were found dead along this stretch of road, it has earned the name the Highway of Tears (Hargreaves, 2017).

MMIW is a mass movement in which both First Nation Aboriginal Canadian women and Native women in the U.S. work to raise awareness through organized marches, community meetings, local city and town council meetings, tribal council meetings, the building of databases, and the formal trainings of police and other public officials (National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, 2020). In addition to these awareness and educational initiatives, MMIW has also gained national attention using social media. The #MMIW social media hashtag was started by Sheila North Wilson, former Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. This hashtag is said to have help boost local and regional activism into a transnational scale (Smith-Morris, 2020).

One of the many national MMIW artwork was completed by the founders of Native Women's Wilderness, Indigenous Women Hike, and Native artists. The artwork created is the *No More Stolen Sisters* image. This image was created to help bring awareness as well as honor our Native women. Red is the official color of the MMIW campaign because of its sacredness. Red is known, in many tribes, to be the only color spirits see. It is hoped that by wearing red we can ask the missing spirits of our women and girls to come back so we can lay them to rest. In addition to the color red, turquoise is worn for protection by many tribes to ward off bad spirits. Turquoise is a symbol of strength and prosperity and we wear this color to help keep our women and girls safe (Native Women's Wilderness). MMIW awareness walks and runs are filling the streets with the color red, all across the country. Native women, men, two spirited, and allies walk in solidarity for those who have been denied justice and who are still missing. Native women organize, lead, and pray during these walks. These walks tell an important story, a story

of the lives of our missing and denied justice sisters across Turtle Island. Walks and runs, big and small, arise every other day, it is a healing and supportive process for those who have lost their loved ones in addition to bringing awareness (Hargreaves, 2017).

Hanna was murdered on the Northern Cheyenne reservation on July 4, 2013. At the time, Hanna had a son who was 6 months old. Hanna's family was worried when Hanna did not come home one night. Law enforcement did not investigate which prompted her family to search for her. They found Hanna, murdered, days later. Malinda Limberhand is now raising her grandchild in addition to focusing on and building the many awareness projects. She organizes prayer walks, engages in public speaking events, attends Montana state meetings all to raise awareness about the failed law enforcement response when Native women go missing. Through Malinda's advocacy, May 5th has been designated the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Women and Girls. She chose this day because it is the birthday of her late daughter, Hanna (National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, 2020).

Many Native women pray and bring awareness through their artwork, with the most notable being the REDress Project, Walking with Our Sisters, and the Faceless Dolls Project. Led by Metis artist Jamie Black, the REDress Project features red dresses hanging from trees as memorials to Native women who were murdered. Black states, "the dresses call in the energy of the women who are lost, people notice there is a presence in the absence" (Bolen, 2019, p. 1). Supporters have donated more than 400 dresses to the project. Black installs this project in several locations across Canada and the U.S. She hangs the dresses from trees and in other natural settings to help represent the connection our women have to the earth as well as where the bodies of most Native women are found (Bolen, 2019).

Led by Christi Belcourt, a Metis artist, *Walking with Our Sisters* is a commemorative art installation for MMIW that comprises of 1,763+ pairs of moccasin vamps (tops). These vamps were created and donated by hundreds of caring and concerned individuals who want to help draw attention to the injustice our Native women face. Each pair of vamps represent one Native woman who went missing and/or murdered, the unfinished moccasin represents the unfinished lives of the women whose lives were cut short (*Walking with Our Sisters*, 2013). The Faceless Dolls Project was started by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and their commemorative art installation is similar to *Walking with Our sisters*. The Faceless Doll Project is a collection of faceless felt dolls that travel across Canada to promote the memory of the more than 600 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2015).

Media has been slowly bringing awareness to MMIW with the Missing and Murdered Podcast and the recent *Wind River* movie. The Missing and Murdered podcast is a CBC News original by CBC News investigative reporter Connie Walker. The podcast follows the families and victims of MMIW cold cases (Walker, 2017). *Wind River* is written and directed by Taylor Sheridan, the movie follows an FBI agent, Elizabeth Olsen, and a land tracker, Jeremy Renner, who try to solve the murder of a Native woman on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming. The Native woman was raped by non-Native men who came into the reservation for work, they later kill her to hide the rape. The film's final statement is to highlight the fact that law enforcement is not doing nearly enough to rectify the injustice Native people face (Sheridan, 2017).

In addition to all the awareness and educational incentives Native women are doing for MMIW, they are also addressing the federal law. The most notable Native woman to tackle the

law is Sarah Deer. Sarah is a Muscogee Creek Tribal woman who sought a career as a lawyer to understand the colonial judicial system. Sarah was instrumental in the 2013 Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, which expanded tribal jurisdiction to prosecute non-Native perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence (Richland & Deer, 2016). In addition, the following acts were also presented and pushed forward by Native women to help address MMIW.

Savanna's Act is a bill named after a young Native woman named, Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, who was murdered. The federal law must now modify their guidelines to incorporate the following actions: "provide training to law enforcement agencies on how to record tribal enrollment for victims in federal databases, develop and implement a strategy to notify the public of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, conduct specific outreach to tribes regarding the ability to publicly enter information through the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System or other non-law enforcement sensitive portal, develop regionally appropriate guidelines for responses to cases of missing and murdered Native Americans, provide training and technical assistance to tribes and law enforcement agencies for implementation of the developed guidelines, and report statistics on missing and murdered Native Americans" (GovTrack.us, 2020, p. 1).

The Not Invisible Act of 2019 will help increase coordination and establish best practices for law enforcement on how to address the silenced epidemic of MMIW. Law enforcement must coordinate prevention efforts, grants, and programs related to MMIW. In addition, law enforcement is required to consider the unique challenges of combating crime, violence, and human trafficking of Natives on Native lands (GovTrack.us, 2020). The Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) requires the federal government to increase their involvement in prosecuting crimes on Native land. Tribes are also required to reform their justice systems to be more aligned with

Constitutional due process. In return, tribes are given stronger sentencing authority. This act is also made to help clear up some of the confusion that happens when deciding whose jurisdiction, a crime falls under (United States Department of Justice, 2010).

A combination of the awareness, education initiatives, and the recent changes in tribal law has helped tremendously with making change with MMIW in Indian Country. Change is happening, slowly but surely, all thanks to the selfless dedication of Native women. As a young Native woman doing research in this area, I feel hopeful for the future although I know I may not see the type of change we need in my lifetime. We need more people, not just Native women bringing attention to this. I say this not only because there is strength in numbers but also, it is hard to speak when colonization has taken so many of our voices and views our bodies as non-human.

Native Women Motivation

Sekhar et al. (2013) completed a literature review on motivation over the last two decades. The article discussed several dimensions of motivation, which included, training, monetary incentives, job transfer, job satisfaction, promotion, achievement, working conditions, appreciation, job security, recognition, and social opportunities. This literature review indicates that motivation is fueled by individual goals obtainable during a certain amount of time and that will increase individual gain within the workplace. The question arises, how do we maintain motivation for goals that we may never achieve during our lifetimes? Are the drives of Native women colonially motivated or are they something more?

How do Native women continue to be motivated and committed to this work despite the frustrations and emotional burnout of their work? According to the literature, there are little to no possible explanations. Current studies of motivation and activists indicate activist motivation

tends to be intrinsic motivation, meaning the individual will benefit as opposed to the community (Sheldon et al., 2016). This study by Sheldon and colleagues did not include Native people and is not representative of Native women and our motivation. Unfortunately, I found no published studies that focus on the motivation of Native women in general let alone when it comes to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. In my research, I sought to better understand how Native women activist leaders sustain their struggles for the lives of Native women and girls, the rights of Native people and the protection of Mother Earth. I sought to do this through information, listening, and conversations with strong Native women MMIW organization leaders in the U.S. Their stories may not only help other Native women and allies better understand this motivation but may empower others to join this work.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I used Narrative Inquiry to highlight the motivation behind the continued advocacy of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) and the work of Native and/or Indigenous women from organizations focused on addressing MMIW.

Rationale for Methodology

Native populations have experienced a long history of exploitation and disrespect at the hands of colonial researchers (Davis & Reid, 1999). Colonial researchers situate themselves within a colonial and elitist lens. This lens helps them justify their way of research as the ethnocentric center of “legitimate knowledge” (Wilson, 2001). Unfortunately, colonial researchers historically focus on externally biased observations with little to no input of the Native communities they are researching. The end result of colonial research with Native populations tends to be disempowering, stereotype filled, racist, and only done to build the careers of the individual researcher. Colonial research has no benefit for Native communities, Native populations, or Indian Country as a whole (Simonds & Christopher, 2013).

Research with Native populations needs to center on trust, data ownership, and sovereign rights (Simonds & Christopher, 2013). When comparing colonial research and indigenous based research, the process of how knowledge is generated, used, shared, and “owned” is distinctly

different. Within colonial research, knowledge that is generated by individuals is “owned” by that individual and they have the autonomy of what they want to do with that knowledge. Whereas Indigenous research stresses that obtained knowledge is a part of the community’s overall identity and it is the responsibility of certain members of the communities to hold this knowledge. This knowledge is shared when the knowledge holders feel it is right for the betterment of the community (Harding et. al., 2012).

A recent example of the potential harm colonial research brings to Natives is seen in the Havasupai tribe suing Arizona State University. In 1990, Arizona State University approached the Havasupai tribe to collect their DNA samples for genetic studies on Type II diabetes. DNA samples from the Havasupai were used without their knowledge for DNA studies on schizophrenia, migration, and inbreeding. In 2004, the Havasupai filed a lawsuit for lack of informed consent and misuse of their DNA materials. This lawsuit is said to help start an important movement of research subjects initiating legal action against researchers and their misuse of research data (Garrison & Cho, 2013).

The lawsuit of the Havasupai and Arizona State University increased the standards of informed consent and how to do research with indigenous populations (Kovach, 2009). To help combat the harm colonial research brings, Indian Country is requesting that only Native researchers may conduct research with Native communities (Iseke, 2013). The justification is that when the researcher identifies as Native and holds their teachings close to them, the research can be done in a good way (Wilson, 2008). Native people versed in their own culture know the importance of sharing a story in research. Specifically, Native researchers will assume a responsibility that the story shared will be treated with the respect it deserves in acknowledgement of the relationship it stemmed from (Kovach, 2009). As a Native who holds

their teachings close to her, I conducted this research. I am a Native Counseling Psychology Doctoral student, and I am mindful about holding identities within both worlds. Continuing with this research, I attempted to be transparent with the writing and conducting of this research project. As such, to help meet the criteria of completion for this research, conducted in the context of colonial academics, I used a colonial methodology that I believe best supports Native traditions.

Native Storytelling

Storytelling has been a part of all indigenous cultures since the first humans walked the earth (Deloria, 2003). Indigenous scholars have discussed storytelling as a traditional method used to teach cultural beliefs, relationships, values, cultural customs, history, practices, and our ways of life. Iseke (2013) states “Indigenous peoples engage through oral traditions, historical and ancestral knowledges, and cultural resources to examine current events and Indigenous understanding in ways consistent with traditional worldviews and cosmologies.” (p. 559). Iseke continues to argue that storytelling is a central focus of Indigenous knowledge and research approaches.

Meaning-making through Native storytelling involves the process of comparing and cross-matching shared stories, as well as careful interpretation of the language in which the information is held. These stories can be expressed through song, chant, poem, and yarning. Indigenous researchers defined “yarning” as “a conversational process that involves the sharing of stories and the development of knowledge.” It prioritizes indigenous ways of communicating, in that is it “culturally prescribed, cooperative, and respectful” (Kovach, 2009, p. 2215). By utilizing yarning in research, it can help to ensure that the research paradigm is culturally safe, which may enhance the validity of data.

Narrative Inquiry

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) described Narrative Inquiry as a methodology that seeks to understand the lived and told experiences of different individuals. When describing Narrative Inquiry, Clandinin (2013), stated, “people shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study.” (p. 13).

Narrative Inquiry as a methodology utilizes the stories and stored experiences of a small group of people as data. Participants share their stories through story telling or collaborative conversation between the researcher and the participant (Clandinin, 2013). Data is developed with interviewing and reflexive journaling. The data that is compiled is analyzed with thematic analysis as thematic analysis is a commonly used qualitative method used to identify, report, and analyze data for the means produced in and emerge organically by people, situations, and events (Riessman, 2008). Utilizing thematic analysis not only preserves the narrative truth of the collected data, it also preserves the data as a whole instead of splitting up the data into smaller codes.

Story as methodology is decolonizing research. These stories of resistance will inspire generations about the strength of the people as well as the culture. Although these stories serve as strength, it is important to focus on the potential exploitation implications of sharing Native stories within colonial research. It is important to not forget the colonial harm that came with

doing colonial research with Native knowledge. To help fight against this, the stories and the knowledge they carry, must be shared with the importance of protection from exploitation and appropriation. The use of narrative inquiry means the Native researcher accepts the guardianship and protection of bringing the shared stories into academia with their full truths.

With the colonial researchers' history of delegitimizing Native communities and peoples, Narrative Inquiry provides a way to ground this research study in the ideographic experience of Native and/or Indigenous ways as a way to colonially value their stories as legitimate sources of data. By focusing this study on the experiences of Native and/or Indigenous women, the researcher is making the stories and experiences of the participants as theory. Narrative Inquiry was utilized with this population to not only express their stories in a way “acceptable” by colonial academia but to also stay true to the traditional teachings of the population by prioritizing and giving primacy to story.

Paradigm and Philosophy

With this study I sought to highlight the motivation behind the continued advocacy of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) work of Native and/or Indigenous women. This Native woman centered research sought this knowledge through the process of Narrative Inquiry as the participants’ stories are legitimate sources of data and this methodology is similar to storytelling, a way Native community shares knowledge.

According to a Native scholar (Wilson, 2001), Native ontology is how people see the world and influences their understandings of what exists, and vice-versa. This is based on an understanding that there are many ways of knowing and they are directly and indirectly related to each other. For this study, I centered Native traditionalism. Native traditionalism can be described as holding land and places as having the highest possible meaning and all our

statements are made with the land in mind. This connection to the land helps build a connection within all those who also value the land. Valuing the land establishes a feeling of belonging, respect for independence as well as collectiveness, and promotes generosity and unselfishness (Deloria, 2003).

Storytelling is a form of ceremonial Native practice. To help keep good medicine for those who are sharing their stories and for me who is protecting these stories, I smudged and prayed within my Native tradition. Smudging is a means of purification, through passing the smoke of burning cedar, sage, or sweetgrass over individuals and the spaces we occupy. Through the smoke, my prayers for the health of our Native people are lifted to the spaces needed (Deloria, 2003). Through smudging and prayer, I find the strength to guide this research within good medicine.

Participants

Population. For this study, the Native researcher asked for participants from multiple tribal nations across Turtle Island. This did not require the approval of an individual tribal IRB as the participants were from multiple tribes and did not represent one particular land area.

The population for this study included Native and/or Indigenous women who identify and engage with their traditional spirituality, customs, practices, or ideologies. These Native and/or Indigenous women not only practice and are engaged in their traditional teachings, they also help run, maintain, or helped with the startup of an organization made to assist individuals, communities, and families who are impacted by MMIW.

The rationale for requiring the Native participants to be engaged with their traditional ways is because those who are engaged within their traditions tend to be more involved with their communities (Deloria, 2003). Native participants who hold their traditions close to their

identities may also utilize their teaching as a form of healing (Deloria, 2003). As a Native woman, I smudged throughout this research journey to help keep myself and the Native participants healthy. If the Native participants do not hold their traditions close to them, the healing act may not be perceived in a good way. To help keep myself, the Native participant, and the data healthy, there needs to be an understanding and acceptance of traditionalism.

To help assess if the Native participant holds their traditions close to them, the Native researcher transparently asked. If the potential Native participant said they do not hold their traditions close to them, they were not included within the study. If the potential Native participant said yes, their word was taken as truth. Within Indian Country, it is extremely disrespectful to challenge a Native's understanding of their own traditions. This challenge can bring bad medicine which would impact both the Native researcher and the Native participant. To guard against this, once the Native participant identified with their traditions, the research project went forward as planned.

Site Selection. This study consists entirely of Native and/or Indigenous Women. These women have helped start or are currently a part of an organization made to assist individuals, communities, and families who are impacted by MMIW. These organizations are not limited to any type of criteria other than the establishment of these organizations were made to help assist Native individuals, communities, and populations who have been impacted by MMIW. These organizations are based within what is colonially known as the United States. Given that there may be few of these organizations across the U.S, a representative sampling of these Native and/or Indigenous women may be difficult to recruit. Therefore, the researcher made connections through personal introduction emails as well as being referred by Native colleagues. The combination of these methods of introduction helped me, the Native researcher gain the trust of

the potential Native participant. When working in Indian Country it is known that including outsiders can be dangerous, so with an introduction from a Native insider, the barrier for trust was lowered allowing for the Native researcher to introduce themselves.

Sample. Qualitative theorists have not been able to reach an agreement on an optimal sample size (Kim, 2016). In this study, my intent was to collect life stories from Native women. Narrative Inquiry methodology suggests that an appropriate sample size could range from 3 to 12 participants (Kim, 2016). The study completed with six participants with five participants completing two interviews and one participant completing one interview. Interviewing these Native and/or Indigenous women more than once was a lengthy process which produced rich data. The accumulation of this rich data and the lengthy process of interviewing, and the time needed for a full analysis are justification for the small participant size.

Notion of Validity

In non-narrative research, “validity” refers to the goal of being logically or factually sound. Within a narrative inquiry format, there is no claim this type of research will be able to capture or reflect an exact or factual record of what is being researched, only capturing the person’s personal reality. Instead of testing the validity of a particular construct or a relationship between certain constructs, narrative inquiry assesses the authenticity of the stories these individuals share. Validity is essentially replaced with credibility. Credibility is ensured through the extensive documentation of findings and conclusions, trustworthiness, reflexivity, interviewing, and personal journaling.

Trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) position trustworthiness as a more naturalistic way of establishing validity in qualitative research. They continue to report that this can be established by addressing issues related to creditability, authenticity, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability. Given the aim of this study was to help bring comfort and offer a safe place for the participants to feel heard and not minimized, the researcher attended to building rapport with the participant. When attending to rapport building, there was an increase in trustworthiness and creditability between the participants, the researcher, and with each participant's shared story. To build rapport, the Native researcher disclosed who she is and who her people are. This disclosure helps identify the connection between the Native researcher and the Native participant. As Native peoples, we are all connected and all related through the land. Once we made this connection, we were able to break down that "outsider" barrier and engage in authentic conversation.

As a Native researcher, I also attend to authenticity criteria, which researchers have argued to be more relevant in establishing trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013). I engaged in this by asking participants to expand and elaborate on the stories they are sharing. Collaborative authenticity asks for participants to have a hand in the interpretation of their own stories. This helped build trustworthiness as the participant has a collaborative say within the interpretation and coding of their own individual stories. Collaborative authenticity was attended to by sending the interview transcription to the Native participant so they could review the transcript, within an agreed amount of time and add comments. In addition to them overlooking the transcripts, the Native participants were asked if they would like their identities to be shared within the study to help give respectful attention to the organizations they are overseeing.

Reflexivity. Reflexivity is the process of the researchers placing themselves in the research context. It encourages the researcher to pay attention to the way their identity and experience may influence the research context and their interpretations. To help achieve this the Native researcher was transparent, not only about the methods, but also about my personal

contribution to the research study. It was important for the Native researcher to continually focus on their interactions with the Native research participants, as the interactions may be impacted by my personal underlying biases. It is assumed, individual biases of race, gender, class, religion, spirituality, family background, and personal life experiences, will impact the researchers' influence on interpretation (Creswell, 2013).

Following Creswell's (2013) recommendations of discussing reflexivity, I discussed my relationship to the research question in two parts, including (a) my personal experiences related to the topic and (b) discussing how my experiences shape my interpretation of what is being studied. As a Native woman doctoral student who also advocates for MMIW, I have an insider experience of the content being researched. As I attempted to engage with these participants, it was important to keep my biases and values under evaluation as my experiences may be different than theirs. Immediately following each interview, I voice recorded my initial reactions and thoughts based on the interview. I came back to these personal voice recordings and wrote down summarization notes before deleting them. Throughout the process, I also journaled and smudged whenever I was reminded of the Native women participant's shared stories. The process of engaging in the voice recordings, journaling, and smudging helped me engage in continuous self-reflection throughout the research process.

Data Collection

Narrative Inquiry uses different forms of field texts that will serve as data for analysis. These field texts not only document the relationship between the Native researcher and the Native participant but also serve as a process of reflection for the Native researcher (Kim, 2016). What was discussed and the meanings from the interviews depended on the level of rapport developed between the Native researcher and the Native participant. Field texts serve as a

connection between the reflective stance of the Native researcher and the storytelling of the life experiences from the Native participant. Similar to narrative inquiry methodology and centering Native traditions within the study, the Native researcher collaboratively positioned herself as a co-producer of narratives within the collective rapport with the Native participant through the collection of field texts (Kim, 2016). The collection of data was done through the collective field texts of interviews and journaling.

Interviewing. Interviews are the main form of data collection for this study. In Narrative Inquiry, interviews may be influenced by the relationship between the interviewer and participant, the time of the day, the setting the interview was conducted, and the interview itself (Creswell, 2013). There was a chance of something happening that would influence the sharing of the story and because of this, the Native researcher did at a minimum of two rounds of interviews with each participant. Story and Narrative inquiry are grounded within a relationship-based approach to research. For the first interview, the researcher conducted a planned one-hour, initial interview (which ranged between 65-90 minutes), which was semi-structured conversationally around the study's research question. The purpose of the structure for the first round was to help build rapport and trustworthiness. To help build this rapport and trust, I followed Native etiquette by sharing where my community is and who my people are (Kovach, 2009). Once the first interview was completed, transcribed, and reviewed, I contacted the Native woman participant for a second interview. The second interview was conducted to help clarify information from the first interview as well as encourage deeper conversations and explore emerging themes and patterns. After completion of the second interview, the Native participant was given the interview transcription and time to review the transcript and offer comments and clarity if they wanted. Each round of interviews, with each participant, was followed with rounds

of reflexive journaling by me, the Native researcher. This study had six Native women participants. Five of the participants completed the two-interview format and one participant completed one interview, ending in a total of eleven interviews. The sixth participant was able to complete one full interview and was unable to complete the second interview due to scheduling issues.

Journaling. Journaling is one approach to creating field texts. Journaling allows the researcher to write down their reflexive experiences as a source of data (Creswell, 2013). Journaling was included within the methodology to help the Native researcher reflect on their own experiences and identify potential patterns as they arose throughout the research process. To help gather additional data for this research project, I reflexively journaled following each interview. This process allowed me the opportunity to record my experiences, questions, or thoughts that immediately follow the interview. This aided within the process of theorizing and identifying emergent patterns and themes. After the first interview, the journaling process was used to help me, the Native researcher, develop a semi-structured research protocol for the second interview. After each interview, I journaled. With the journaling and interview transcriptions, I utilized both data points to begin the theorizing process and begin to craft narratives of the participants. These narratives were shared with the participants and allowed the participants to give clarifying information or add to their stories.

Ethical Considerations

Colonial research has harmfully impacted Native communities and populations. It is suggested that non-ethical misconduct is a predicament of researchers having a lack of cultural knowledge and unknowingly utilizing their power dynamic and privilege, enabled by societal and institutional structures, to take from Native communities (Kovach, 2009). Native scholars

report that non-native stakeholders appropriate the knowledge for financial gain but give nothing back to the Native community (Kovach, 2009). To help fight against this mistreatment, Native research protocols have been developed.

These protocols are rooted within the relationship and the decolonizing of the research relationship. Regardless of the methodology, any disrespectful research relationship with Native communities is colonial and raises ethical questions. This relationship stresses the responsibility of the researcher to learn the Native communities' strengths, history, and teachings. Self-education is a sign of respect as Native communities should not educate outside individuals. While most protocols cannot provide specific direction on a specific research project, they will offer guidance as to how to assess the ethical implications. These research protocols are most useful when used in conjunction with local community protocols.

In addition to learning the colonial research protocols, the Native researcher will also utilize the *Steps for Conducting Research and Evaluation in Native Communities* by the Native American Center for Excellence Substance Abuse Prevention Guidelines, promoted by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA). This protocol lays out transparent steps aimed towards educating non-community members, so they do not do harm to the Native community (Native American Center of Excellence, 2009).

Data Analysis

For this study, I used Thematic Narrative Analysis as described by Riesmann (2008). Riesmann's approach was used to focus on the entire content of the Native participants' stories to gain an abstract meaning to answer the research question. This was to understand what is shared as a whole instead of following traditional coding processes of chopping the data up. Thematic Narrative Analysis helps focus on the core of Narrative Inquiry, which is to examine

the manifestation and metaphors that are inherent in the stories. Finally, Thematic Narrative Analysis attends to components related to what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) labeled as the three-dimensional inquiry space. This is, Thematic Narrative Analysis places the collected data into the dimensions of time, the personal and social, and the place (Clandinin, 2013).

Procedure. After approval from the university's institutional review board, I begin recruiting Native participants who met the criteria listed above. These Native participants were recruited from several resources including, social media, list serves, personal email, and personal contacts. In addition to these recruiting strategies, I also utilized a snowball approach to sampling by soliciting other potential Native participants from those who have opted into the study. The interview process took place at a mutually agreed upon time and location between the Native researcher and the Native participant. For participants who were geographically located far from the Native researcher, or who had concerns about in-person interviewing because of COVID-19, interviews were conducted via digital communication (zoom) and recorded using an audio/video recording device. For participants who are geographically located close to the Native researcher, the interview could take place at a mutually agreed upon physical location between the Native researcher and Native participant. Each of the participants opted to conduct the interviews via Zoom.

When all the field texts were collected and transcribed, I placed the stories within themes and looked for similarities across all the data points. Data from the interviews and the reflexive journals were stored on a password protected hard drive stored within a locked box behind a locked door. The Native participants were asked if they would like to include their names and names of the organizations they represent to provide full ownership of their stories. Of the six participants, two participants names were replaced with pseudonym and four participants agreed

to have their personal name and organization written in the study. Native participants were asked how they want me, Native researcher, to take care of their ownership of their stories. Five participants asked for a write up of the study to read and released their ownership of their stories to the Native researcher one participant has not responded. Although they released their ownership, I plan to follow up by sending them the final study write up, their interview transcripts, and their voice recordings via protected email as well as a password protected USB via postal mail.

Following Riesmann (2008), the Native researcher coded the data to preserve the participant's story and focuses on the dimensions of time, place, and person. The data was collected, coded, analyzed for specific themes, reviewed, and placed into themes. Initially the data was meant to engage an auditor to produce triangulation to help maintain trustworthiness. After speaking with the participants, I decided not to include an additional person as this person has not built the rapport and trust of the participants. The stories of these Native women are entrusted with the Native researcher due to engaging in additional rapport building Native norms. This extensive process was not completed by a potential auditor making it disrespectful to add them. Instead of using a physical person, I utilized prayer and smudging as this study's auditor.

In the following section I describe the results that emerged through the process of procedures previously described. I, the Native researcher, grew up Anishinaabe Ikwe, Ojibwe, of Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa. Traditional Anishinaabe Ikwe teachings paved the way for the write up of these results. It is important to note, not every Native Woman participant is of Anishinaabe/Ojibwe decent, and their traditional teachings are different than mine. For this study the following interpretation of the results will be through the mind and eyes of an Anishinaabe Ikwe. As mentioned before, of the six Native woman participants, four agreed to have their

names and organizations they represent shared within the study, two declined. Of the two that declined, their names will be replaced with a pseudonym.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Before writing the study results, I drove down to the water and prayed by offering tobacco. I prayed for my sisters, my relatives across Turtle Island who are doing this work. I prayed for our communities who continue to be impacted by MMIW and who are still seeking justice. I prayed for this study conducted to meet colonial academic expectations, for me to write the whole truth to bring respectfulness and justice to the medicine (stories) that were given to me to keep safe. I prayed for the reader to understand and fully take in the medicine of these powerful Native women participants. I prayed.

Mindimooyenh

Ojibwe people are traditionally patrilineal we trace our clan affiliation through our fathers rather than our mothers. It is important to acknowledge the potential outsider's immediate bias. Ojibwe are patrilineal, yes, this does not mean we disrespected our women. Ojibwe women are strong, fierce, warriors who will fight to protect our lands, water, and people from potential threats both inside and outside of our communities. We have survived generations upon generations of violence and attempts to end our existence. Ojibwe men not only respected our women but listened to what we had to say, knowing we speak and do only to provide and protect.

I make this statement because the main theme that emerged from the data is a traditional word that holds great importance within our communities. Native Ojibwe women provide healing to our Native communities which has given us a respected identity. Having the automatic bias that patrilineal tribes/nations did not respect their women can place bad medicine on the theme and subthemes that emerged. These themes emerged organically, and we must give the stories the respect they deserved. When discussing the results, the Native researcher will describe the main theme and its subthemes as it relates to the research question by providing examples and brief interpretations.

Mindimooyenh

Mindimooyenh is an Ojibwe word meaning “*respected elder woman.*” Brenda J. Child (2012), states, “Mindimooyenh, the Ojibwe term for female elder, best embodies how Ojibwe society traditionally perceived women’s power... it literally refers to ‘*the one who holds things together*’ and is a category of distinction that honors the pivotal role occupied by fully mature women in the social order.” (pg. 63). A Native woman who holds their traditions close will know what to do to protect and provide for their community. Specifically, Mindimooyenh uses prayer and listens to community and the Creator to help guide their actions. Mindimooyenh holds great love for our communities and this love combined with traditions guide Mindimooyenh to do what is necessary to protect and heal, even if this means putting oneself through physical and mental harm. To heal the harm she experiences, Mindimooyenh embraces traditional teachings to heal their wounds and find peace within the moment to help them continue the work of the people. The Native women participants in this study each share an identity with Mindimooyenh. Mindimooyenh is the main theme as each of the subthemes are characteristics of how

Mindimooyenh moves throughout the physical world on Turtle Island. The subthemes are Aakwa'ode'ewin, Nbwaakaawin, Mnaadendimowin, and Zaagidwin.

Aakwa'ode'ewin

Aakwa'ode'ewin is a traditional Ojibwe word meaning *bravery*. Bravery is represented by the Bear, as the mother bear has the bravery and strength to face her fears and challenges to protect her loved ones. Bear teaches us to live a balanced life with rest, work, and play. Bear pushes for us to find inner strength to face the difficulties of life but still allow ourselves to experience love. Bear makes difficult choices and defends what is right for community, family, and self (Uniting Three Fires Against Violence, n.d.). The Native women participants shared their identity with the Bear when addressing the need for survival, safety, and taking on the challenge to help better Indigenous people's overall wellbeing.

Shanda Poitra of Turtle Mountain Empowerment Self-Defense discusses how the lack of justice for her close friend ignited her fight for the safety and survival for Native women.

“But also, I think what really triggered this whole program was a close friend of mine was beaten very badly by her partner and basically left for dead. He thought she was dead. And she was unrecognizable to her family and needed medical care and everything like that. And this wasn't the first time he's done something like this to her. And I just... I kept thinking like, “God, somebody's gotta do something.” And like the tribe's gotta fucking... Why aren't people being arrested? Why is he still walking around and still coming into bars and still doing whatever? And it was just... It was so fucking troubling to me.”

Shanda shares frustration from the justice systems inadequate response to the people who are harming others in her community. Similar to Shanda, Sweet Grass (pseudonym) discusses how she felt the urgency to start this work in hopes to bring safety and survival to Native women after two of her friends were murdered.

“I've been doing this for close to seven years now, after two of my friends were murdered in Gallup, New Mexico... Then I thought that most of the stuff was mainly in

the Southwest because I was raised an Urban Indian... So we're like, "Well, you know what, this is more widespread than we even believed." Then just slowly we found out it was everywhere. It wasn't any specific area. It was anywhere where they knew was no law enforcement. It was easy pickings."

Sweet Grass describes her initial limited knowledge on how widespread MMIW was throughout Turtle Island and how she started this organization to help address the inadequate response from law enforcement. She continues to express frustration with having to "prove" this unfortunate reality to non-Native people.

"they're like, 'Oh, you guys are just dramatizing' and blah, blah, blah. It's just like, 'No, we're not. We're not dramatizing at all. We're literally counting our own dead here.' There's no other place in society that... no other race, nobody has to count their own dead. But we do."

Lady Slipper (pseudonym) also experiences the urgency to address the safety and survival of Native women and she discusses how she makes important decisions in her MMIW work.

"Well, it's weird. I'm not thinking of me. I'm thinking of how did our ancestors make this decision? And the basic answer is survival. They had to make difficult decisions just for us to survive. But I kind of feel that same urgency now with this work. We are trying to prevent death. That's pretty blunt way to say it and going missing. But I feel like it's not the same sort of urgency as before, if that makes sense. In the sense of, we're not going to lose everything if we don't do this one thing... I mean, it's still important, it's still worth doing. I feel like it kind of shifted a little bit though that we made progress because we're still here and we're still asserting our treaty rights, our civil rights. And I don't think we're ever going to be completely gone because we are fighting so hard to still exist."

Lady Slipper continues to discuss the shift in our survival to establishing treaty rights and civil rights for the continued survival of our people. Shanda shares a horrifying story of how many Native women in the Turtle Mountain Empowerment Self-Defense training shared a common trauma that Native women unfortunately experience throughout their lives.

“So the first class that we taught this to, it was a women’s class. We had 10 women in that class, and 8 out of those 10 women admitted during the circle that that exact situation had happened to them here at our hospital. And as they went around, we had women that were crying because they thought they were the only ones. They thought it only happened to them, and hearing all these other women say, “No, it happened to me, too.” 6 of these 8 women actually went through with the pelvic exam because they trusted their doctor. And because they were saying things like, “it’s gonna take you forever to get another appointment” which is very real, he wasn’t wrong. But he was using that statement, he was using that fact to get them to do these procedures. And so, 6 of these women went through with it and did the pelvic exam. One of these women, one of them admitted that during her pelvic exam, she heard the click of a cell phone camera and she sat up and she said, “What was that?” and he said, “Don’t worry.” He held his phone, he’s like, “We have... I have a lot of pictures. It’s just for my dictations and don’t worry about it. It’s all for research,” whatever... And every single alarm in her body was going off, but she didn’t say anything. And she laid back down and she finished the procedure, and she felt so dirty and awful when she left there. She was crying because she knew something was very wrong, but again, this man in this powerful position was telling her it’s okay and this is necessary. And so anything, this group of women needed a lot of healing from this thing and they needed that validation that your internal alarms that were going off were correct and it’s not your fault that this happened and it’s not your fault that you trusted this guy. It’s his fault, and this is why we’re teaching this.”

Shanda talks about how many Native women experience manipulation and exploitation at the hands of those we are told to trust. She shares wanting to teach more Native women of what to look out for in order to protect themselves and experience safety. Lady Slipper discusses having to be brave to continue the work even though there are multiple factors set in place for this work not to succeed.

“I think we do see it as our responsibility even though there’s so much now stacked against us, I think with systems of oppression. We are in a world where we’re not supposed to thrive, we’re not supposed to be innovative or we’re just supposed to fade away and not be contributors, but we’re always been contributors. We’ve always been leaders. Just patriarchy and I don’t know other things have shifted that story, but I do see that Native women have been leaders for a long time. And now that there’s issues that are more mainstream or getting more attention and then you see the Native women there. And so now people are able to better make that connection. I mean, I’m talking about outside of our community and I think that kind of awareness is important to help move all of this forward”

These Native women had friends and family experience violence followed by a lack of adequate justice response. They took it upon themselves to address the survival and safety of their people in hopes that no other Native woman dies or experiences violence. These Native women spoke on how important it is to individually increase our personal knowledge around violence to help increase safety and survival. These women share their identity with Bear, with Ankwa'ode'ewin by addressing safety and survival.

Nbwaakaawin

Nbwaakaawin is a traditional Ojibwe word meaning *wisdom*. Wisdom is represented by the Beaver because Beaver uses their gifts for survival. Beaver cherishes knowledge and can alter the environment for the benefit of family and community. By using their gifts wisely, Beaver addresses the gaps needed for survival. In addition, Beaver knows the limitations of their wisdom and can listen with clarity and a sound mind (Uniting Three Fires Against Violence, n.d.). The Native women in this study share their identity with Beaver to help address the gaps needed to increase safety for their people.

Shanda processes through how she started the Turtle Mountain Empowerment Self-Defense program to help fill the gaps she saw within the MMIW movement.

“Definitely. One of the things that was really frustrating for me as well when this whole... When we started this program... Well, when I was contemplating on whether or not I wanted to start it, was MMIW was coming up, and there were a lot of awareness events. “We’re gonna do a 5k. We’re all gonna wear red shirts and everything.” Which is absolutely amazing and so beautiful and so much needed to get that awareness out there. And the social media pages dedicated to that sort of thing too. But I sat there wondering like, Okay, I’m aware. Now what? So, there’s so many of us who are aware now, and we have a t-shirt. Now what? And then the next event was something similar, like a get-together or potluck type of thing. And I was frustrated, ‘cause I felt like it wasn’t enough. And we have to do something. We have to start fighting back. We can’t just focus on victim’s services. We have to start talking about prevention. And that’s something I haven’t heard of a that point. And that’s really unfortunate. And I don’t mean... I say that with zero ego whatsoever.”

Shanda shares how she came to starting this program, not to obtain personal gain but to help extend the work of MMIW advocates. Lady Slipper shares a similar story of noticing the gaps within the system meant to keep Indigenous people “safe.”

“And I think that’s when I start truly thinking about the missing and murdered issue, because it made me realize, “there’s no structure, there’s no policy.” I felt like I was meant to see this firsthand and knowing about the environmental impacts of fracking and then working firsthand on the social impacts, I just mentally took a step back and thought, “Okay, I know I’m actually helping people, but I feel like I’m just putting band-aids on the problem. And what I want to do is more systemic work. How can I shift this?”

Lady Slipper continues to discuss how she took on Western education to help provide her a “seat at the table” to address oppressive systems.

“I felt like I needed to learn them to understand them, but to try to change them so that it acknowledges our existence and that we need to be treated like human beings. I felt like that’s part of the struggle. Especially around MMIP issues. Where did that start? It started with genocide. It started with taking our resources, taking our land, trying to erase who we were as people. And that’s what keeps me grounded. I feel like I am doing what I can for that issues, for us. And in a way, that is selfish. I am working for my own community, but at the same time our voices need to be in this work... And I think again, with my dad, I mean, he was one of the first lawyers to graduate with a Federal Indian Law concentration and that in the 1970s. We think in long terms of history, but the most recent things that we’re still dealing with are also just decades ago. And where are Native Americans? We’re less than 1% of lawyers, so we’re starkly underrepresented. And I can’t pinpoint one type of motivation, but I just feel like I’m in the room for a reason. I got in the room, so what can I do while I’m in the room?”

Lady Slipper discusses how she saw a gap when it came to helping Indigenous people and she sought out a life to fill that gap. When asked how come she does this work, Annita Lucchesi of Sovereign Bodies Institute had a simple yet powerful response.

“We do it because nobody else is going to do it. We do it because it needs to be done.”

Annita discusses that this is the reality for why so many of Native women do the work they are doing, “because nobody else is going to do it.” Native women know the gaps and instead of waiting for someone to address the gaps, we take on the challenges to help ensure a

safer future for our people. Just like Beaver, the Native women in this study adapt and fill in the gaps with their knowledge and wisdom to help increase our survival rates.

Mnaadendimowin

Mnaadendimowin is a traditional Ojibwe word meaning *respect*. Respect is represented by the Buffalo as the Buffalo gives every part of its being to sustain the human way of living. Buffalo does this because the Buffalo respects the balance of all creation. Buffalo teaches to live honorably in our traditional teachings and actions towards all things. Buffalo reminds us to live in a mindful way, to bring balance as well as healing (Uniting Three Fires Against Violence, n.d.). Each Native women in this research shared their identity with Buffalo by using their traditional teachings to heal and live in a respectful way.

Sweet Grass describes how she uses her traditions to keep her safe and heal from the bad medicine she receives from the work she is doing. She also discusses using traditions to ground herself, find balance in the work she is doing, and find the healing needed to continue the work.

“And yeah, it’s all really sad and everything. But the inside is so dark that you... I mean, I’ve burned a lot of cedar. And that seems to be the one thing that keeps it from going in my mind, because you start dealing with people like that and it just, there’s a spirit of darkness to it. That you have to protect yourself from... it’s an awful thing. And there’s just so much to it... But you get replenished by your culture, hopefully. And that’s one of the empowering things about our society is that, we have our ways that our ancestors dealt with stuff. And we needed to do the same. And look to the past for the future. And follow those ceremonies, follow the drum, follow those prayers. And that replenishes, because I don’t know how we do it.”

Brenda Golden of the Society to Protect Indigenous Rights & Indigenous Treaties (S.P.I.R.I.T) speaks on using her traditional teachings to find hope for the future to help combat burn out.

“Yeah. And I think if you look around, we have a lot of Native people that feel that same way. The problem is some of us burn out, they just simply burn out after because it never ends. We haven’t had justice for 300 years and who knows how long it’s going to take us

to ever get justice. And so they just burn out, they get tired of the fight, the disappointment. So whenever you get a small victory like honoring the treaties for once or for legislation that's passed to combat MMIW, you hold onto that victory and savor it."

Tami Turett Jerue of Alaska Native Women's Resource Center speaks to the balance of recognizing the smaller successes to embrace the positive and not dwell in the negative.

"But I think that that's, we have to really celebrate the smaller successes so that when the larger successes happen we recognize it, because that's the other in the opposite end of dysfunctioning chaos is that you don't often understand or recognize the good or the change or the positive things that may have been happening in the, whether it's a community or your family, because those doors they're shut... Maybe if we give up on hope, then we might as well all change, you change, and what you're going to do in life, me and all of my life and what I've done, then I might as well walk away. And I'm not willing to do that because there's still hope and generosity of spirit and kindness. And in all of the things that continue to hopefully have you go on day by day."

Tami continues to stress not to give up on hope as hope is a fundamental part of continuing to show up and do the work. Sweet Grass continues the conversation by focusing on being hopeful for the future to find healing.

"And that's what I always tell our employees and stuff. And they know it. They know it now, they're just like no, we were, we were born for this day. I don't know how many people I've heard, like has to come up to me and said, we had a dream that you were sent from the moon for this day, for this reason. And I mean, I have had quite a few people say that to me and I believe. But I don't know how it worked. I don't know how the, but I'll find out one day. And that's what I feel. My kids know it, my descends and they're just really good at supporting me and everything. And yeah, we were born for this day. And that's when someone feels weakened and weaken their heart and stuff, that's something that we can tell them that is true. It's like, I know its hard, but listen, you would have never been put here if you weren't strong enough... Maybe that's supposed to be happening. Maybe that's the way Creator meant it, so that we would know because we're living in the time of the seventh generation. We were promised restoration and that's what we're getting. I feel every little inch is further to where we're supposed to be closer to where we're supposed to be."

Sweet Grass shares how our ancestors spoke about restoration as long as we followed our traditions and listened to Creator. She speaks to how we find peace and balance by grounding ourselves in our hopes for a better future.

Annita explains a traditional Native woman's role and how this woman is to provide for others but also receive care and love from the community in return.

“But she said that a true leader will be the poorest person in the community, because a leader will never allow a family in their community to go cold while they have a blanket... Well, and the other half of that teaching about the blanket is, in return for that leader giving their last blanket to the people and truly being the poorest person in the community by giving all they have, the community in turn is supposed to turn around and take care of them. And that's the piece that it does happen internally within the movement. There are women in the movement who have literally saved my life, because there has been times when the lateral violence was so bad that I was considering self-harm. And they held a healing ceremony for me and really surrounded me with a lot of love. Like I said, it literally saved my life. So, there are those moments of care happening, but not to the degree it should be.”

Annita shares the traditional healing and love she received from other Native women has helped her along her healing journey. In addition, Annita expresses being called to the work by Creator and having trust that Creator will provide the right path for her.

“I feel like I wouldn't have been called to this work, I wouldn't have even been called home to our community if I wasn't supported to be here and if I wasn't supposed to be doing this.”

Tami discusses the power of traditional healing for one who hold those traditions close. She expresses the importance of providing guidance to others to also help them along their healing journey.

“I think that it's... for someone who was struggling basically to have that sense of community so to speak, I don't think we can minimize how powerful that is. And even if you do not live on the land yourself, it is a spiritual, almost your ancestors, it's a spiritual sense of belonging, and that comes with healing. That comes with looking within or feeling like you are changing the script, so to speak. And I may not be saying it right, but it's like, it's like being able to say, this is not serving me, and it's not serving my family. And it is possible for me to do some, make a different choice. I may not get it right every time, or that quickly, and I guess that's also part of the whole process, it that we have to learn that there's forgiveness involved with healing. And that's a hard place to come to. I don't know what most people get there. So, if we had people that were helping mentor or support people through this process, if they could sense that at a deeper level, then they could walk along with that person and potentially help that person over the humps. Whether that's a spiritual guide of some kind, traditional guide, whether that's a mainstream therapy, whatever that looks like that's going to be impactful or effective.”

Like Buffalo, these Native women share how they utilize their traditions for hope for the future to help them continue the work they are doing. Traditional teachings teach us that Creator will guide us where we are needed, and restoration will follow. Utilizing Mnaadendimowin teachings has helped these Native women address bad medicine to help them heal. Finally, it was stressed to share the teachings of Mnaadendimowin to others who maybe experiencing distress so they can find their own healing within their own lives.

Zaagidwin

Zaagidwin is an Ojibwe word meaning “love.” In Ojibwe traditions, Zaagidwin is represented by the Eagle. The Eagle is said to have the strength to carry every traditional teaching and fly the closest to Creator. This makes Eagle strong and the one to see all ways of being across many lands. Love is at the center of all the traditional teachings. Making love the most honorable and a sacred gift. To embrace Eagle’s teaching is to love not only oneself but also the land and everything that calls the land home (Uniting Three Fires Against Violence, n.d.). The Native women participants each shared their identity with the Eagle.

When asked what motivates her to continue this work, Tami describes the love she has for the future despite potential burnout.

“That’s a challenging question because I’ve asked myself that as well, because, personally, I get a little tired sometimes. I’ve been doing this or similar work for a really long time and I believe in people and I really do believe that there is healing possible and in the healing of people, that’s the healing of our families and that means that I’m going to leave the next generation in my family better off. And if I think back to just from my grandmothers to my mothers to now, I think that there’s already been significant changes in how we are in the world, how we cope in the world, and even though both of my grandmother and my mother are gone, and my mother just recently, which has also kind of helped me to, it’s been a really challenging time with the loss of my mother, but it’s also have me really reflective about what is it then that I’m leaving to my children and to their children? ... And so, I suppose I will keep going because I want my children and their children to have a better way. And that’s general, but I guess that has to do with it,

because I remember growing up and seeing just the atrocities that were happening to both in our family and outside our family and the fear that that creates in the living day to day and not having the ability to plan or to constantly in flight or fight more. And how do you grow up to be a contributing person or have a future when you can't get by the day-to-day survival? And I don't want that for my grandchildren. I have like five grandchildren right now. I don't want that to be their experience. I want their experience to be, I don't think normal is the right word, but to want their lives and do the things that people that aren't in constant chaos do."

Tami describes wanting a better future for her children and her grandchildren. Tami expresses having some difficulty with loss of her mother and grandmother but continues so her loved ones do not have to experience the same life she did growing up. Tami discusses doing the work now despite experiencing hardship to make the future different for our youth. Like Tami, Lady Slipper discusses wanting a safer and different future for her loved ones.

"But also going home, it's just a reminder of this is why I'm doing the work I do because my grandkids, my great nieces and nephews, I want them to feel safe. I don't want them to be worried that this crisis at least will be adequately addressed in our lifetime. And I know that doesn't just take me, but again, whatever I can do, I'm willing to do it."

Lady Slipper discusses leaving her home, her medicine, to help address the overall safety for our communities. Although Lady Slipper experiences some distress being away from home, she continues to do the work to help ensure a safer future for our youth. Additionally, Lady Slipper expresses the epidemic of MMIW may not be fully addressed during her lifetime but is willing to do as much work as she can for the future of the movement.

Shanda also discusses wanting a better and safer future specifically for our Native women.

"... would love it if I didn't have to focus on teaching Native women how to survive out in the world. My mentor, she was so proud when we did our first workshop and everything. And it was getting successful, and we were gaining this momentum getting the attention and the requests for our services. And she's like, 'yeah, your dream is coming true,' and it really stopped me dead in my tracks because this is not my dream. This is not my... I didn't dream to teach my Native sisters how to survive. Like we

shouldn't have to do this. It's so not fair. And I'm not gaining anything on this, I'm not... And I don't feel like I should. I feel like I really love the vision, where let's teach Native women from every single tribe to teach this. Let's have this program on every single reservation or every Native community. Let's have it in every Native center at universities. Let's start the fucking revolution already. Let's change the narrative. And I think that we can. And that is my goal. There's nothing to be gained from it besides our safety and our confidence and walking this earth in a safe way, and that's really the only... that's the main driving force of this program."

Shanda describes the love she has for the future of our Native women and what needs to be done to help keep us safe. In addition, Shanda expresses the frustration of why this type of work needs to be done and how it is unfair that we have to do this work for the safety of our sisters. Shanda shares her excitement and continued factor of motivation by "start a fucking revolution," helping Native women reclaim their identities.

Annita shares a similar goal and love of changing the future for our Native women and finding motivation in knowing there will be a change.

"One of the goals that we put there was, okay, within the next 10-20 years, we're going to have one year with no murders. I mean, people cried. But it feels so like, 'that would be amazing,' and we shouldn't have to feel that way. That's really sad. So, if I didn't believe that was possible, I wouldn't be in this work."

Annita describes wanting to experience the day we are informed we made it through the year without a Native woman being killed or experiencing violence. Annita describes how having this vision is "really sad" since wanting Native women to be treated as human beings should not be a "vision" we have to strive for. Despite the sad reality we sit with as Native women, Annita believes there will be a time when a Native woman will feel safe, her love for our future is what continues to motivate her. Annita continues to describe why she stays in the movement regardless of the burnout she experiences.

"But the reason I stay is because the families ask me to stay, and I don't feel like I can say no, because what else would I do with myself if I started saying no to your people? I

just can't fathom saying no. I can't fathom walking away from our communities, no matter how toxic or fucked up they are. So, that's what keeps me in the movement, that cult of service."

Sweetgrass focuses on how we can love and teach our youth to help empower them for the future.

"And prepared the way for us as best they could, with what they were going through. And so we need to that. Is nurture those kids, empower them with our culture, teach them about things that may hurt them. And one of the things is, have people that's actually been through this stuff talk to them. And, but yeah, that's our future. That's, and we are living in the seventh generation. All of us, no matter how old you are, we're seventh generation. And this is a time that was promised, that we would rise again and not rise in a war like way. But rise out of the ashes that they tried to kill us."

Sweetgrass discusses wanting to teach our youth of the power we hold as native people as well as the trauma we experience. Sweetgrass expresses the drive she has, knowing she is a part of the generation that is promised to take back our homelands and our bodies.

Brenda expresses an overall love for Native people and our communities.

"Well, it's sometimes can be very... I'm trying to think of how to frame this. I know that you know how hard it is to be an activist in Indian Country. You can never please everybody, you can't speak for everybody because we're so diverse. There's 500 different nations and not all of us are the same. That's what a lot of people don't understand. And what keeps me going especially something as important as MMIW as I mentioned that, we're life givers and when you take away our life and our ability to bring life, you're cutting off untold generations of people. That's one thing that keeps me going on the MMIW front. But personally on the other, it's just that I've also always had a passion for helping my native people, helping indigenous people in some way. And if there's something that I can do to make this work better for our people or to get justice for our Native people, I've have that burning drive for as long as I can remember. And that's just what keeps me going. I personally cannot stand mistreatment of animals or humans, and so that's that's where the drive comes from. It's just a burning desire that when I depart this world, that it will be better for our people than when I was growing up."

Brenda reports having love for all living beings on Turtle Island and protecting them is what drives her to continue her MMIW work. Brenda describes how MMIW is impacting our Native women's ability to bring life and medicine into our communities. Brenda expresses

wanting to protect our Native women and our future generations to come through the process of receiving justice and overall safety. Like the other powerful Native women in this study, Brenda reports wanting Turtle Island to be a safer more nourishing place for our people.

Specifically, when focusing on motivation, each participant reflected on how their work will impact the future of Native women and Native people. Many stated how their love for the safety of their people is what keeps them continuing the work despite frustrations. Some discussed how their frustration of the mistreatment of our Native women and knowing there is a way to address this is their motivation. Zaagidwin is wanting a better life for our people, wanting the next generation to live a safer and thriving life, and wanting our people to no longer hurt. Each of these Native women expressed the values and love of the Eagle and allows the values of the Eagle to pave the way for their continued motivation.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Prior research with Native women focused on the horrific statistics that we experience as opposed to the strength and resiliency we have. As a Native woman, I wanted to help change the narrative of the targeted Native woman. Instead, I am focusing on the Native women who are dedicating their whole selves to the safety of Native women and girls, the rights of Native people, and the protection of Mother Earth. It is important to stress that Native women engage in this work despite being harmed emotionally, mentally, and physically. We do this work, even though we may never see our goals achieved within our lifetimes. This prompted the question, what motivates Native women to engage in their work despite not having the opportunity to experience their goal of having Native people experience safety achieved.

In this research, I as a Native woman, sought to listen to the stories and medicine of Native women MMIW activists, within what is colonially known as the U.S, to help understand what motivates them to continue to engage in MMIW work. The results described emphasized that these Native women utilize their traditional teachings to heal and protect. Specifically, these Native women utilize their teachings to help motivate them to continue doing MMIW work and to help them address burnout and re-traumatization. The following section describes the Native

researcher's interpretation of the themes that surfaced, to help describe the internal connection between the main theme and the sub-themes.

Motivation and Traditionalism

Looking at traditional roles, we know that Native women are held as healers and protectors among the community. Even through the danger of colonization, we know that Native women would do what is needed to help nourish their people. An example of this was provided earlier, colonial soldiers held food and other necessary items from Native communities until the Native woman would belittle themselves by performing sexual acts in exchange of the items needed for survival. Another example is that during forced relocation, many tribes and nations were placed together thinking that we would fight and kill each other off. To colonial surprise, Native women banded together because we knew fighting would not help our people survive but working together would help us thrive. These are two examples of how Native women adapted and moved forward for the safety and love of their communities. If these Native women did not do what they needed to do for the overall wellbeing of the community, many more of us would be gone.

Mindimooyenh is the Ojibwe word that holds high respect for Native women and means "the one who holds things together." Mindimooyenh utilizes her traditions to help guide her and provide her the resources to keep the community physically, emotionally, and mentally healthy. The important work Native women do to address the betterment of Native communities has continued well into present day. Our roles have continued to expand to best fit the impact on and the needs of the land. Mindimooyenh has transitioned from negotiating with fur trades to addressing modern day policy and law. The Native women in this study utilize Mindimooyenh values because they provide protection and prayer throughout every aspect of their MMIW work.

This is consistent with the literature that indicate that Native women who engage with their traditional teachings tend to be more involved with their communities and use their traditions to help heal themselves (Deloria, 2003).

As a Native woman, I know the strength and guidance that we experience when we let our traditional teachings be the forefront of all our choices. For example, my traditions lead me throughout my whole life, which brought me here, writing this to complete my PhD in Counseling Psychology. I got here because I listened to my community and Creator, I saw the gap within our communities, and I learned how to adapt myself to bring back what I can for the betterment of Indian Country. Just like these Native women participants, I experience a significant amount of trauma and pain from seeking out this degree and working within the MMIW movement. Some days, I wanted to quit and leave back to my reservation to be where I am comfortable, but I would pray, and my pain would go away. Having that kind of faith in our own traditions is hard to do in a world that murders us for doing so. As I smudged, my prayers were lifted, and the stories of these amazing Native women have been protected. Deloria states Natives “hold their lands-places-as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with the land in mind” (2003, pg. 61). Together, we shared our traumas, strengths, and traditions all while keeping space and those who occupy the land in mind.

The results stress that Native women’s motivation is not separated by their traditional teachings. When asked how they came to this work, many stated they felt the urge to make the future safe for the next generation of Native youth. Making difficult decisions are supported by the thought “what would our ancestors do” or “how would this benefit the people?” Traditional values help fuel the drive for Native women to leave their homes to obtain Westernized education to help them fill in the gaps within the MMIW movement. In addition, when

motivation is depleted, these Native women engage in traditional healing practices to continue fueling their MMIW work. Finally, Traditions help heal the hurt and pain we experience while engaging in MMIW work.

When addressing gaps, many of these women sought out higher education to bring back Westernized education to their communities. For example, both Lady Slipper and Brenda sought out law degrees to fight for the human and environmental rights of their people. Shanda sought out a medical degree to help make her people feel safe when attending the hospital. Annita sought out a doctoral degree to continue assisting with the research and expand her MMIW work. And Tami sought out a degree in social work to help address the overall wellness of her people. Each of these women left their homes, their medicine, to seek higher education to help bring that knowledge back to their communities. This experience is significant as the research highlights that Natives who leave their homes for higher education tend to drop out and move home before receiving their degree. It is hypothesized that Mindimooyenh values and teachings help motivate and heal these women as they continued their higher education to help them graduate with their degrees.

Traditional healing is needed especially when we consider the severe impact of the work these women are doing. For example, when asked what type of work she is doing, Lady Slipper stated, “trying to prevent death.” It is important for the reader to recognize this statement is not an exaggeration. Native women are targeted and frequently attacked. Many abusers and murderers have not been found or held accountable for the crimes they have committed against Native women. I personally know families who never received justice for losing a loved one to violence. These Native women also experienced this same hurt yet continue to bring awareness, change policy, and put their bodies in between the abuser and the one being abused. These

Native women push against the harm and risk their lives for the survival of our women. They do this because they are “trying to prevent death.”

Specific examples of how the participants use their traditional healing, other than smudging, was not provided and asking them to provide an example would be extremely disrespectful. The process of traditional prayer and ceremony is not to be said out loud especially in the colonizer’s language, English. As a Native who grew up with her traditional teachings, I knew this going into this research. From the interviews, the participants shared they engage in smudging which is a universal form of healing to help prevent burnout and increase motivation. Smudging is a form of purification through the smoke of burning cedar, sage, or sweetgrass that many Native tribes and nations utilize prior to engaging in additional ceremonial healing.

It is important to highlight that some of these women did not grow up knowing their traditional teachings and moved toward their identity as a Native woman later in their lives. Even though they did not consciously know of their teachings, Mindimooyenh values and teachings were still ingrained within them. It can be hypothesized that if Native women allow themselves the space to listen, grow, and learn, we will be rewarded with Mindimooyenh values and ways of moving on Mother Earth as these values may be ingrained within our spirits. This hypothesis can be comforting for reconnecting Native women who are starting their MMIW work. MMIW work is exhausting and causes significant pain and hurt. Holding Mindimooyenh values and teachings close can help heal and provide motivation to continue.

Research Limitations

Time is a main limitation of this study, which was undertaken as a dissertation. As a Native woman, I know time spent building relationships is sacred. Personally, I would have spent more time with each of these Native women prior to asking questions. Within my

traditions, it is rude to ask questions prior to establishing a relationship or providing a traditional offering. Knowing my time limitations, as a Native researcher, I went into the interviews with the goal of building the interviews around sharing time and space together. To help ease my personal uncomfortableness with the limited timeline, I remind myself I will meet these women at some point in the future. Indian country is small and the MMIW activist family is even smaller. I know I will come across these Native women again and be able to share more time and space with them to help continue our relationships.

In addition to the limited interview time, I believe if this study was to expand well into three plus years, there could have been more Native women MMIW leaders who participated. Many places I reached out to expressed interested but were busy with their hectic MMIW schedules and had no time to fit me in. I believe if I would have allowed more time to accommodate them, we would have had more participants having the time to be a part of this study. Although we did have six Native women participants, I believe with more time we could had between eight to twelve. Again, I believe as I continue my MMIW work, I will come across these other Native women and will hopefully share space and time with them.

What could be seen as a limitation, strength, or a combination of both would be myself as the researcher having sole ownership of interpretation of the stories. As a Native woman researcher, I have limitations when it comes to my traditionality as well as knowing others' traditional backgrounds. When considering this reality, this type of research may have had a different outcome if done under a research team setting with Native women from different backgrounds and traditions. To accommodate for this limitation, a different qualitative methodology would need to be utilized to focus on a research team format.

Recommendations and Future Research

The benefit of the present study is that the results show us that Native women are not only strong but also traditionally resilient. Native women are more than the horrific statistics that are placed on us, and we are braving death to help change the future for our communities. This study is a testament to how Native women utilize their traditions to combat potential harm and pain. It is beneficial for other Natives to know that not every participant grew up with their traditional teachings and came to them later in their adult life. Mindimooyenh teachings and values are ingrained in us Native women and if we listen and allow Mindimooyenh to lead us, we will be healed and become stronger along the way. Knowing this can provide reconnecting Natives with the support to start their reconnection journey and hopefully start their MMIW work.

For academia, it is time that we add more Native women strength and love to the literature. These Native women are doing amazing work and receive little to no recognition. Although one can make the argument, receiving recognition is a colonial way of viewing MMIW work, I would stress that being supported and recognized helps further MMIW work within the Westernized world. Unfortunately, within the colonial world support only comes to those who the main population believes is worthy of support. Within academia, we can change the Native woman's perception. It is time for non-Native academics to also highlight the strengths of Native women. We must stop putting the burden on Native women to prove we are worthy of love and respect. We must hold ourselves and others accountable on how we are supporting Native women and what we are each individually doing to keep Native women safe.

This study can also be a call for us to adapt our ways of teaching to best fit the minds of Mindimooyenh. We need to keep in mind that not all Native women obtain higher education for

individual gain but for community prosperity. How can we adapt individualistic education to embrace more Native minds? A suggestion is to embrace Native ideologies and not suppress through the process of traditional Westernized academics. Native people have a significantly traumatic past with Westernized education. When teaching in higher education, it does a disservice to Native communities to teach in a way that was initially meant to suppress and kill Native people. As academics it is up to us to brainstorm on how we can adjust higher education to best fit the needs of the Native mind.

The present study focuses on the love and resiliency of Native women as opposed to the horrible statistics that overshadow us. MMIW work is harmful and traumatizing work that Native women took on to help address the survival and safety of their people. The Native women MMIW activist leaders in this study embrace Mindimooyenh values and teachings to guide their decision making, healing practices, and continued motivation. In addition to the discovery of Mindimooyenh, this study highlights the importance of reconnection and gives potential hope to Natives who were displaced from their traditional teachings. It can be hopeful to know that reconnecting Natives can have an impact in Native communities and specifically within the MMIW movement.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

With the present study, I a Native woman, sought to understand how Native women activist leaders sustain their struggles for the lives of Native women and girls, the rights of Native people, and the protection of Mother Earth. More specifically, I focused on highlighting the motivation of these Native women MMIW activist leaders through sharing time and space together. With the resulting analysis, I revealed one main theme and four subthemes that relate to the above purpose of the study. Mindimooyenh is the main theme and Aakwa'ode'ewin, Nbwaakaawin, Mnaadendimowin, and Zaagidwin are the subthemes.

Native women MMIW activists' leaders have continued to provide safety despite many layers of colonial pushback. Native women participants utilize Mindimooyenh, "the one who hold things together," values and teachings to drive their MMIW work, fuel their motivation, and to heal from potential harm and burnout. Each of the subthemes are Mindimooyenh values and teachings where the Native women participants provided examples that corresponded well with that teaching. Aakwa'ode'ewin is bravery and is represented by Bear, brave and faces their challenges with an open mind. Nbwaakaawin is wisdom and is represented by Beaver, addresses the gaps to increase chances of survival. Mnaadendimowin is respect and is represented by Buffalo, respectful of all teachings and utilizes our teachings to care for ourselves and others.

Finally, Zaagidwin is love and is represented by Eagle, love for all the living and future generations.

The results of this study provide us the information to continue changing the narrative of Native women within academia and eventually within the public. It is hopeful that these results will help encourage others to engage in MMIW work through the guidance of Native women. In addition, it may provide reconnecting Natives hope that they can find comfort within learning their Native traditions. Finally, within academia we can adjust our higher education learning system to fit the decolonized Native mind.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

This extended literature is difficult to write as a Native woman. The retelling of the unjust past and present of my people is in some ways triggering for my intergenerational trauma. My writing is not based on a fictional group of individuals but my family, my communities, and my people. Many sections of this extended literature will bring up hurt, pain, and anger. As the reader goes through, please take each powerful word with importance because the reader may have the privilege of not knowing this reality but as a Native woman, I am reminded of it every day. It is also important to recognize that I, a Native student, is being forced to experience my pain and the pain of my people in order to complete this colonial aspect of my colonial program.

Indigenous women have been and continue to be victims of massacres, wars, murders, and monstrous sexual violence. When a Native woman suffers abuse, this abuse is an attack on her identity as a woman and an attack on her identity as Native (Smith, 2005). The Native woman has been targeted through colonization and continue to be targeted to this day. The following extended literature will focus entirely on Native women, how colonization historically and presently silences them, and how these women are responding to their unjust pain through activism.

The Importance of the Native Women

Native women understood their existence as holistic, involving biological, social, and spiritual dimensions, and related themselves through time and tradition to their lands, culture, families, and communities (Tsosie, 2010). Prior to the arrival of colonial settlers, Native women were equal members in a great majority of individual Native tribes (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). The roles of the Native women varied greatly by tribe. Traditionally the structure of the tribe could be matrilineal or patrilineal, but most were egalitarian in valuing gender roles. Men, women, and two-spirit individuals had specific tasks needed for the good of the tribe. Each position was recognized as valuable, and women usually had equal or higher economic, spiritual, and “political” power and authority (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). Native women typically had a large say and control in various tribal activities. For example, Native women served as mothers, advisors, medicine women, midwives, and were the manufacturers of skins, hides, clothing, and other instruments (Mihehuah, 2003). These women often owned property and oversaw the land for agricultural and economic production (Hilden & Lee, 2010). Native women had their own status, and the importance of their word was taken greatly into account during many if not all tribal decisions.

The importance of the Native women in Native tribes extends past our physical world. Many Native tribes’ creation stories and traditions emphasized the powerful essence of the Native women (Hilden & Lee, 2010). It is said that when Creator decided to make the world, they modeled it after the Native women; strong, caring, supportive, and beautiful. Our Mother Earth is the source of all life, whether it be the plants, the two-legged, four-legged, winged ones or human beings. The Mother Earth is the greatest teacher, as long as we listen, observe, and respect her. When we live in harmony with the Mother Earth, she will recycle the things we

consume and make them available to our children and to their children. Mother Earth is a living entity that maintains and nurtures life (White Bison Inc, 2002).

The Oneida's earth creation story is attributed to Sky Women. From their traditions, Sky Women fell from the sky carrying the seeds of creation, the three sisters of corn, squash, and beans, as well as the medicines of tobacco and strawberry. After lying on top of a turtle, she created the earth. Sky Women gave birth to the land, animals, and water. Sky Women gave birth to the Lynx woman who eventually gave birth to the first humans created on Mother Earth. The Oneida creation story of Sky Women is a testimony of the rich powerful roles held by Native women (Sunseri, 2008). Mohawk legend states a similar creation story to Oneida's Sky Women. Mohawk traditions state that at one time the earth was one, large, never-ending ocean. One day, a pregnant woman fell from the sky, swans carried her down to the earth by gently placing her on the back of a large sea turtle. Beavers swam to the bottom of the ocean and grabbed some soil and brought it back to this woman so she could have some dry ground on to walk on. She walked in a widening circle on the top of the turtle's back, pushing the soil around. On the giant turtle's back, the earth became whole. This land has become known now as North America; *Turtle Island* (Laduke, 1999).

Many tribes place their creation stories within the hands of women and these two creation stories are a small example based on the importance tribes placed on Native women. The combination of traditional creation stories and traditional gender roles hold great importance and modern native women leaders point to their tribal religions and traditions as inspiration and justification for their leadership positions (Tsosie, 2010).

Colonization Silenced the Native Women

Native women have unanimously identified settler colonialism as a root cause of all forms of violence committed against Native women and girls (Bourgeois, 2018). Settler colonialism is the forced domination of Native lands and peoples by non-Native peoples i.e., predominantly White people (Bourgeois, 2018). For the remainder of this paper, I will refer to settler colonialism interchangeably with “colonial settlers, colonizers, colonial, and colonization.”

Sexual Violence as a tool of genocide. Patriarchal beliefs held by colonized settlers viewed their women as “weak, incompetent, child bearers,” and inferior to men (Nielsen & Robyn, 2014). Native women were viewed as corrupt and sexual “dark-skinned whores” while lighter-skinned, clothed European women were the more “pure,” respectable females (Smith, 2005). Due to colonized racist beliefs, colonizers saw Native women as less than human and only as objects of fulfilling sexual desires (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). Colonial minds did not understand and disapproved of the respect Native communities had for Native women. This disapproval was seen as “savage” and “uncivilized” in colonial eyes and stereotypes like these were used by colonial settlers to justify their abuse, oppression, and exploitation of Native peoples (Bourgeois, 2018).

The oppression of the Native women is essential for colonial settlers to colonize Native communities, who are not hierarchical in nature. To do this, colonizers must establish colonial hierarchy through instilling a patriarchal value system that prevent the traditional systems that originally protected Native women against violence (Smith, 2005). Violence and torture were used to display hierarchy through the sexual domination of the bodies of the colonized (Bourgeois, 2018). Colonizers saw Native women as impure and “because Indian bodies are

‘dirty,’ they are considered sexually violable and ‘rape-able.’ (Smith, 2005). During the wars, colonial soldiers would murder Native women and publicly rape them in the middle of their communities for all to see (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). This humiliation was continued by forcing Native women to perform sexual acts for colonizers. Colonial soldiers would starve the Native community and cut off their access to necessary supplies until Native women engaged in sexual acts in a desperate plea to feed their families (Bourgeois, 2018). Colonizers forced Native men to beat and rape Native women. If the Native man refused, he was publicly beaten and killed in the middle of the community for all to see (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Violence against Native women was perpetrated both by the settler-colonists and eventually, Native men. Native men were contaminated by this colonial sickness in an act of survival. The wars, killings, and overall humiliation of the Native women and Native communities continued for many years and continued well into the relocation act.

Taking of the Land. Currently, there are more than five hundred *federally recognized* Native communities that consist of nearly three million people on Turtle Island (United States). We are the descendants of the over fifteen million original inhabitants of this land (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Many tribes went through the process of removal from their original homelands. Colonized history positions the formation of reservations as “safe havens” and an agreement that colonized soldiers would stop killing the Native communities (McCoy & Fountain, 2017). The reality is that reservations were made to purposely move Native tribes from their original lands to different lands, in hopes the Native community will slowly starve and die (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

Removal happened to most of the tribes, with some tribes being “allowed” to stay on their original lands. The most recognized and cited forced removal was the Cherokee Trail of

Tears in 1831. Andrew Jackson and congress worked together to pass the Indian Removal Act in 1830. The Act gave Jackson the authority to negotiate treaties that required Natives to give up their homelands and move west (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). Cherokees were forcibly removed over the course of three years as colonial settlers were pushing for claim to their lands. Some Cherokees hid while others refused removal. The U.S Army eventually rounded up the remaining Cherokees and sent them to different camps for enrollment and then removal to the west. The trip was grueling as the Cherokees had to battle, bad weather, tough terrain, sickness, poor food, no medical care, murder, and sexual and physical assault. This caused the death of many Cherokee people with an estimated 4,000 dead while traveling to their “new” Indian Territory. The tribe called this pain “Nunna daul Tsunyi” or the Trail of Tears (McCoy & Fountain, 2017).

The forced removal of northern tribes to the south and vice versa, was done to obstruct how Natives farmed and lived off land resources (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). The enmeshment of tribes was also thought to have started internal Native wars between the different communities (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). This movement was expected to hinder the role of the Native women, as the women were typically the head of farming and utilization of land resources (Hilden & Lee, 2010). With the enmeshment of many strong Native women, the colonial thought was women would not work together and only focus on their own people. The Native women adapted, as did the Native community. Not only did the forced relocation fail to kill all Native communities but to colonizers surprise, many Native communities thrived (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

The discovery of oil and other valuable natural resources on now new established tribal lands started the commoditizing of Native women through marriage (Deer, 2015). White men would marry Native women in order to gain access to allotted Indian land of oil or other natural

resources. These white men would profit greatly from marrying and gaining access and control over the Native women's colonial wealth (Deer, 2015). Once they married, the Native women would not only be stripped from their colonial wealth but also their Native identity. Many Native women lost tribal citizenship, tribal enrollment, and any association related to the tribe. Once they were married, the women would be discarded, abused, or even murdered (Deer, 2015).

Boarding Schools. Boarding schools were used to continue the installation of patriarchal norms into Native communities so that Native women would lose their place of leadership in Native communities (Smith, 2005). Boarding schools separated Natives from their communities to receive Christian "civilizing" education that focused on men as superior and women as less than. Targeting Native children was purposely done because colonists believed that adults were "too set in their ways to become Christianized." Thus, the boarding schools started with the formalizing of the Grant's Peace Policy in 1896. This federal policy was to turn over the administration of Indian reservations to Christian denominations and Congress set aside funds to start these boarding schools to be run by churches and missionary societies (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019).

In 1879, the first off-reservation boarding school, Carlisle Indian School, was founded by Richard Pratt in Pennsylvania. Pratt argued that as long as boarding schools were situated on reservations, it would be too easy for Native children to run away from school and the efforts to assimilate them into "civilized beings" would be reversed when the children returned to their families during the summer. He proposed a policy which mandated that children be taken far from their homes at an early age and not returned until they were young adults (Smith, 2005). By 1909, twenty-five off-reservation boarding schools, 157 on-reservation boarding schools, and 307-day schools were in operation. More than 100,000 Native children were forced into

attending these schools. According to Pratt, the rationale of this policy was to “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” (Smith, 2005).

In an effort to save money, the government was supportive of boarding schools because they thought that cultural genocide was more cost-effective than physical genocide (Smith, 2005). Smith (2005) continues to discuss that the commissioner of Indian Affairs, Carl Schurz concluded that it would only cost \$1,200 to school an Indian child for eight years whereas the secretary of the Interior, Henry Teller, stated that it would cost close to \$22 million to wage a war against Indians over a 10-year period. It would ultimately cost less than a quarter of the \$22 million to educate 30,000 Indian children for a year. In an effort to “Kill the Indian, Save the Man” these education boarding schools were developed. Attendance at these boarding schools was mandatory and Native children from tribes across the U.S. were forcibly taken from their homes and parents who resisted were imprisoned (Smith, 2005). In these boarding schools, Native children were given inadequate food and medical care and as a result they died from starvation and disease. In addition, Native children were forced to do grueling work to raise money for the schools and salaries for the teachers and administrators (Smith, 2005).

There is extensive literature of Natives' experiences at these boarding schools and the massive pain perpetrated on Native children (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). In 2001, a report by the Truth Commission on Genocide in Canada maintained that the mainline churches and federal government were involved in the murder of over 50,000 Native children through the boarding school system (Smith, 2005). The list of atrocities committed by church officials on Native children includes murder by beating, poisoning, hanging, starvation, strangulation, and medical experimentation (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Nauseating torture was used to punish children for speaking their Native traditional languages and children were involuntarily sterilized (Smith,

2005). In addition, the report found that a combination of the clergy, police, and government officials were involved in maintaining pedophile rings using Native children from residential schools. Former Native survivors of boarding schools spoke out indicating that some schoolgrounds contain unmarked graveyards of murdered babies born to Native girls who were raped by priests and other church officials (Smith, 2005).

This treatment provided an environment where violent behavior was learned and normalized. Boarding schools had an overall traumatic impact on Native communities with former boarding school children reported having higher rates of drug use, alcohol use, depression, anxiety, PTSD, suicidal thoughts and attempts (Evans-Cambell et al., 2017). Survivors of boarding schools share stories of how their experiences in boarding schools allowed for violence to be in their homes. Adults sexually and physically abusing their children, later grandchildren, and domestic violence among parents, are just some of the many examples of how violence was normalized for Native boarding school survivors (Hargreaves, 2017).

Forced Sterilization. Control over women's reproduction and the destruction of women and children is necessary to destroy a people. "Native women, whose ability to reproduce continues to stand in the way of continued conquest of Native lands, endangering the continued success of colonization" (Smith, 2005). Involuntary sterilization is "a sterilization procedure which is performed on a woman with legal capacity to consent, without that woman providing full informed consent." In the US, during the 1970s, between 25-50 percent of Native women between the ages of 15 and 44 were unknowingly sterilized, by non-Native Contract Indian Health Services (IHS) physicians (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019). The rationale these doctors gave was the "Native women were polluting the population with their numbers, taking too many welfare and health care resources, and it benefited (non-Native) society" (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019).

Connie Uri, a Cherokee/Choctaw medical doctor, was one of the first people to bring attention to Native women mass sterilization in the 1970s. A young Native woman came into her Los Angeles office in 1972 requesting a “womb transplant.” Unfortunately, this young Native woman was given a full hysterectomy for birth control purposes when she was only 20 years old and had not been informed that the operation was irreversible (Smith, 2005). Another Native woman informed Dr. Uri that she was advised to be sterilized for headaches. Dr. Uri stated, “The doctor told the women was afraid of becoming pregnant and advised sterilization. The women agreed, but the headaches persisted. She later learned she had a brain tumor” (Smith, 2005).

On November 6, 1976, the Government Accounting Office (GAO) conducted its investigation of IHS sterilization practices in four of the then twelve IHS programs: Aberdeen, Albuquerque, Oklahoma City, and Phoenix. From this investigation, they found that IHS performed 3,406 sterilizations during the fiscal years of 1973-1976 (Rutecki, 2011; Lawrence, 2000). Forced sterilization decreased the Native population by rates as high as 80 percent on some reservations (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). The GAO stated that “contract” physicians were not required to comply with federal regulations such as providing informed consent in the context of performing surgical procedures (Rutecki, 2011). The GAO examined 113 of the 3,406 obtained consent forms for the sterilization procedures. From these 113 forms, they reported that IHS used three different short versions of the original informed consent (Lawrence, 2000). Two of these three forms did not provide all the necessary information required to be considered an “informed consent” form. In addition, these “consent forms” did not record if a medical professional orally informed the patient of the risks, dangers, and alternatives to the sterilization procedure. They did not have written summaries of any oral information, and they did not provide the required statement reminding patients of their rights if they did not want

to continue with the surgical procedure (Lawrence, 2000). Those who provided a written consent form, did not explain the repercussions of the surgery or coerced signatures by threatening the Native women. Health care professionals threatened to stop providing future health care or have the Native women's children taken away by forging information on their medical files (Rutecki, 2011).

Although sterilization abuse in the U.S. has "subsided" since the 1970s, the control of Native women's reproductive freedom was far from over. Depo-Provera (Depo) and Norplant are unsafe, long-acting hormonal contraceptives that are widely used within IHS across Indian Country (Smith, 2005). Depo is a birth control injection that prevents pregnancy by stopping the production of progesterone and estrogen, inhibits ovulation, prevents the uterus from accepting a fertilized egg, causes a mucus plug to form in the cervix, and thus prevents the contact between the sperm and ovum (Smith, 2005). This injection has many side effects, "irregular bleeding, depression, weight gain, osteoporosis, loss of sex drive, breast cancer, sterility, cervical cancer, and headaches (Smith, 2005, p. 1924)." As a result of taking Depo over a long period of time, many young Native women had uterine, cervical, or breast cancer, or had to undergo a hysterectomy as a result of a hemorrhage (Smith, 2005). Even with the many side effects, this birth control injection is continued to be used by IHS across Indian Country, with Native women as young as 10 years old (Smith, 2005).

Norplant is implanted through five rods into a women's arm and prevents pregnancy for five years by releasing low doses of progesterone, suppressing ovulation, and thickening the cervical mucus to ward away sperm. Norplant has many side effects, with around 82% of women experiencing 90 day long consistent vaginal bleeding (Smith, 2005). For Native women, this is extremely problematic since women are often excluded from ceremonies while they are bleeding

(Smith, 2005). Other reported side effects are blindness, hair loss, dizziness, nausea, headaches, strokes, heart attacks, tumors, and sterility (Smith, 2005). As expected, the extreme side effects cause around 30% of women to want it removed within the first year with the majority of women wanting it out within the first three years. Norplant was taken off the market in 2000 after many women sued, claiming that their health had been severely damaged from taking it. Although, more than 36,000 women received a reported 54 million dollars in the law suites and fought for it to be taken off the market, it is still being distributed by IHS to Native women across the country (Smith, 2005).

Modern Day Colonization

As I write this, I am reminded that the reader may not fully understand the severity of the connection between the past and the present. Colonization formed oppressive federal policies and genocidal initiatives. Forced removal, relocation, and assimilative policies resulted in the loss of traditional knowledge, homelands, lifestyles, and identity. This loss created a dependency on the federal government as well as placed Native women at a greater risk for violence. In this section, I will go over the harsh, terrifying and disgusting reality that Native women face today.

Sexual Assault. Native women continue to be targeted through all forms of abuse and violence. Native women in the U.S are 2.5 times more likely to be violently raped or sexually assaulted than any other women in the U.S (Flowers, 2015). Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) use the definition of rape as including forced vaginal, oral, and anal sex against a woman's will and found that 34% percent of Native women reported a completed or attempted rape at some point in their lives. When compared with the prevalence of rape for other ethnicities, Native women statistics are unfortunately higher, with 6.8% of Asian American women, 18.8% of African American women, and 17.7% of White women experiencing a completed or attempted rape at

some point in their lives. The horrible reality is that our women and girls are expected to experience sexual violence very early in life, with 44% of rapes experienced before the age of twelve years old (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). These alarming statistics are based off on *reported* cases, it is estimated that Native women experience a significantly higher rate of sexual assault in the U.S. (Wahab & Olson, 2004).

Sex Trafficking. The legacy of enslavement, exploitation, and exportation is echoed in the lives of current Native women who are abused by sex trafficking. Trafficking of any kind is difficult to research because of the invisibility of the victims. Although it is difficult to research and have “adequate” statistics, we do know that Native women are victimized by prostitution at higher rates than other women (Deer, 2015). A Canadian study done in 2000 estimated that 70% of street prostitutes were Aboriginal women under the age of 26 and most were mothers (Culhane, 2003). In Winnipeg, hundreds of teen and pre-teen girls, some as young as eight years old, are working as sex workers (Deer, 2015). Across four states surveyed in the U.S. and Canada, an average of 40% of women involved in sex trafficking identified as Native or First Nations. “In Hennepin County, Minnesota, roughly 25 % of the women arrested for prostitution identified as American Indian...In Anchorage, Alaska, 33% of the women arrested for prostitution were Alaska Native...In Winnipeg, Manitoba, 50% of adult sex workers were defined as Aboriginal...and 52% of the women involved in the commercial sex trade in Vancouver, British Columbia were identified as First Nations” (NCAI Policy Research Center, 2016, p. 6). To help put into perspective the disproportionate rates these are, it is important to stress that not in any of these cities do Native women represent more than 10% of the general population (NCAI Policy Research Center, 2016).

Missing and Murdered. The U.S Department of Justice estimated Native women are murdered at ten times the national average rate, more than any other race. Homicide is the third leading cause of death among Native women and girls between the ages of 10 and 24 years old (Daines, 2017). Unfortunately, there is not a definitive number of how many women and girls are missing and/or murdered (Farley et al., 2011). Mysterious circumstances consistently surround the hundreds of cases of missing or murdered Indigenous women and girls across the U.S and these cases never receive national headlines or demands for justice from powerful people (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). The National Crime Information Center reports that in 2016, there were 5,712 *reported* missing Native women and girls and the U.S. Department of Justice only logged 116 of these cases (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). The lack of good data and lack of understanding adds to the historical and ongoing trauma Native women continue to experience. Native women tend to go undocumented within the system due to a lack of good record keeping, racial misclassification, and lack of interest from those documenting these crimes (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). A report completed by the Sovereign Bodies Institute, (2019) documented an additional 2,306 *reported* cases of Missing Native women and girls in the U.S., with about 1,800 killed or vanished within the past 40 years. Almost 60% of the cases are homicides and 31% involve girls 18 years old and younger (Sovereign Bodies Institute, 2019). Much of the research on missing and murdered is conducted within an urban setting although we know reservation women and girls are also targeted at great rates (Weaver, 2009).

Tribal Law. It is important to stress the harsh reality that many perpetrators are non-Native, meaning the tribal law may not have jurisdiction to apprehend let alone prosecute. Native women, Native communities, and unfortunately, outside perpetrators know the limitations of tribal law. An Ojibwa woman spoke about how non-Native men would come to reservations to

“hunt” on her Minnesota reservation. With no consequences to worry about, non-Native men “would go onto a Native reservation and go “hunting” by raping, abusing, and even murdering Native women. There is absolutely nothing anyone could do to them...They got off scot-free” (Nielsen & Robyn, 2019, p. 2878).

In the U.S, tribal jurisdiction has suffered massively in the past 150 years from federal laws passed without input or vote from tribal leaders. Federal law has been greatly overlooked and diminished tribal power by denying tribal jurisdiction over the sexual violence, murder, and taking of Native women (Deer, 2015). Deer (2015) states that four significant federal laws impacted to what extent tribes can protect their communities and their women: the 1885 Major Crimes Act, the 1953 Public Law 280, the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act, and the 1978 U.S Supreme Court decision in the *Oliphant v. Suquamish*.

In 1885 Congress passed the Major Crimes Act, which forcibly imposed the colonial federal criminal justice system on tribal communities. This Act provides the federal government with criminal authority on reservations, meaning that those who survive sexual assault must learn how to navigate a colonial federal justice system (Deer, 2015). The formation of the Major Crimes Act started after non-Natives did not like the outcome of the 1883 U.S. Supreme Court Case, *Ex Parte Crow Dog*. Crow Dog, a Brule leader killed Spotted Trail, a rival Brule leader. The Lakota people adjudicated Crow Dog in a traditional setting and imposed traditional penalties. Non-Natives were unsatisfied, called for Crow Dog to be arrested and Crow Dog was arrested by federal officials. Crow Dog petitioned the Supreme Court, arguing that he was not under U.S. authority as a citizen of a foreign government accusing of violating foreign law on foreign soil. Crow Dog won his petition and was allowed back on the reservation, enraging non-Native people. The Major Crime Act was passed to appease the non-Native population as well as

prosecute future defendants like Crow Dog (Deer, 2015). Instead of a rape or murder case being handled within the tribal community, that applies tribal law, beliefs, and traditions, it has to go through the many channels to get to a federal desk. This wait can allow the perpetrators to easily leave the scene of the crime and never be found (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018).

In 1953, Public Law 280 was a part of a larger mid-twentieth-century federal effort to ultimately “terminate” the recognition of tribal nations. The termination policy was designed to eliminate federal recognition of Native nations and force Native people to assimilate into the mainstream colonial population. Public Law 280 relinquished federal control over Native territories in Alaska, Oregon, California, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, and made them turn their law enforcement authority to state government. Responding to rape and murder of Native women on Native land now is replaced by state government officials. Neither the states or the tribes consented to this arraignment and the state was not provided with any resources with to help enforce crimes in Indian Country. As a result, Public Law 280 has assisted in criminal justice dysfunction in those states (Deer, 2015).

The 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act placed a cap on tribal sentencing authority. This Act serves as another example of forcing assimilation by enforcing colonial legal norms onto tribal law jurisdiction. The Indian Civil Rights Act mandates that tribal governments enforce individual rights under the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Eighth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. In addition, this Act imposes a limit on the punishment a tribal court can impose. When the law first passed in 1968, incarceration was limited to six months and fines were limited to five hundred dollars, with drug offenses being limited to one year of incarceration and a five-thousand-dollar fine. This will only allow tribes to prosecute minor crimes on their own

lands, not allowing the authority of prosecuting any major crimes such as sexual assault, murder, or kidnapping (Deer, 2015).

The final jurisdictional barrier, as mentioned by Deer (2015), is the 1978 Supreme Court decision in *Oliphant v. Suquamish*, which stripped tribal court's criminal jurisdiction over non-Natives. Since this decision, tribal nations have not had the power or authority to prosecute crimes committed by non-Natives, they must be handed over to federal authorities. This unfortunate decision has allowed increased fear to overcome Native communities because non-Native sexual predators, drug dealers and manufacturers, and other violent people are now allowed to come to tribal communities to commit crimes knowing they will not be apprehended. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, many of them know this as well, with 70% of violent crimes such as rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault done against Native women perpetrated by persons not of the same race (Bubar & Thurman, 2004).

The Federal government frequently ignores or declines to prosecute on tribal lands. In 2011, the Justice Department only filed charges in 35% of sexual assault and 50% of murder cases that happened on tribal lands (Hilstorm & Webley, 2015). When Native communities encounter a crime, they must find out who was involved, where it happened, and what the crime was in order to figure out whose jurisdiction the crime belongs. This format can be confusing to those who do not know the tribal, state, and federal criminal codes, which most tribal nations do not. The miscommunication between whose jurisdiction a crime falls under and the lack of urgency from federal agencies leave Native communities helpless in protecting their own communities and Native women.

Lack of Awareness. Despite the statistics, the media is less likely to showcase violence against Native women as being an issue. The murder or kidnapping of White, heteronormative,

middle-class, attractive individuals are more pressing news over the murder of Native women (Gilchrist, 2010). For example, in Canada, news coverage focused on a whale named Luna, who died when colliding with a tugboat propeller, yet silence suffocates the many brutal murders and disappearances of more than thirty-two Native women along the highway of tears in British Columbia (Stillman, 2007). In addition, news coverage is more likely to report on the abductions of white, “attractive,” female children. Between 2000 and 2005, 76% of child abductions on a major news outlet were of white, attractive, female children, although only 53% of overall abductees actually identified as White (Gilchrist, 2010). This biased news coverage of young white women and girls happens frequently, so much so that observers have coined the phrase “the missing white girl syndrome” (Stillman, 2007).

Stereotypes and derogatory views of Native bodies help justify the general public’s dismissiveness and systematic normalization of the mistreatment of Native women. Native women are reduced to “savages, lustful, wild, sexy, helpless, and weak” negative stereotypes (Fleming, 2006, p. 213-214). These stereotypes help justify the “rational” that Native bodies are “dirty,” and considered sexually violable and “rape-able,” and the rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count (Smith, 2005, p. 10). This dehumanization and commodifying of Native women bodies may help perpetrators and the general public disassociate Native women as human beings with value (Beniuk, 2012).

Native Women’s Leadership/Activism

Even through the many bloody obstacles created to kill us, Native women continue to thrive and are using traditional teachings to help bring balance to Indian Country. Many strong Native women have been called to take leadership roles, fight for justice, and help restore good medicine. There are many examples of current and past Native women’s grassroots endeavors but

for the purpose of this research, I will only highlight a few monumental Native rights movements. I encourage the reader to read outside of this study to learn about other Native rights movements started and maintained by Native women. This information is important for all to know.

American Indian Movement (AIM). I am starting with The American Indian Movement (AIM) because I feel many will already know some of the major contributions of AIM. AIM brought many successful lawsuits against the federal government for the protection of the rights of Native peoples that were initially promised in treaties, sovereignty, the U.S constitution, and laws. In addition, AIM developed partnerships to address the common needs of the people and works to transform policy making into programs and organizations for Native peoples. This organization has worked hard to consult and incorporate spiritual leaders and elders throughout all of their endeavors (Wittstock & Salinas, 2006).

Most notable and publicized AIM endeavors are the Wounded Knee Trails and the takeover of Alcatraz Island. In 1969, AIM occupied Alcatraz island for 19 months as a protest for all tribes reclaiming of federal land. Natives began lobbying to have the island redeveloped as an Indian Cultural Center and school. An 1868 signed treaty allowed Natives to appropriate surplus federal land and in October 1969, a fire destroyed San Francisco's American Indian Center, prompting an activist group known as "Indians of All Tribes" to set their sights on the unused land on Alcatraz. Native people from many nations arrived on Alcatraz, claiming it was theirs "by right of discovery," but they sarcastically offered to buy it for "\$24 in glass beads and red cloth"—the same price that Natives supposedly received for the island of Manhattan. By May of 1970 the Nixon administration cut all remaining power to the island as an effort to force the Natives out. In June of 1971, armed federal marshals descended on the island and removed

the last of the Native residents. This 19-month occupation succeeded in electrifying Native activists all across the country (Andrews, 2018, p. 3).

In 1972, AIM started the Trail of Broken Treaties, a march on Washington, DC ending in the occupation of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) headquarters and resulted in the presentation of a 20-point solution paper to President Nixon (Wittstock & Salinas, 2006). The 20-point solution paper focused on “renewal of contracts and reconstruction of Indian communities and securing an Indian future in America” (Wittstock & Salinas, 2006, p. 3). The Nixon administration provided \$66,000 in transportation money in return for a peaceful end to the BIA takeover. It was also agreed that they would appoint a Native to a BIA post. This march was highly publicized with many media outlets covering the events as they unfolded, heightening public awareness of unresolved Native issues (Wittstock & Salinas, 2006).

AIM continues on to this day and is in some way involved in promoting Native civil rights throughout all of history. AIM was founded under the leadership of NeeGawNwayWeeDun, Clyde H. Bellecourt, Madonna Thunder Hawk and others. Madonna Thunder Hawk is a member of the Oohenumpa band of Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and a strong Native woman activist. She helped promote the mission of AIM and was a part of many of the AIM initiatives. She is also the co-founder of the Native organization Women of All Red Nations (WARN), an organization that focuses on issues affecting Native Women. She was also an imperative member of the No DAPL (Standing Rock and the Dakota Access Pipeline) movement.

Standing Rock & The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Water is the first and primary medicine in our bodies and on earth. Water is essential in reproductive, cultural, social, and economic practices in Native communities. As “carriers of water,” Native women “hold the

rights to water through their connection to Mother Earth as Life bearers” (Lane, 2018, p. 4). In 2014, Lakota women started the fight against the pollution of their land and water. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe learned of the plans to build the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), a 1,172 pipeline from North Dakota to Illinois that would carry 460,000 to 570,000 barrels of oil per day, after the residents of the city of Bismarck, a White North Dakota City, protested against the pipeline stating it would pollute their water (LaDuke, 2016). Standing Rock opposed the project knowing the pipeline would jeopardize their only water resource, lands, and sacred sites. Thousands of supporters and protesters arrived on Standing Rock land to help protect their water sources and sacred lands. The pipeline protest gained national attention and started highlighting the campaign #NoDAPL after its creation by a young Native woman Tokata Iron Eyes and her friends (Moeke-Pickering et al., 2018).

At the Oceti Sakowin (Dakota and Lakota Sioux collectively) camps, water protectors endured violence at the hands of law enforcement, which included being pepper sprayed, shot with rubber bullets, attacked by dogs, denied nourishment and supplies, threatened by lawsuits, unjustified arrests, and drenched with cold water during the onset of North Dakota winter temperatures (Whyte, 2017). The attacks on the water protectors reminded people that the mistreatment of Native peoples is still alive and well. The hurting of Native people for a corporation to profit and continue harming the earth screams colonization (Whyte, 2017). The Native women were not having any of it and continued to stand their ground at the front lines (Lane, 2018). At the Oceti Sakowin Camps, the women often led as spiritual leaders, leaders of prayer circles, as oral historians, as caregivers, and as peace givers (Randol, 2017).

LaDonna Brave Bull Allard of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe offered her land and sent a call to action to all tribes to help stop bulldozers from digging up sacred gravesites and polluting

the water of Standing Rock (Randol, 2017). The Standing Rock youth responded to her call to stop the construction of “the black snake” (DAPL). Fearing for their lives and the contamination of their water, Lakota youth ran 2000 miles to Washington, D.C. carrying the prayers of their ancestors to demand the termination of the pipeline (Lane, 2018). LaDonna held space for all to come and pray for the termination of the pipeline, she lived at the Oceti Sakowin Camps and took her traditional place as a spiritual leader (Randol, 2017).

Winona LaDuke played an active role in the Dakota Access Pipeline protests during her one-year stay. Winona is an Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe) enrolled member of the Mississippi Band Anishinaabeg and is a land rights activist, environmentalist, economist, politician, and author. She has spent her career working on a national level to advocate for Native land rights. During the No DAPL movement, Winona arrived at Standing Rock and took on the responsibility of speaking with the different news outlets and educating those who opposed the mission of the No DAPL movement. Although the media pushed her towards being the “face” of the Standing Rock protest, she never claimed to start the protest, always indicting she is there to assist and offer her help in anyway the community needs. Winona has a long career of helping Native communities, building Native programming and organizations, and speaking out against the hurt the federal government continues to place on tribal communities (Bures, 2018).

In 2016, Standing Rock sued the Federal District Court in Washington, D.C., to stop construction of the DAPL and this was granted during the Obama administration. Four days after the Trump administration took office in 2017, he signed an executive memorandum directing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers “to review and approve in an expedited manner” the pipeline. By June of 2017, oil again started to flow through the pipeline. Through the strength of the many Native women and the water protectors, the DAPL was halted in March of 2020. The decision

was made after a U.S District Judge found that the pipelines’ “effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial” (Friedman, 2020, p. 2). and that the federal government had not done an adequate job of studying the risks of a major spill or if the pipeline’s leak detection system was adequate. The District Judge instructed the corps to conduct a more extensive environmental impact statement (Friedman, 2020).

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Movement. Since 2005, there has been an increased awareness of the disappearance of Native women and the failure of the criminal justice system response to this crisis (Urban Indian Health Institute, 2018). Native women connect the violence Native women experience to the introduction of colonization and argue that the awareness and justice needs to be brought forward with this truth in mind (National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center, 2020). In response to this silent epidemic, the Murdered and Missing Indigenous women (#MMIW) movement was birthed from grassroots efforts of First Nations women and families in Canada. First Nations women experience the same statistics as Native women in what is known as colonial United States. Dozens of First Nations women and girls have disappeared or been murdered near Highway 16, a remote road that goes through British Columbia and goes past thick forests and impoverished First Nation reserves on the way to the Pacific Ocean. So many women and girls have disappeared or were found dead along this one stretch of road that locals and national media call this road the Highway of Tears (Hargreaves, 2017).

This mass movement among First Nation Aboriginal Canadian women and Native women of the U.S. work to raise awareness of MMIW through organized marches, community meetings, local city and town council meetings, tribal council meetings, the building of databases, and the formal trainings of police and other public officials (National Indigenous Women’s Resource

Center, 2020). One of the many ways Native women are fighting against this epidemic is by public awareness. The #MMIW hashtag in social media was started by Sheila North Wilson, former Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. This hashtag has helped boost local and regional activism into transnational activism (Smith-Morris, 2020).

The founders of Native Women's Wilderness, Indigenous Women Hike, and Native artists banded together to create the *No More Stolen Sisters* image to help bring awareness as well as honor our women. Red is the official color of the MMIW campaign because of its significance. Red is known, in various tribes, to be the only color spirits see. It is hoped that by wearing red, we can ask the missing spirits of our women and girls to come back so we can lay them to rest. In addition to the color red, turquoise is worn for protection by many tribes to ward off bad spirits. Turquoise is a symbol of strength and prosperity and we wear this color to help keep our women and girls safe (Native Women's Wilderness).

Malinda Limberhand's oldest daughter Hanna was murdered on the northern Cheyenne reservation on July 4, 2013. At that time Hanna's son was 6 months old. Local law enforcement was unwilling to launch a search for Hanna after she has been missing overnight. Ignoring her families urging, knowing that Hanna would not leave her baby, law enforcement did not investigate prompting the family to search for Hanna, finding her murdered just days later. Malinda is now currently raising her grandchild in addition to building the many awareness projects she focuses on. She organizes prayer walks, engages in public speaking events, attends meetings with Montana's congressional delegation to raise awareness about the failed law enforcement response when Native women go missing. Through Malinda's advocacy, May 5th has been designated the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Native Women

and Girls. She chooses this day because it is the birthday of her late daughter, Hanna (National Indigenous Women's Resource Center, 2020).

All across the country, MMIW awareness walks and runs are filling the streets with red. Native women, men, two spirited, and allies walk in solidarity for those who have been denied justice and who are still missing. Walking is a mobilization that takes place over time and space that involves "persistence, patience, and slow, painful movement" (Hargreaves, 2017, p. 16). Native women organize, lead, and pray during these walks to help tell a story, a story that tells the lives of the missing and those denied justice across Turtle Island. Walks and runs, big and small arise every other day, it is a healing and support process for those who have lost their loved ones in addition to bringing awareness (Hargreaves, 2017).

Many Native women pray and bring awareness through their artwork, with the most notable being the REDress Project, Walking with Our Sisters, and the Faceless Dolls Project. Led by Metis artist Jamie Black, the REDress Project features red dresses hanging from trees as memorials to the Native women who have been murdered. Black states, "the dresses call in the energy of the women who are lost, people notice there is a presence in the absence." She uses red "because red is sacred and powerful, it related to our lifeblood and that connection between all of us" (Bolen, 2019, p. 1-2). Supporters have donated more than 400 dresses to the project. She installs this art project throughout several locations across Canada and the U.S. Black hangs these red dresses from trees and in other natural settings. When people see the vacant dresses floating, they are startled by the incongruent imagery (Bolen, 2019).

Led by Christi Belcourt, a Metis artist, Walking with Our Sisters is a commemorative art installation for MMIW that comprises of 1,763+ pairs of moccasin vamps (tops) created and donated by hundreds of caring and concerned individuals to help draw attention to the injustice

Native women face. Each pair of vamps represent one Native woman who went missing and/or was murdered. The unfinished moccasins represent the unfinished lives of the women whose lives were cut short (Walking with Our Sisters, 2012). The Faceless Dolls Project was started by the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and their commemorative art installation is similar to Walking with Our Sisters. The Faceless Doll Project is a collection of faceless felt dolls that travel to promote the memory of the more than 600 missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls in Canada. NWAC contacted artist Gloria Larocque, the creator of the "Aboriginal Angel Doll Project" to partner for a similar project that will produce the visual of Aboriginal women who have become 'faceless' victims of crimes on a mass scale (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2015).

Media has slowly started to bring awareness to MMIW with the Missing and Murdered Podcast and the Wind River Movie. The Missing and Murdered podcast is a CBC News original by CBC News investigative reporter Connie Walker. The podcast currently has two seasons and each season follows the families and victims of MMIW cold cases (Walker, 2017). Wind River is written and directed by Taylor Sheridan, the movie follows an FBI agent, Elizabeth Olsen, and a tracker, Jeremy Renner, who try to solve a murder of a Native woman on the Wind River Indian Reservation in Wyoming only to find out she was murdered after being raped by a non-Native man who came to the reservation for work. The film's ultimate statement is revealed at the end with an expanded awareness that law enforcement is not nearly doing enough to rectify the injustices Native people face (Sheridan, 2017).

Many Native women activists and leaders saw the inconsistencies with federal, state, tribal, and county laws. These women worked on changing the laws in order to protect Native communities and Native Women. The most notable Native woman to tackle the law is Sarah

Deer. Sarah is a Muscogee Creek Tribal woman who sought a career as a lawyer to understand the colonial judicial system. Sarah was instrumental in the 2013 Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, which expanded tribal jurisdiction to prosecute non-Native perpetrators of domestic and sexual violence (Richland & Deer, 2016). In addition, the following Acts were also presented and pushed forward by Native women to help address MMIW.

Savanna's Act was introduced January 25, 2019, passed the senate on March 11, 2020, and goes to the House next for consideration. This bill is named after Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind a North Dakota Native woman who was murdered at the age of 22 when her murderer cut open her belly to take her baby. Her body was later found in a nearby river (Hyatt, 2019). This bill directs the Department of Justice (DOJ) to review, revise, and develop law enforcement and justice protocols to address missing and murdered Native women. This bill requires the DOJ to take the following actions: "provide training to law enforcement agencies on how to record tribal enrollment for victims in federal databases, develop and implement a strategy to notify the public of the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System, conduct specific outreach to tribes regarding the ability to publicly enter information through the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System or other non-law enforcement sensitive portal, develop regionally appropriate guidelines for responses to cases of missing and murdered Native Americans, provide training and technical assistance to tribes and law enforcement agencies for implementation of the developed guidelines, and report statistics on missing and murdered Native Americans" (GovTrack.us, 2020, p. 1). This bill authorizes the DOJ to provide grants for the purposes of (1) developing and implementing policies and protocols for law enforcement regarding cases of MMIW, and (2) compiling and reporting data relating to MMIW. The Federal law must modify their guidelines to incorporate these guidelines (GovTrack.us, 2020).

The Not Invisible Act of 2019 will help increase coordination and establish best practices for law enforcement on how to combat the epidemic of MMIW. Law enforcement must coordinate prevention efforts, grants, and programs related to MMIW, this includes incorporating the BIA, DOJ, Office of Justice Programs, the Office of Violence Against Women, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, the FBI, and the Office of Tribal Justice. In addition, law enforcement is required to consider the unique challenges of combating crime, violence, and human trafficking of Natives on Native lands. This bill has passed in the senate on March 11, 2020 and goes to the House next for consideration (GovTrack.us, 2020).

The Tribal Law and Order Act (TLOA) was passed by Congress in 2010 in an attempt to revitalize tribal justice systems for the first-time since the 1968 Indian Civil Rights Act. TLOA requires the federal government to increase their involvement in prosecuting crimes. In addition, tribes are required to reform their justice systems to be more align with Constitutional due process. In return, tribes are given stronger sentencing authority. This act also was meant to clear up some jurisdictional problems between the federal, state, and tribal governments (United States Department of Justice, 2010).

Finally, the Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives announced a series of tribal consultations under the Executive Order 13898. This Executive Order requires that the Task Force to “conduct appropriate consultations with Tribal governments on the scope and nature of the issues regarding missing and murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.” These meetings will be twelve tribal virtual consultations that occur across the U.S. over the next coming months. The meetings begun August 17th, 2020 and are expected to continue until September 17th, 2020. Indian country awaits the results of these meetings and from the White House (United States Department of Justice, 2010, p. 1).

Native Women Motivation

Sekhar et al. (2013) completed a literature review on motivation over the last two decades. The article discussed several dimensions of motivation, which included, training, monetary incentives, job transfer, job satisfaction, promotion, achievement, working conditions, appreciation, job security, recognition, and social opportunities. This literature review indicates that motivation is fueled by individual goals obtainable during a certain amount of time and that will increase their individual gain within the workplace. The question arises, how do Native women maintain motivation for goals that we may never achieve during our lifetimes?

As mentioned, several times, Native women have been fighting against the murder and kidnapping of other Native women since first colonial contact. At the time of writing this study, it is currently 2020 and we are still fighting to keep our Native women safe. How do Native women continue to be motivated and committed to this work despite the frustrations and emotional burnout of their work? According to the literature, there is little to no possible explanations. Current studies of motivation and activists indicate that motivation becomes intrinsic motivation, meaning the individual will benefit as opposed to the community (Sheldon et al., 2016). This study did not include Native people and is not representative of Native women and our motivation. Unfortunately, there are no studies that focus on the motivation of Native women in general let alone when it comes to Missing and Murdered Indigenous women. In this study, I (we) seek to find this information from the stories of many Native women organization leaders.

Since the formation of Turtle Island, Native women have been the strength and caregivers of our people and our lands. Colonial minds were jealous of the respect Native women received, prompting the next 100s of years of genocide. Although colonization still tries to suffocate the

Native women, she will not be silenced, and she will not be stopped. As our people continue to flourish, the Native women will continue to be the symbol of power and resilience. I am proud to hold my power as a Native woman and help promote the next generation of Native peoples just like the strong Native women before me. This study is not only the stories of strong Native women but also a fight against colonial systems, the same systems made to kill me, to kill us. This research is a call to action to non-Native scholars, to the reader, to think of their past and of the colonial system they benefit from. We are in the time of change and the time to take action is now.

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

Native Women Activism and Motivation: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Amanda R. Young, M.A

amanda.young11@okstate.edu

As a fellow Native woman MMIW activist and emerging leader, I am truly humbled by your interest in participating in this study, thank you. You are being asked to participate in this qualitative study to better understand the motivation for Native women Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) continued activism and leadership via the sharing of stories from Native women MMIW organization leaders and/or developers. This study seeks to highlight the strength and motivation factors of Native women MMIW organization leaders and/or developers. If you are interested in participating, **please read the remainder of this document carefully.** *In addition, we can verbally discuss, and I can answer any questions regarding this informed consent.* The following information is to help understand the unique considerations, as well as the ways in which added protections have been built in.

Introduction:

The following qualitative study seeks to highlight Native women MMIW organization leaders and/or developers' though the sharing of stories on the motivation factors they utilize to continue their MMIW activism.

Procedures:

The present study is a qualitative study examination of the shared stories of Native women MMIW organization leaders and/or developer's motivation factors. The following bullet points will detail the unique concerns associated with this study and how we will seek to address them.

- Contact Information:
 - For recruitment purposes, participants will be asked to provide contact information so that the primary researcher can contact the participant during each component of the study.
- Interviews:
 - Participants will be asked to complete two interviews with the primary researcher of the study. The interviews are expected to take between 50 minutes and an hour. Upon finishing the interviews, each interview will be transcribed and sent to the

participant for review via password protected electronic document. This review is to make sure that the researcher was able to capture the participant's story and meaning accurately. Participants will be asked to correct and alter the transcript, via comments, in order to correct the meaning and context of their stories in a way that is comfortable for them. Transcriptions will be stored on a password protected file on the primary researcher's password protected document drive.

- The sharing and deleting process of the transcriptions will be collaboratively decided between the researcher and the participant. Apart of this discussion is if the participant would like their identity associated with their stories. If they do, the research will not take additional steps for taking out identifying information. If the participant does not want their identity associated with their stories, the researcher will alter identifying information, such as names and specific locations, to maintain confidentiality.

Risks, Discomforts, Alternative Treatments, and Benefits:

Risks of this study are potential discomfort around discussing topics related to MMIW and the motivation to continue MMIW activism work. If you decide to participate, please remember that you may discontinue at any point of time during the study. Please do not feel obligated to finish the study if you experience discomfort. The benefit of this study is contributing to mainstream academia and providing well needed information about the strength of Native women within counseling psychology.

Questions or Concerns:

If you have any questions about this study, please contact the Principal Researcher, Amanda Young, M.A., at amanda.young11@okstate.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Sue C. Jacobs, Ph.D at sue.c.jacobs@okstate.edu. Members of the Oklahoma State University IRB may also be contacted if a problem cannot be discussed with the researchers: irb@okstate.edu.

Indicate Initial Consent By Providing Your Initials:

_____ Indicating that you have read and understood the information about this study.

_____ Indicating that you are at least 18 years of age.

Please Indicate You Are Interested Or Not Interested In Participating In This Study By Providing Your Personal Signature:

I am providing consent and agree to participate in the study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

I am NOT providing consent and DO NOT agree to participate in the study.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Thank you for taking the time to review this document. Once filled out, please email this filled out document to the principal researcher: Amanda R. Young, M.A at amanda.young11@okstate.edu

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Letter

Dear Amanda Young,

The Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved the following application:

Application Number: IRB-21-84

PI: Amanda Young

Title: Native Women Motivation and Activism: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

Review Level: Exempt

You will find a copy of your Approval Letter in **IRB**Manager. Click [IRB - Initial Submission](#) to go directly to the event page. Please click attachments in the upper left of the screen. The approval letter is under "Generated Docs." Stamped recruitment and consent documents can also be found in this location under "Attachments". Only the approved versions of these documents may be used during the conduct of your research.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

- Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted for **IRB** approval before implementation.
- Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period.
- Report any adverse events to the **IRB** Chair within 5 days. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
- Notify the **IRB** office when your research project is complete by submitting a closure form via **IRB**Manager.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the **IRB** and that the **IRB** office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the **IRB** procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact the **IRB** office at 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Best of luck with your research,

Sincerely,

Dawnett Watkins, CIP

VITA

Amanda R. Young

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: NATIVE WOMEN ACTIVISM AND MOTIVATION: MISSING AND MURDERED INDIGENOUS WOMEN

Major Field: Counseling Psychology

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling Psychology at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in July, 2022.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in Counseling at University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota in 2018.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology at University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota in 2016.

Experience:

2021-2022 University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center—*Counseling Psychology Intern (APA Accredited)*

2020-2021 Counseling and Counseling Psychology Clinic—*Practicum Counselor*
2019
2018

2020-2020 David L. Moss Criminal Justice Center—*Practicum Counselor*

2019-2019 The University of Oklahoma: University Counseling Center—*Practicum Counselor*

2018-2018 Wings of Hope Family Crisis Services—*Practice Counselor*