



# **Métis Perspectives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People**

June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019





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## Preamble

### Who Are Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak is the recognized voice of Métis Women across the homeland. Operating in a democratic, transparent and fiscally accountable manner, we influence public policy and decision-making related to the concerns and aspirations of Métis women at all levels of Indigenous and Canadian government. A secretariat of the Métis National Council since 1999, LFMO was incorporated in 2010.

The mission of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak is to ensure that Métis women from across the homeland are safe, connected, empowered and have the capacity to work with other Canadian and Métis organizations to help create the conditions for healthy, vibrant and productive communities throughout the Métis Nation.

We are guided by six strategic goals:

1. Build a strong, successful and responsible organization whose voice is heard throughout the Métis Nation;
2. Be caretakers of traditional knowledge and the unified voice of Métis women;
3. Ensure that the perspectives of Métis women are included in community economic development;
4. Foster culturally appropriate learning environments and life-long learning to improve the educational outcomes for women and all Métis learners;
5. Help Métis people lead healthier lives and help create the conditions for healthy and vibrant communities and
6. Advocate on behalf of Métis women.

Under the guidance of LFMO's National President, we conduct regular meetings for the Board of Directors, hold general meetings and provide a communication mechanism between and among Métis Women and the Government of Canada.

Métis women are the heart of the Métis Nation, and they were equal partners in the development and life of Métis communities. They were fully engaged in the political, social, and economic life of the Métis Nation. Métis women have always held the honoured role of traditional knowledge keepers and have been accorded respect and held in high esteem by the Métis Nation.

Métis people are often described as being “‘invisible’ within the general population,”<sup>1</sup> and this invisibility is even more profound for Métis women. This is because, as victims of the consequences of colonialism and patriarchy, Métis women faced and continue to face a unique form of marginalization and discrimination; first, as Indigenous peoples; second, as Métis—the “invisible” among Aboriginal people; and third, as women. As a result, Métis women have been uniquely vulnerable to violence and lack a great number of programs and supports, such as those provided to other Indigenous peoples.

Prior to LFMO's founding, Métis women had no direct voice or representation at the national or international levels about issues that directly affected them. Métis women have always held respected roles within the Métis Nation and Métis communities, and it was in demonstrating this respect and furthering their participation in national dialogues that LFMO was created. LFMO participates on Advisory Groups and committees regarding issues related to Métis women such as health and wellness,

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<sup>1</sup> R. v. Powley, [2000] O.J. No. 99 (trial decision), para. 33.

early learning and childcare, education, economic development and environment. LFMO creates policy papers specifically aimed at the needs of Métis women and led a pan-Indigenous collaboration to address violence faced by Indigenous women. The objectives of the “She is Indigenous” campaign are to change the damaging stereotypes about Indigenous women held by many non-Indigenous Canadians and to educate non-Indigenous Canadians about First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women, as well as to support Indigenous women by honouring their strengths, accomplishments, and distinct perspectives. Addressing violence against Métis women has been one of the key priorities of LFMO since its founding.

LFMO is committed to developing partnerships and engagements that link Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak with other Métis and Canadian organizations. The goal is to help create the conditions for strong Métis female participation throughout the Métis Nation to build healthy, vibrant and productive communities. It contributes to capacity building efforts dedicated to advancing Métis women into leadership roles in their communities, as well in positions of governance. The aim is to raise the profile and voice of Métis women in areas where they can effect change.

## Introduction

This report addresses the situation of violence against Métis women and girls in Canada.<sup>2</sup> We know that Indigenous women are six times more likely to be murdered than non-Indigenous women in Canada.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to estimate the number of missing and murdered Métis women and girls because there is a lack of data to assist in reaching a better understanding of the problem. Similarly, there is no data on violence against Métis women, as most agencies do not collect, record or even identify Métis as a separate and distinct group of Indigenous peoples.

There are few reliable statistics that would assist in identifying the predictors or factors that situate Métis women and girls as vulnerable. We do know that Métis women are among the most disadvantaged Canadians and suffer from social and economic disadvantages such as poverty, inadequate housing, lower educational and employment attainment and health challenges. These disadvantages, combined with historical discrimination and patterns of racism, have created an environment that perpetuates violence and leaves Métis women more susceptible to violence.

Métis women are the heart of the Métis Nation, and they were equal partners in the development and life of Métis communities. They were fully engaged in the political, social, and economic life of the Métis Nation. Métis women have always held the honoured role of traditional knowledge keepers and have been accorded respect and held in high esteem by the Métis Nation. Yet outside of their communities, Métis women were not respected, their perspectives were devalued, and their voices were silenced. Métis people are often described as “invisible” within the general population,<sup>4</sup> and this invisibility is even more profound for Métis women. This is because, as victims of the consequences of colonialism and patriarchy, Métis women faced and continue to face a unique form of marginalization and discrimination; first, as Indigenous peoples; second, as Métis—the “invisible” among Aboriginal people; and third, as women. As a result, Métis women have been uniquely vulnerable to violence and lack a great number of programs and supports, such as those provided to other Aboriginal peoples.

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<sup>2</sup> Any reference to Métis women and girls includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, and 2-Spirit (LGBTQ2S)

<sup>3</sup> The Statistics Canada Homicide Report, 2014 found that Indigenous women are six times more likely to be the victim of a homicide than are non-Indigenous women. Working Together to End Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls National Scan of RCMP Initiatives, May 2017 Found at <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/en/working-together-end-violence-indigenous-women-and-girls-national-scan-rcmp-initiatives-may-2017>

<sup>4</sup> *R. v. Powley*, [2000] O.J. No. 99 (trial decision), para. 33.

Violence against Métis women extends well beyond the confines of the family circle. Métis women are placed at special risk simply because they are Métis women. Historical trauma and structural racism generate systemic abuses and marginalization for Métis women, making them vulnerable to aggressive abuse outside of the family circle.<sup>5</sup>

LFMO consulted with Métis women who have close ties to their communities and has learned that the loss of culture and community has exacerbated violence amongst Métis young people. We have identified some disturbing trends:

- Métis youth have come to tolerate verbal, physical and emotional violence.
- Young Métis women are experiencing more aggressive forms of violence through bullying, drugs, gangs, poverty and a lack of familial support.
- Young women tolerate and accept derogatory references from their partners, such as referring to them as ‘their bitch’ and other demeaning labels as signs of endearment.

In order to understand the current situation of Métis women and girls it is important to review the historical treatment of Métis people and how historical discrimination, rooted in colonization, continues to adversely affect the safety and well-being of Métis people, especially Métis women. Métis people have suffered abuses in ways that are unique from the abuses suffered by other Indigenous people; however, outcomes such as poor health, poverty, a lack of educational, unemployment and the breakdown of family and community were the same.

This report explores contemporary issues facing Métis women and girls, and includes a series of recommendations based on the distinct circumstances and experiences that meet the specific needs of Métis women and girls.

## **Executive Summary**

Through the development of this report, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak reached out to a number of subject matter experts who each wrote their own individual pieces on the issues facing Métis women, girls and gender diverse people.

In its methodology, LFMO has continually used a Métis-specific gender-based analysis (GBA+) tool so that the unique histories and current realities of Métis women and girls are accurately reflected. This approach was used from the very beginning onward so as to avoid the usual pan-Indigenous approach that is so often employed and so often erases Métis experiences and identity. It must be noted that this approach relies greatly on grassroots engagement and consultation. A mixed-methods approach was also used in order to include both quantitative data such as statistics and qualitative data such as literature reviews and family stories.

In order to thoroughly understand the root causes of violence against Métis women and girls, understanding history is essential. Métis women have always played pivotal roles in their families and communities; their lived experiences have provided important insights into many priority areas, including education, health, violence against women and economic development. In the past, many Métis women acted as interpreters between European fur traders and local communities, as providers in preparing hides,

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<sup>5</sup> Understanding Racism, Social Determinants of Health, National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, pp3-4. Found at <https://www.nccah-censa.ca/docs/determinants/FS-UnderstandingRacism-Reading-EN.pdf>

products and goods to be sold and as traditional knowledge keepers. Women are and always have been integral to the Métis Nation.

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic missionaries arrived at the Red River and brought with them gender norms and expectations that sought to confine Métis women into strict roles that soon made them politically, socially and economically inferior to Métis men. These norms were quickly worked into legislation and were later reflected in media and worked to erase the various contributions of Métis women to their communities and greater society. There has been much Métis resistance to these colonial impositions, such as the Northwest Resistance and the Red River Rebellion. The breakdown of Métis communities and their families, as well as the events following these resistance movements, led to even greater marginalization of Métis women. Residential and day schools compounded the issue further and impacted generations to come and has led to increased child apprehension among Métis families, not only due to trauma but also because of negative stereotypes about Métis women's abilities to parent. Rather than being seen as the strong, independent and contributing Métis women that they are and always have been, Métis women and girls frequently find themselves in vulnerable situations such as homelessness, poverty and food insecurity. This, of course, has lasting impacts on their health, both physical and mental.

These experiences have compounded to create a collective trauma that is felt by Métis people, particularly Métis women and girls. In order to safely and effectively support Métis women and families who are healing from and overcoming trauma such as violence, abuse or neglect, LFMO wants to balance knowledge of the Métis historic and contemporary traumas and losses with recognition of Métis strengths and resilience. A trauma-informed lens is based on tenets such as understanding the unique histories of Métis related to communities and as affected by colonization; being non-judgemental and strengths-based and honouring difference, choice and compassion. It is also important to include Métis-specific values, such as kinship ties, faith and spirituality, food and respect for life that includes land and water in trauma-informed care. Such approaches have led to positive impacts and experiences as articulated by Métis women who have entered programs that use these approaches.

In order to effectively articulate any recommendations to combat the crisis of MMIWG, LFMO reached out to families and asked for their stories to uncover the voices of the silenced and to provide direction going forward. Stories were unique and focused on experiences related to child and family services, victim services, family grieving processes, the justice and police systems, mental health, addictions and cultural identity. Storytelling is a crucial form of knowledge for Métis communities, and so this approach has guided the way of this report.

LFMO also conducted a statistical analysis, looking at demographic information, self-identification, family dynamics, housing, health, education, employment and the child welfare system. Statistics also looked at violence against Métis women and their overrepresentation in the corrections system. There is a dearth of data related to Métis identities throughout this report, not only due to the lack of recognition and understanding of Métis identity but also because there is no common definition of Métis shared between the Métis Nation and the federal government. It is essential that there is a commonly shared and understood definition of what it means to be Métis between governments and Métis groups, and this definition must be defined by the Métis Nation itself.

The federal government has taken a few steps recently to recognize the Métis Nation, an example of this being the launch of the Recognition of and Implementation of Rights Framework in 2018. Engagement focused on the role that re-empowerment plays in defining and rebuilding Indigenous Nations, as well as the rich history of Métis women in building the Métis Nation and various barriers that are impeding Métis women and girl's re-empowerment.

There are many serious issues and barriers faced by Métis women, girls and gender diverse people in today's Canadian justice system that have contributed to the MMIWG crisis. As mentioned earlier, the lack of identity data that is collected has impacted the way that municipal and provincial police, as well as the RCMP, understand the circumstances of Métis women and girls, as well as how they respond to them. This has led to the incredibly appalling mistreatment of Métis women and girls and a lack of support for victims and their families, which has made experiences of MMIWG even more painful.

When accessing these services, Métis women, girls and gender diverse people have continually faced racism that is distinct from the racism experienced by First Nations and Inuit women, girls and gender diverse people. Again, this racism is often due to a lack of information about Métis women's experiences, particularly in the form of disaggregated data, of Métis women and girls, and because Métis women are rarely invited to sit at tables as community stakeholders to express their own concerns and experiences. Because these doors are closed to Métis women, they are not able to define for themselves their experiences of racism and solutions to combat them.

The lack of understanding of Métis identity and the misrepresentation of Indigenous women as a whole have been reflected in their media portrayals, which has led to their continued dehumanization and mistreatment by Canadian society, particularly by service providers. Gender-based violence against Métis women does not exist in a vacuum in Métis communities; it is a reaction that is the result of colonization, toxic masculinity and the imposition of patriarchal values and norms. Popular culture, including television shows, movies and video games, have situated Métis women and girls as uncivilized, hypersexualized and disposable.

Though a number of databases exist to track the MMIWG crisis, there is currently no database that speaks to distinct Métis experiences of MMIWG as they are often misidentified as "Aboriginal" and even "non-Aboriginal". The creation of a Métis-specific database would touch on issues such as citizenship, location and self-identification, among others. The database could be used among governing members of the Métis National Council, the RCMP, provincial and municipal police and Statistics Canada. This is a distinct need in order to understand the unique risk factors for violence against Métis women, to bring forward unique policies and solutions to address the issue and to better facilitate the healing and honouring processes of Métis families.

All of this engagement has led LFMO to make its own Calls for Miskotahâ, which is the Michif word for *change*, that are specific to Métis women, girls and gender diverse people and reflect their unique histories and realities. Calls have focused on the lack of data specific to Métis women and girls, intergovernmental affairs, engagement, services, child welfare, jurisdiction, criminal justice, health, prevention and awareness.

## **Methodology**

### **Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak's Approach to Intersectional Gender-based Analysis**

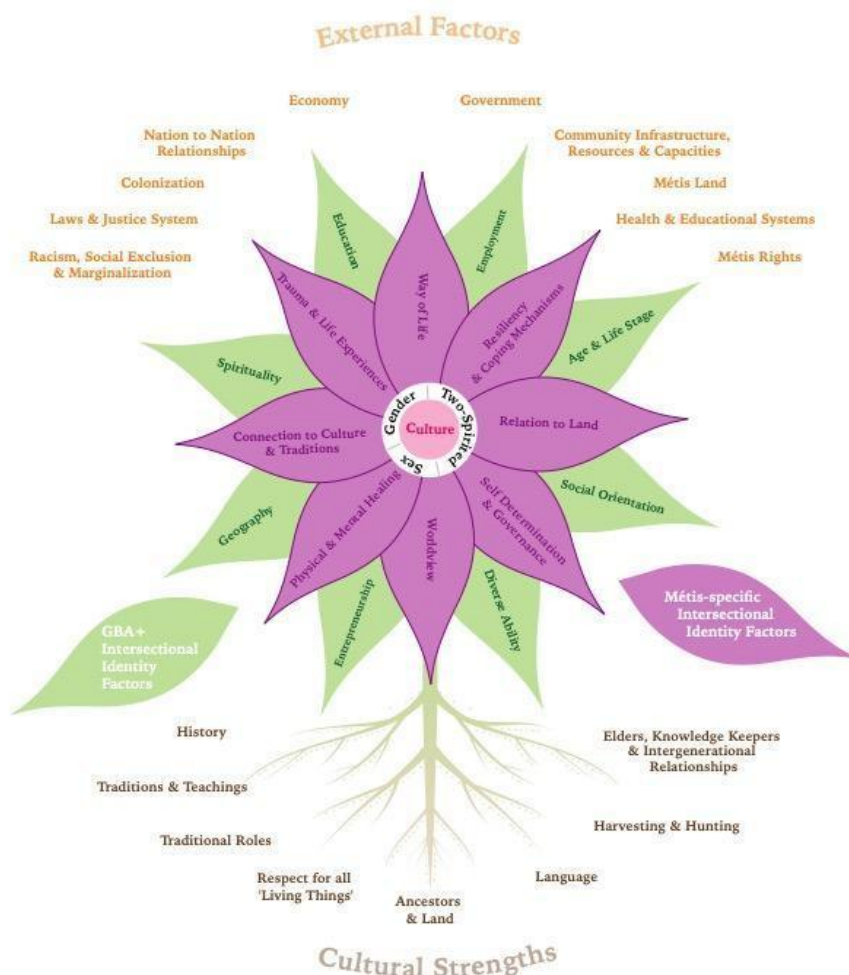
Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO) identified the need to develop a Métis-specific gender-based analysis tool to ensure that the unique realities facing Métis women are incorporated into public policy across the continuum, from development to implementation. This reason for this is because often a pan-Indigenous approach is used, which overlooks and conflates the Métis experience. The Métis-specific Gender Based Analysis Tool enables LFMO to challenge biases on the impact of process, policy and programming on Métis Women and girls, in order to set the stage for attitudinal, operational and theoretical shifts. LFMO's Métis-Specific Gender Based Analysis Toolkit is a practical, user-friendly

tool, utilized to raise Métis-specific considerations throughout the Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) process. This toolkit was built from the Government of Canada's GBA+ Analysis Toolkit and adapted to make GBA+ culturally-relevant to Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people.

## A Métis Approach to 'Intersectionality'

GBA+ Métis-specific Identity Factors

Adapted from Status of Women Canada's GBA+ Intersectionality Graphic



The Métis-specific GBA+ Tool was utilized throughout the development of this research report. There are two different diagrams below which illustrate the concepts considered in the Métis-Specific GBA+ Analysis. This tool was created to guide LFMO's work but also to be used as a job-aid tool for government workers and other partner organizations with whom LFMO works. The tool is meant to be a 'living document' that is constantly updated to reflect the realities of Métis women, girls, LGBTQ2S+ and their families.

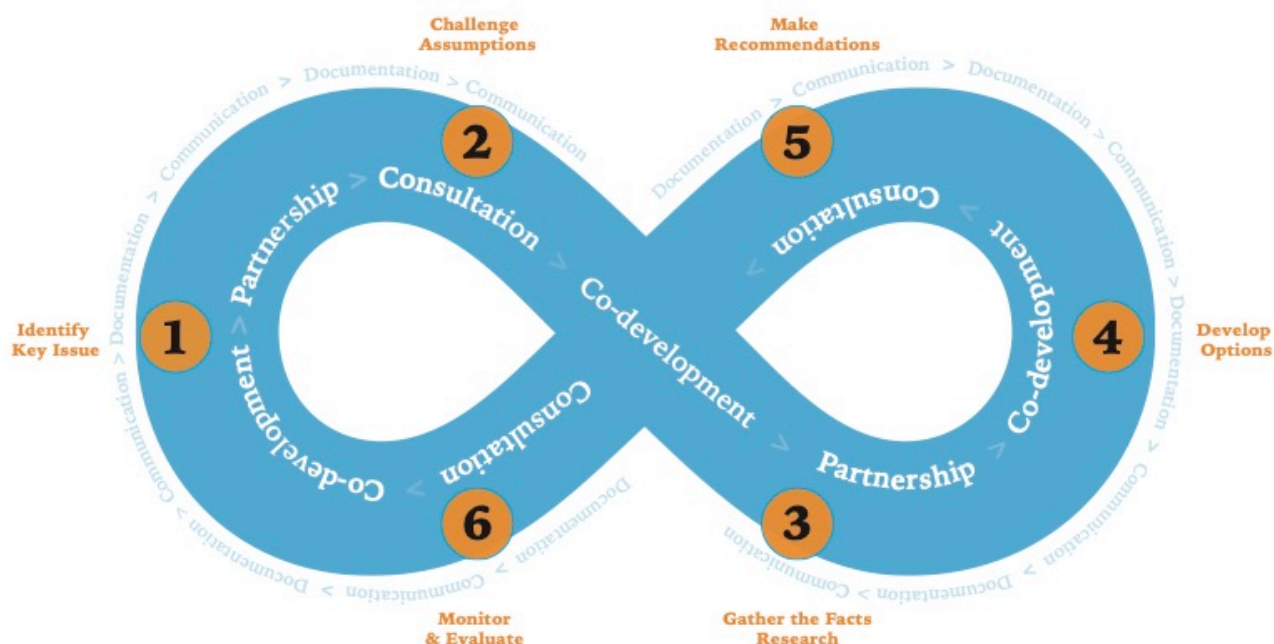
This diagram is used to depict an intersectional understanding of Métis people from a culturally-relevant perspective. Similar to other GBA+ tools, it highlights multiple intersecting identity factors and helps us to innovate and to consider issues and

policies in a different way. Adopting an intersectional approach enables you to see an individual as a whole being, with multiple identity factors, allowing for a holistic approach. Intersectionality emphasizes the importance of identifying multiple and diverse identity factors and how they interact with external considerations. Intersectionality focuses on how structural, systemic, political, social and geographical factors interact with identity factors to shape lived experiences. While there may be expectations of researcher objectivity in other fields, an intersectional approach recognizes that personal biases – both conscious and unconscious – may impact a researcher's ability to effectively identify barriers to equality. Researchers are expected to be reflexive and to identify how their own perspectives, background and social location impact the work that they do. GBA+ is an entry point that can help us reflect on peoples' multiple identity factors, and how that may impact their experiences with initiatives, policies, programming and services.

## A Métis Approach to GBA+

There are five different areas within the **Métis Approach to GBA+**: *the core, the word cloud, the inner petals, the outer petals, and the roots*. The *core* (centre circle and surrounding ring) of the flower represents Métis culture and gender identity. The *word cloud* represents external influences on Métis identity. The *inner petals* represent the various GBA+ identity factors that intersect to make up individual experiences of Métis people. The *outer petals* represent Métis specific identity factors that may not otherwise be included in a GBA+ analysis, these are the contemporary culturally specific identity factors. The *roots* of the flower represent the historical and cultural make-up of Métis communities; these are the historical culturally specific identity factors. This diagram represents considerations to be made when developing policies, programs and advocating for the needs of Métis families across the homeland. This flower diagram is paired with a second infinity diagram to capture the whole **Métis Approach to GBA+**. The second diagram focuses on the steps that should be taken to consult with Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people.

## Gender Based Analysis Plus Key Steps: Metis-specific Approach



## Gender Based Analysis Plus Key Steps: Métis-Specific Approach

A GBA+ framework needs an implementation strategy. The *Infinity Diagram* represents the process in implementing the **Métis Approach to GBA+**. There are six key steps in this process: *identify issues, challenge assumptions, gather facts, (co)develop options/recommendations, monitor and evaluate*. Additionally, there are some overarching concepts that guide these six key steps including: *partnership, consultation, co-development, communication and documentation*.

Identifying issues is the first step of this process. This includes identifying: the context (historical, socio-cultural, economic, environmental) of an issue, focusing on gender/diversity issues/implications, and links the context and gender/diversity issues to broader priorities such as policy or program development. Step two of this process is to challenge assumptions. Challenging assumptions includes looking at your personal beliefs, challenging assumptions in policies/programs and challenging the assumptions within a workplace culture. Gathering the facts is the next step in the process and focuses on broad, inclusive research strategies and incorporates the use of GBA+ in the design of consultation processes (and throughout consultation). After the fact-gathering, the next step is to (co)develop options and recommendations. All options/recommendations should be informed by consultation and research. Additionally, options/recommendations should also identify differential impacts, unintended barriers and any data gaps that may exist. Monitor and evaluate are the last step of this process. Any options/recommendations developed should address inequality, impact groups affected, fill data gaps, and address unintended outcomes. The design of your evaluation framework and approach to monitoring can help address inequality and build capacity.

Partnerships and co-development are an essential part of the **Métis Approach to GBA+**. LFMO will continue to develop and grow partnerships with the Government of Canada and other organizations to allow for the co-development of policies and programs that meet the needs of Métis women, girls, LGBTQ2S+ people and their families. Consultation is another key component of the **Métis Approach to GBA+**. As an advocacy organization, LFMO seeks to elevate the voices of grassroots Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people, and believes in a bottom-up approach. In order to achieve this, LFMO must engage with grassroots Métis families to understand their unique realities. Engagement or consultation is not a one-time event in order to check a box, but must be on-going and meaningful to create the desired changes in policies/programs. Co-development is another important principle to the **Métis Approach to GBA+**. Similar to consultation, co-development must be on-going and meaningful to impact policies and programs. To truly co-develop, all partners must be engaged throughout the process and feel as if their concerns have been heard or addressed. Communication and documentation are principles that should be applied throughout each of the steps. Communication is key to facilitating work between partners and is an essential aspect of co-developing policies and programs. It also helps to identify your target audiences and to tailor your messaging appropriately. Show how your initiative supports diversity, and use inclusive examples, languages and symbols. Review your messaging to ensure you are not perpetuating stereotypes. Whenever possible, choose images and language that challenge harmful stereotypes.

Documentation refers to the analysis and findings throughout the cycle of the initiative. It is important to provide meaningful background information, evidence that a GBA+ was conducted, and explain the process that guided the recommendations.

## **Research & Data Collection**

The research and data collection for this report took a mixed methods approach. LFMO employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Additionally, LFMO honours Traditional Knowledge and Teachings through the guidance of our Elders and Knowledge Keepers. When looking to quantitative methods, LFMO applied a statistical analysis to the lived experiences of Métis women. Qualitatively, LFMO conducts a narrative analysis, with a focus on traditional oral histories and storytelling to ensure Métis women's voices are elevated in culturally safe ways. Within this project, you will find literature reviews, identified data gaps and the opportunity to fill these data gaps with grassroots research. Additionally, for this report, LFMO engaged a committee of experts. These experts included grassroots Métis women from a variety of different regions across the homeland and fields of study/practice, allowing for a diversity of opinions and a robust set of recommendations to be developed.

## **LFMO's Primary Research**

It is well known that there is a limited body of research available that focuses on the distinct realities of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people; therefore as part of LFMO's mandate, it is our goal to continue to work diligently to fill these data gaps. This project includes findings from primary research activities including interviews with family members of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people that have gone missing or been murdered.

Additionally, LFMO is completing a project aimed at filling some of these data gaps: Building a Métis Women's Blueprint. In March 2018, LFMO began working on this project to better understand and support the vision of Métis women across the homeland. This project was funded by the Department for Women and Gender Equality Canada.

The goal of this project is to gather evidence on the needs of Métis women from a grass-roots perspective; identify challenges that Métis women face, such as gaps in service provision; summarize best practices from service providers that serve Métis women; report on the lessons learned throughout the project on how to engage with Métis women, and to help identify strategic priorities for LFMO moving forward. This project will identify where gaps in services still exist and will allow LFMO to further advocate to the Government of Canada for the fair treatment of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people.

LFMO represents all Métis women across the homeland. This includes a diverse set of women, and considers the different experiences of women, men, girls, boy, trans and non-binary people. There are three different components of this project: 1) Community Consultation 2) Environmental Scan and 3) Key Informant Interviews. Each of these components build upon the previous component to create a well-rounded research project.

Preliminary findings from the Environmental Scan portion of the Building a Métis Women's Blueprint project will be included in this report.

## **Grassroots Engagement**

One of the core components of **Métis Approach to GBA+** is to centre research around engagement with grassroots Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people. Métis women are experts on their own lived experiences and LFMO believes in elevating the voices of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people. Within this report, LFMO conducted grassroots engagement on Métis experiences with MMIWG. LFMO engaged in two different capacities: striking a working group of expert witnesses and interviewing families that have lost loved ones to the MMIWG epidemic.

## **Expert Testimony / Family Stories**

This report is centred around Métis Traditional Knowledge and the families that have survived through the tragedy of losing their loved one in the MMIWG crisis. For any interviews conducted with families, Elders were present to provide emotional and spiritual support. In the spirit of reciprocity, families were provided gifts to thank them for sharing their experiences with LFMO to include in this report. LFMO conducted case studies with families that have lived experience with MMIWG. Family interviews were conducted with a trauma-informed lens and the stories presented within this report take a strengths-based approach. LFMO wants to honour and celebrate the lives of the women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people that our communities have lost. Additionally, LFMO has applied the concept of confidentiality to the family stories. We want to respect the privacy wishes of the families involved so all names and identifying information has been removed from their stories. These stories are the driving force behind this report,

and LFMO wants to acknowledge the strength and resilience of the families who have shared their experiences.

### **Expert Research Team**

As part of the research and data collection for this project, LFMO struck an Expert Research Team to conduct research, prepare chapters, and provide policy recommendations to keep Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people safe, secure and supported in their communities. Within this group, there was representation from a variety of fields of study and practice, diversity in age, a variety of represented geographic regions and an Elder/Knowledge Keeper. On this working group, there were experts in law, trauma-informed care and academics. In addition to the Expert Research Team, LFMO's Board of Directors provided their guidance and expertise and LFMO staff facilitated sessions of the working group and supported their research and data collection efforts.

### **Historical Context**

#### **Métis Women and Girls Who Have Gone Missing and/or Been Murdered: Understanding the Roots of Violence**

As stated repeatedly throughout this report, the Inquiry has failed to take seriously Métis experiences of gender-based violence, racism, and colonialism. The Interim Report, published in 2017, offers little insight into the realities of racism, sexism, and marginalization that have framed Métis people's lives since Canada forcefully dispossessed Métis people of their homes in Red River in 1870 and in and around Batoche in 1885. It fails to account for the systematic displacement of Métis in the century that follows, as Canada continues to build itself to, largely, the disregard of Métis people. Further still, the Interim Report failed to make tangible interim recommendations as to how to confront the myriad root causes of gender-based violence against cisgender heterosexual (cishet) Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ women, girls, and other people. It is not clear then what the contributions of the Inquiry's Final Report will be. The limited research available to us does, however, paint a startling picture – that cisgender Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people have experienced great harm as a result of the imposition of gender binaries and gender discrimination. While there is appallingly little research on the experiences of Métis LGBTQ2S+ and on cisgender Métis girls, there is enough that is publicly available to ascertain that cisgender Métis women are greatly marginalized vis-à-vis non-Indigenous Canadians and that the roots of this marginalization run back to the very origins of Canada as a country. The creation of the Canadian nation, and the attending colonization of the Métis Nation has had, and continues to have, particularly brutal impacts on Métis cisgender women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people. Given the limited scope of available research, this portion of the report will focus largely on the experiences of cisgender Métis women and of cisgender Métis girls.

#### **A. Historical Role of Métis Women and Girls in Métis Families and Communities**

Métis people find our origins in the fur trade. While still overwhelmingly marginalized in historian accounts of the fur trade, Métis women have nevertheless received some attention through the work of people such as Sylvia Van Kirk (1980), Jennifer S.H. Brown (1983), Nicole St-Onge (2004), Brenda Macdougall (2010), and Nathalie Kermoal (2016). Sylvia Van Kirk's (1983) *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* documents First Nations and Métis women's places within the fur trade. She writes that insofar as the fur trade system being patriarchal and sexist, First Nations and Métis women were not "passive victims" but rather "active agents" that "did act

to make the most of the opportunities available to them.”<sup>6</sup> The large number of “daughters of the country,” Métis, in fact were able to navigate the trade well and were thoroughly supported via the emergence in the 18<sup>th</sup> century of distinct Métis communities.

Within these communities, Métis people traditionally lived in balance, with each person filling a distinct role within the familial and communal structure. Métis families were not divided along gendered lines but through a careful system that ensured all members of the family lived in balance and that each member of the immediate and extended kinship networks in which Métis people lived, fulfilled their responsibilities to take care of each other and their homeland.

This is supported by the research of Métis scholar Adam Gaudry (2014), who in examining Métis governance in the context of buffalo hunting, writes that, “since all work was necessary for the family’s well-being, all labour was important. One’s contributions were assessed based on how one’s skill assisted in realizing wahkohtowin obligations – how they supported their relations – not by the type of work they performed.”<sup>7</sup> Yet the distinct Métis culture discussed earlier in this report that emerged in the vast expanse often referred to as the “Northwest” through the late 1700s and into the 1800s, was “rooted in the homeland and worldview of maternal relatives rather than paternal ancestors.”<sup>8</sup> Historical and genealogical research confirms Métis oral tradition, that Métis families and communities were historically “matriorganized” and matrilocal, meaning Métis women’s kinship ties laid the foundation for communities’ structuring.<sup>9</sup> This strong matrilineal connection is rooted in the fact that Métis women were active in the daily life of Métis fur trade society. Fur traders, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, were historically dependent on First Nations and Métis women who “were also able to teach the traders local languages, show them how to survive on the land and tend to domestic affairs such as preparing food, constructing shelters, and making clothing.”<sup>10</sup>

As Métis culture and identity crystallized, across distinct yet interconnected and interrelated communities throughout the Métis homeland, Métis women occupied the familial core of their people. Métis women were responsible for raising Métis children and imparting languages spoken by Métis (such as Michif, Cree, Saulteaux, Dene, French, and English) and raised Métis children with spiritual, cultural, and social knowledge that would teach them how to live within Métis society, in relation with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and with the natural world around them.<sup>11</sup> Métis daughters inherited these responsibilities and “usually carried on traditional roles taught by their mothers.”<sup>12</sup> In addition to raising

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<sup>6</sup> Van Kirk, S. (1980). *Many tender ties: women in fur-trade society, 1670-1870*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press: 6-7; See also Brown, Jennifer S. (1983). “Woman as centre and symbol in the emergence of Métis communities.” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 3(1), 39-46; St-Onge, Nicole. J. (2004). *Saint-Laurent, Manitoba: Evolving Métis Identities, 1850-1914*. Regina: University of Regina Press; Iseke-Barnes, Judy. (2009). *Grandmothers of the Métis nation*. *Native Studies Review*, 18(2), 25-60; Macdougall, Brenda. (2011). *One of the family: Métis culture in nineteenth-century northwestern Saskatchewan*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

<sup>7</sup> Gaudry, Adam J. P. (2014). *Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk-‘We are those who own ourselves’: A political history of Métis self-determination in the North-West, 1830-1870* (Doctoral dissertation). Victoria: University of Victoria.

<sup>8</sup> Macdougall 2010: 4.

<sup>9</sup> Brown 1983: 42. See also Payment, Diane. “La Vie en rose”? Métis Women at Batoche, 1870 to 1920” in Miller, Christine and Churchryk, Patricia. Editors. *Women of the First Nations: Power, Wisdom and Strength*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1996: 19-37; Widder, K. R. (1999). *Battle for the soul: Métis children encounter evangelical Protestants at Mackinaw mission, 1823-1837*. Michigan: MSU Press; St-Onge 2004; Macdougall 2010; Iseke, Judy. (2013). “Spirituality as decolonizing: Elders Albert Desjarlais, George McDermott, and Tom McCallum share understandings of life in healing practices.” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 2(1), 35-54.

<sup>10</sup> Vizina, Yvonne. 2008. “Métis Culture.” Eds. Cheryl Avery and Darlene Fichter. Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan: 170.

<sup>11</sup> Macdougall, Brenda and St-Onge, Nicole. (2013). “Rooted in mobility: Métis buffalo-hunting brigades.” *Manitoba History*, (71), 21-33.

<sup>12</sup> Vizina 2008: 170.

children and tending to the home, women engaged in subsistence trapping, and women often traveled on voyaging expeditions. While women did not fill roles in the overt political structure of the Métis society, they used their influential positions within the family and community structure to influence husbands, brothers, and sons, “by refusing to work, making verbal appeals, and publicly admonishing or encouraging men.”<sup>13</sup> Women were of central importance, amassed great respect, and provided necessary balance within Métis economic, family, and wider community and social community life.

Worthy of specific note is that Métis women were vital to the functioning of the buffalo hunt, to the core of Métis cultural and to economic systems throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Particularly for Métis buffalo hunting brigades, which were largely egalitarian in nature, the work of adult male buffalo hunters was “supported and supplemented by the efforts and productiveness of the young and old, boys and girls, elderly men and women, and adult women.”<sup>14</sup> According to Macdougall and St-Onge, “the buffalo hunts are both a representation and a product of the family structure of the Plains Métis.”<sup>15</sup> In fact, as Macdougall and St-Onge’s study of buffalo hunting brigades demonstrates (in the context of the Trottier Brigade active from the 1830 and through the 1860s), “groups of related women drew a group of men who worked together into a social matrix predicated on blood and marriage.”<sup>16</sup> Métis women and their kinship relations were thus at the very heart of the economic functioning of the Métis buffalo hunting system. Macdougall and St-Onge affirm this, writing that “in short, women played a pivotal role in the creation, formation, leadership and maintenance of brigades.”<sup>17</sup> With respect to the unique system of governance in operation during the buffalo hunt, as full voting members of the Assembly within the governance structure of the buffalo hunt, adult Métis women were given equal political standing to Métis men.<sup>18</sup>

In describing the process of Métis women’s involvement in the buffalo hunt, Gaudry writes that, after the hunters ran the buffalo and killed that which they would need, Métis women arrived “with their family’s carts, and assumed leadership over harvesting and preserving the meat. From this point on, the senior women of the camp guided the process of working the kill into (marketable) pemmican and buffalo robes and commanded a significant amount of authority and respect in the process.”<sup>19</sup> From there, “the skills of each family member were utilized for the benefit of the family as a whole. Women would typically prepare the harvested meat, pound it into pemmican, tan hides, mend the fires, and cook.”<sup>20</sup> Gaudry further details that:

“Skilled and knowledgeable Métis women were vital to the economic prosperity of their families... Women oversaw the tanning of buffalo hides and their transformation into the basic necessities for Métis life... as well as valuable trade goods to ensure Métis familial self-ownership... Since much of the hunt was market-oriented, and the Métis livelihood depended on the quality of the pemmican, robes, and other buffalo-derived products, women’s labour was essential to their family’s economic status. In

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<sup>13</sup> Women of the Métis Nation (2007). “Policy Paper on Violence Against Métis Women”: 2.

<sup>14</sup> Macdougall and St-Onge (2013).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See Callihoo, Victoria. (1960). Our buffalo hunts. *Alberta Historical Review*, 8(1), 24-25; Van Kirk (1983); Macdougall and St-Onge (2013); Gaudry (2014). On the structure of the Buffalo Hunt, see Chartrand, Larry. (2008). ‘We Rise Again’: Métis Traditional Governance and the Claim to Métis Self-Government. “‘We Rise Again’: Métis Traditional Governance and the Claim to Métis Self-Government.” In *Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada*. Ed. Yale Belanger. 3rd ed. Saskatoon: Purich Publishing: 145-157.

<sup>19</sup> Gaudry (2014): 115-116; see also Belcourt, Herb. (2006). *Walking in the woods: A Métis journey*. Edmonton: Brindle and Glass: 200-203.

<sup>20</sup> Gaudry (2014): 114.

this way, women were highly regarded for their contributions to family's economic prosperity and independence."<sup>21</sup>

In addition to their various roles within the buffalo hunting brigades and the governance structure of the Métis, Métis women "have not only raised children alone but [...] were also skilled hunters, trappers, and fisherman," and Métis women "built their own cabins, made snowshoes, and ran dog teams."<sup>22</sup> Métis women were also quite often medicine people, whose responsibilities included gathering roots and herbs central to Métis medicine-making, medicine which they were often directly responsible for administering in their capacity as healers and midwives.<sup>23</sup> Métis women were therefore incredibly versatile and were absolutely vital to the health, well-being, and the very survival of the Métis Nation.

## B. Colonization, Racism, and Sexism: The Roots of Violence Against Métis Women and Girls

*"We were a very matriarchal society. Very often, the men would leave our communities for months, and sometimes years, and the women would take care of all the necessary things that would provide for their well-being and their existence in that community. Part of when we say we need to empower women and take back our traditional role--and I'm not blaming anything or anybody--but the reality was that once there was more European contact with our communities, with the churches getting involved in our communities, the attitude started to change amongst our men. It went to more of a patriarchal kind of role. Many of our men...and statistically I can't prove this, but I believe that's part of where the violence and aggression in our communities comes from" (Melanie Omeniho, 1995).*

By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic missionaries arrived to Red River, bringing with them gender norms that sought to confine Métis women to domestic spaces and to divide Métis families and communities along patriarchal lines.<sup>24</sup> The gradual introduction of the Catholic Church, and later the Canadian government and its armed forces would, by the end of the twentieth century, ensure that a social structure that emphasized balance and equality and in which Métis women were respected and valued was aggressively transformed along Anglo- British-Canadian systems of inequality – by racism, gendered divisions, and sexism wherein Métis women were socially, economically, politically, and culturally positioned inferior to Métis men.<sup>25</sup> In his January 4, 1869, Toronto Globe article, Charles Mair, Canadian nationalist, poet, and later a member of the Treaty Eight Half-breed Commission, writes that Métis men as "halfbreeds" "are a harmless obsequious set of men" who might be "very useful here when the country gets filled up" but who are ultimately lazy and self-indulgent.<sup>26</sup> He characterizes Métis women much in the same way, however, but goes a step further and suggests that Métis women are racially inferior to white women and as a result suffer from feelings of jealousy; that because Métis women "have no coat-

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*: 116-117.

<sup>22</sup> Campbell, Maria (2012). "Forward: Charting the Way." *Contours of a people: Métis family, mobility, and history*. Eds. St-Onge, Nicole, Podruchny, Carolyn, and Macdougall, Brenda. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press: xxiv.

<sup>23</sup> Préfontaine, Darren, Young, Patrick & Paquin, Todd. "Métis Seasonal Cycles." Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute: 21; Kermoal, Nathalie. (2016). "Métis Women's Environmental Knowledge and the Recognition of Métis Rights." *Living on the Land: Indigenous: RPHQ: V Understanding of Place*: 123; see also Hodgson-Smith, Kathy L., & Kermoal, Nathalie. (2016). "Community-based research and Métis women's knowledge in Northwestern Saskatchewan." *Living on the Land: Indigenous: RPHQ: V Understanding of Place*.

<sup>24</sup> Payment (1996): 20; Erickson, Lesley A. (2005). "'Bury our sorrows in the sacred heart': Gender and the Métis response to colonialism: The case of Sara and Louis Riel, 1848-83." *Unsettled pasts: Reconceiving the west through women's history*. Eds. Burnett, K. et al. Calgary: University of Calgary Press: 28.

<sup>25</sup> Van Kirk 1980: 7.

<sup>26</sup> qtd. in Shrive, Norman. (1963). "Poet and Politics: Charles Mair at Red River." *Canadian Literature* 17: 14.

of-arms but a ‘totem’ to look back to, [they] make up for their deficiency by biting at the backs of their ‘white’ sisters.”<sup>27</sup>

Proponents of expanding the young Canadian state through the Red River and into the Prairies, connecting to the Pacific Coast colonies, held these same attitudes toward Métis people and viewed Métis as racially, linguistically, religiously, and culturally undesirable to the project of Canadian nation-building. In addition to facing sexism, racism, and violence from non-Métis people, cis het Métis women, cisgender girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people increasingly came to face sexism and violence within their own families and communities. Métis women, as bearers of the heart of Métis languages, values, and cultural and environmental knowledge, experienced distinct forms of violence. The resultant abuse, poverty, ill-health, and systemic inequality have set the conditions for which we continue to struggle with today. These are, to be clear, the roots of violence against Métis women and girls, and the foundation for the obscenely high rates of Métis women going missing and/or being murdered.

### **1. The Red River Resistance – A Reign of Terror**

Historians have predominantly focused on the implications and impacts of the Red River Resistance on and for Métis men. As Métis men made up the public face of the Métis National Committee, as led by Louis Riel, the experiences of Métis women and girls have been largely ignored. In May 1870, when Louis Riel’s government signed the Manitoba Act as a Treaty with the Canadian government, they did so on behalf of the entirety of the Métis Nation – Métis women and children as well. In that same month, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald dispatched 1,200 troops to Red River in what has now become known as the Wolseley Expedition, a punitive expedition. On July 15<sup>th</sup>, when Manitoba became Canada’s 5<sup>th</sup> province, the Métis were packing their things and fleeing their homes. For those Métis who stayed in Red River and did not flee, as Historian Lawrence Barkwell has documented, the aggression of the Canadian military, namely the Red River Expeditionary Force (RREF) committed a “reign of terror” when they arrived in Red River. The troops arrival encouraged the wholesale assault against the Métis who remained in Red River – as both troops and the settlers flooding into the area and settlers arriving in the new province were hostile to Métis, many Métis were beaten, raped, and killed in the streets and Métis landholders were harassed.

While Métis men, women, elders, and children were beaten and many were murdered, women were specific targets for sexual violence. Barkwell writes that RREF soldiers raped Laurette Goulet, the 17-year old daughter of Elzéar Goulet, a member of the Métis Nation provisional government.<sup>28</sup> In *Merchant Princes*, Peter C. Newman similarly notes that when the RREF reached Red River, they looted homes and raped Métis women. Newman writes that Goulet “died after being assaulted by four drunken soldiers.”<sup>29</sup> To my knowledge, no one has yet researched and documented the widespread sexual violence that Métis women, like Laurette, were subjected to during the course of the resistances. These give us at least some insight into the distinct ways that sexual violence was used by the Canadian state as a weapon against Métis women. The failure of anyone to be brought to justice for these horrendous acts of violence is consistent with ongoing violence against Métis women, and the often-frustrating struggle for justice Métis women with which contend.

### **2. The Northwest Resistance – 1885 in Context**

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*: 15.

<sup>28</sup> Barkwell, Lawrence. 2008. “The Reign of Terror Against the Métis of Red River.” Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute.

<sup>29</sup> Newman, Peter. C. (1991). *Merchant Princes: Company of Adventures Volume III*. Toronto: Viking: 56.

Those who fled Red River to establish new communities and to live within pre-established Métis communities in other parts of the Northwest Territories, continued to experience cyclical patterns of abuse and neglect administered by the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) and the Canadian government. The Dominion Lands Act, 1879, established the Northwest Halfbreed Scrip Commission, a system devised to “settle” Métis land grievances via the extinguishment of the “Indian title” of Métis people. In exchange for such extinguishment, Métis would be given scrip certificates, in essence promissory notes, that they could exchange for either land or cash. As noted by pre-eminent scrip research Frank Tough from the University of Alberta, however, along with Erin McGregor, while the scrip was promoted as offering a measure of protection of Métis land, “in the long run, it may have, apart from a small group of scrip buyers, failed for all concerned.”<sup>30</sup> Likewise, Maggie Siggins asserts that the scrip system process led to “the biggest land grab in the nation’s history,” whereby “unscrupulous white speculators” would “become fabulously wealthy by cheating Métis people out of their government-appointed scrip land.”<sup>31</sup>

As frustration mounted, Métis formed a national government under Riel for a second time – the Provisional Government of Saskatchewan – and a series of conflicts with the NWMP and others led them to identify the need to create a system of defensive trenches and rifle pits around their new core of Batoche. With the issuance of a clear declaration of their intent to seek recognition and rights, and to reject Canadian colonization, the Métis once found themselves as the targets of attack. This culminated in the Battle of Batoche wherein from May 9-12, 1885, Métis found themselves under attack by the Canadian militia. Métis women were active in defending their families and community at Batoche, wherein a number of Métis women “engaged in battle, loading and repairing guns, making bullets, often standing just behind the men.”<sup>32</sup> While some took care of the children and elders, hiding them, feeding them, and praying with them, they also tended to the sick and wounded. Diane Payment notes that women also took to melting lead in order to keep up the soldiers’ supplies of ammunition. Métis women such as Marguerite (née Dumas) Caron, were also influential in military strategizing. At the 1885 Battle of Fish Creek, Caron insisted that leader Louis Riel send reinforcements to the Métis battle lines, resulting in their successful pushback against the Canadian army.<sup>33</sup> Although women were not at the forefront of political decision-making and attempts to negotiate with the Canadian state, they nevertheless were crucial to Métis resistance to Canadian colonization.

In the wake of the Métis suppression at the Battle of Batoche, many Métis women and girls suffered. “Official accounts” authored by non-Métis insist that there was “no rape and wanton killing of women and children during the war” the pattern of behaviour consistent with the treatment of Métis women and girls in 1870 points to the need for greater research into these foundational moments of violence against Métis women and girls.<sup>34</sup> Even in the absence of immediate data regarding state-led sexual violence, the actions of state actors directly led to the death of Métis women and girls. At least one little Métis-Dakota girl “was killed in the crossfire and hastily buried by the soldiers” and two young girls died from tuberculosis.<sup>35</sup> According to one study, nine Métis women died between March and December 1885 in various parishes from “causes related to or at least aggravated by the sufferings and deprivations of war.

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<sup>30</sup> Tough, Frank and McGregor, Erin. 2011. “‘The Rights to the Land May be Transferred’: Archival Records as Colonial Text – A Narrative of Métis Scrip.” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature/Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée* 34, no. 1: 57.

<sup>31</sup> Siggins qtd. In Cariou, Warren. 2006. “Haunted Prairie: Aboriginal ‘Ghosts’ and the Spectres of Settlement.” *University of Toronto quarterly* 75, no. 2: 729-730.

<sup>32</sup> Payment, Diane. (2012). “Women of Batoche.” Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute: 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*: 1.

<sup>34</sup> 29 Payment (1996): 27-30.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

They died of consumption (tuberculosis), la grippe (influenza), and fausse-couche (miscarriage).”<sup>36</sup> They continued to account for “the proportionately high death rate in 1886 as well” (Payment 27-30). Further, owing to the number of Métis men who were killed, arrested and imprisoned, a great number of Métis women were left without their husbands and were simultaneously “dispossessed of their homes and personal belongings.”<sup>37</sup> This effectively destabilized the Métis Nation. While Payment has argued that kinship networks between Métis women were strengthened and thus reflects the resilience of Métis women during a period of unimaginable struggle, it is clear that the events at both Red River and Batoche have had deep ripple effects and have set a foundation for homelessness, poverty, and insecurity that have continued to render Métis women and girls vulnerable through today.

### **3. Land Dispossession, Homelessness, Scrip and Road Allowances**

It was with the events of the resistances and the breakdown of Métis communities and families left in the wake of Canada’s assault wherein Métis women began to find themselves in even more marginalized positions. In the wake of 1885, the federal government’s approach to relations with the Métis has been through an unwritten policy of neglect and ignorance, waiting for the forces of non-Métis settlement to assimilate Métis into Canadian society. Métis have taken upon ourselves the referent “the forgotten people” to highlight Canada’s policy of neglect. As mentioned, in the years following the attack at Batoche, Métis women strengthened their kinship networks with/to one another, but in their effort to seek compensation from the Rebellion Losses Commission for financial compensation, they were often confronted with varying levels of discrimination on the basis of gender and of race. Payment details that some Métis widows advanced the line of argument that they “had not taken up arms and therefore could not be held accountable. It was a worthy and in most cases valid argument, but one that the commission lawyers did not accept, especially given that at this time a woman’s property was considered her husband’s.”<sup>38</sup> Generally, claims made by Métis women were, however, “likewise rejected on the basis of denunciations by others and the fact that ‘the husbands had been party to the loss’.”<sup>39</sup>

Researchers have noted that many families remained in Batoche and that the community ultimately continued, although drastically changed, into the 20th century. For some, and for other families, however, they were driven to eke out marginal existences in shanty towns and what have become known as “road allowances.” In Manitoba, in the wake of the Reign of Terror, not all Métis fled the Red River Valley. As David Burley points out, Métis families continued to live in the area in small shanty towns known as Rooster Town and Turkey Town, that later come together to be known as Rooster Town.<sup>40</sup> The Métis-dominant town faced racism and aggressive stereotyping by Canadian residents of the City of Winnipeg, people who depicted the Métis as “indolent, immoral, and irresponsible and whose children brought contagious diseases into the elementary school.”<sup>41</sup> Women in Rooster Town struggled to enter into the wage labour market and for those Métis women who were heads of their households, they were often dependent on male relatives living nearby for some modicum amount of support.<sup>42</sup> Many of the families in Rooster Town had been displaced from their original parishes in Red River and few had been able to

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Roy, Sylvia. (2016). We are Still Dancing: Métis Women’s Voices on Dance as a Restorative Praxis for Wellbeing (Doctoral dissertation, Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa): 16; see also Payment (1996).

<sup>38</sup> Payment 1996: 30.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Burley, D. (2013). Rooster Town: Winnipeg’s Lost Métis Suburb, 1900–1960. *Urban History Review/Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 42(1): 8).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*: 2.

<sup>42</sup> Peters, E., Stock, M., & Werner, A. (2018). *Rooster Town: The History of an Urban Métis Community, 1901–1961*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

secure any kind of title to the lands they lived on. In 1959, 14 families were ordered removed and Rooster Town was razed.

The massive changes to Métis land relationships in the Red River Valley meant the forceful induction of Métis women into a wage labour economy that they had to adapt greatly to. While some found work as domestics, many Métis women who lost their husbands in the Reign of Terror and were left alone to raise their children struggled to ensure security and stability for their children, found themselves in oppressive poverty. As will be discussed shortly, the systemic marginalization of Métis women with respect to Canadian systems of education meant that few had the skills necessary to transition into well-paid labour positions. In one case, a widow Charlotte Omand, who had “owned a three-room house and two lots on which the Chipperfield family lived” was forced to sell the land and house in a tax sale.<sup>43</sup> Charlotte was “unable to earn enough to support herself and her small children, and the extended Omand family did not make enough to subsidize her and her offspring. As a result, she was unable to pay the taxes on her property and lost it” (Peters, Stock, & Werner 2018). Métis women were not dependent on Métis men, as it has been classically framed in Canadian academic and policy research, but rather Métis women lived in a system that depended on the health and well-being of all members of the family and community – immediate and extended kinship networks. These extended networks supported women in times of difficulty, ensuring the ongoing vitality of Métis families and communities. The dispossession of Métis families from land, and Canada’s refusal to honour the terms of the Manitoba Act of 1870, placed Métis women in extremely precarious positions.

In other parts of Manitoba, and in Saskatchewan, Métis families were pushed into road allowances. Métis author and scholar Jesse Thistle writes that in 1872, the Dominion Land Survey, “divided the prairie into settlements called homesteads. In between those lots and sites, spaces were left for roads, future railway lines and other infrastructure. Ten feet on either side of these spaces were allotted for works to do maintenance. These thin strips of land were often left unused by the Crown.”<sup>44</sup> Métis who had been pushed from their homes at Batoche and in nearby communities, those who continued to be pushed from their land in the wake of 1885, and those for whom the scrip system continued to fail, set up communities within road allowances. Historian Darren R. Préfontaine notes that Métis became squatters and that from 1885-1945, in Saskatchewan, “the landless Métis moved from locale to locale, often forcibly, in order to make a living and live among themselves.”<sup>45</sup> This “Post-Resistance Period” as Préfontaine calls it, continued to see Métis in Saskatchewan deprived of a stable land base by “systemic racism, Scrip speculation [the practice of non-Indigenous settlers swindling Métis out of scrip] and government policies such as the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (1935), which gave the state the power to forcibly remove the Métis from their homes.”<sup>46</sup> The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (1935) specifically targeted Métis people living in road allowances for forced relocation to provincially-run experimental farming colonies at places such as Green Lake, Glen Mary, Lestock, Lebret, and Crescent Lake, Saskatchewan.<sup>47</sup>

In Alberta, where Métis had continued to live in their communities, the Dominion Lands Act and simultaneous scrip process opened up Métis communities for settlement by non-Indigenous settlers. At the same time, the Crown’s demarcation of “Crown land” saw many Métis turned into squatters on their

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Thistle, Jesse. (2019). “Forced to live on roadsides: the dark history of Métis road allowances.” Unreserved: CBC Radio. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/from-scrip-to-road-allowances-canada-s-complicated-history-with-them%C3%A9tis-1.5100375/forced-to-live-on-roadsides-the-dark-history-of-m%C3%A9tis-road-allowances-1.5100660>; see also Zelig, Ken and Victoria. (1987). *St. Madeleine: Community Without a Town*. Métis Elders in Interview. Winnipeg: Pemmican Publications; Campbell, Maria and Racette, Sherry Farrell. (1995). *Stories of the road allowance people*. Penticton: Theytus Books.

<sup>45</sup> Préfontaine, Darren. (nd). “The Road Allowance People.” Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute: 15.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

own land.<sup>48</sup> As in other provinces, Métis likewise struggled to secure title to their lands and a series of petitions were issued by Métis to the federal government in an effort to see their title secured (Blackfoot Crossing 1877, Cypress Hills 1878, Edmonton and St. Albert 1880).<sup>49</sup> At the same time, as the federal government ensured that those it designated as “Halfbreeds” could no longer be within treaty, a number of Métis in Alberta were withdrawn from treaty and saw their Indian title extinguished. The lists “Halfbreeds Withdrawn From Treaty” are overwhelmingly filled with the names of Métis women, and in some cases of Métis women who married non-Indigenous men. This demonstrates an alternate pathway through which federal legislators enforced the *Indian Act* of 1876’s gender discriminatory blood quantum provisions that held that an Indigenous woman’s “status” (and that of her children), in the eyes of the Canadian government, was determined by whether their husbands were, or were not, Indians recognized by Canada. By 1932, Métis in Alberta formed political associations that actively worked to push the Alberta government toward the establishment of land bases for Métis – known today as the Métis settlements and the only recognized land basis established for Métis people.<sup>50</sup> For Métis women within road allowance communities in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and for those designated as squatters on their own land, racism and sexism continued to make them especially vulnerable. In Nicole St-Onge’s study of Métis women living in St. Eustache, those born between 1911 and 1924 identified challenges faced by Métis women in continuing to live in rural areas. While both the federal and provincial governments saw no reason why Métis could not and would not assimilate into the wage labour economy of cities, for Métis women in St. Eustache, the prospect of the city was quite terrifying: “Certainly for the Fort Rouge [nickname for Métis neighbourhood in St. Eustache] families, linguistic and educational barriers along with an awareness of latent racism kept them away from urban areas where the possibility of better jobs existed.”<sup>51</sup> The Métis women interviewed similarly rejected the idea that they would move to cities for better working conditions, insisting instead that if life was so untenable in their rural homes that they were, in fact, being pushed out by racism.<sup>52</sup>

For those who had been widowed in 1870, 1885, and/or otherwise lost spouses and children to illness and other conditions of systemic violence, the fracturing of kinship networks and the dispersal of Métis family members threatened the social fabric of Métis community life. Preliminary research into the period between 1870-1920 shows that Métis women suffered from the death of their children due to disease, malnutrition, and other factors at an exponential rate.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, sexism was taking a deeper hold within Métis families and communities, something that Métis elder Rose Boyer echoes in her reflection on young Métis women’s experiences with respect to sex: “I see what men do to young girls. Like coaxing them to have sex, getting them pregnant and then leaving them high and dry. The men seem to get away with everything and the women, the girls, are always left with whatever – could be a transmitted disease, or pregnancy, and they are the ones who have to bear the punishment without protection.”<sup>54</sup> For Boyer, this is associated with the changing shape of men’s roles: “A warrior at one time was a man who looked after his family, was a hunter and made sure that the family had enough food. He looked after the family. All of a sudden, manhood became how many babies you can have.”<sup>55</sup> The sexual objectification

<sup>48</sup> O’Byrne, Nicole. (2013). “No other weapon except organization”: The Métis Association of Alberta and the 1938 Métis Population Betterment Act. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 24(2): 315.

<sup>49</sup> Rupertsland Center for Métis Research. 2018. “RMCR Scrip Booklet.” Edmonton: University of Alberta: 10.

<sup>50</sup> Pocklington, T. C. (1991). *The government and politics of the Alberta Métis settlements*. Regina: University of Regina Press: 10.

<sup>51</sup> Peters, Stock and Werner. (2018): 49.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Adese, Jennifer. (2018). “Extinguishing the Dead: Colonial Archives, Anxieties, and Reflections on Research Métis Scrip.” *Métis Talks*. Edmonton: University of Alberta.

<sup>54</sup> Boyer, Rose qtd. in Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization (2008). “In The Words of Our Ancestors: Métis Health and Healing.” Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization: 87.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

and exploitation of Métis women and girls is rooted in the systemic, governmentally-sanctioned, and targeted breakdown of Métis families and communities.

While Canada did its best to fracture Métis communities, Métis women were able to continue to carry and transmit to their children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews Métis cultural traditions; at the core of busy family lives they ensured the transmission of Métis worldviews and ways of being to future generations. This does not, however, negate that there were significant consequences for Métis women and girls, as a result of the introduction of sexism, their dispossession of land, and their displacement. These impositions have meant the intrusion of patriarchal oppression into Métis women's daily lives and the dual oppression of Métis women based on their Métisness and their womanhood. This oppression continues into the present as Métis women struggle to return their families and communities to a place of balance and substantive equality.

#### **4. Residential and Day Schooling and Child Apprehension**

Another major root cause for the obscenely high rates of Métis women and girls who have gone missing and/or been murdered is the violence that is fostered within educational systems – residential schooling, day schooling, and the social welfare system as systems geared towards the apprehension of Métis children from Métis families.

##### **a. Residential and Day Schooling**

Métis people have generally been neglected with respect to recent research and governmental initiatives regarding residential schooling. As with many other aspects of federal government policy Métis, Métis were inconsistently treated in relation to residential schooling. Tricia Logan summarizes that while Métis were seen as a “threat to peaceful settlement” and thus targeted for removal and assimilation, “they existed in a grey area in which neither the provincial governments of the western provinces nor the federal government wanted to provide services such as education.”<sup>56</sup> Unlike with First Nations, Métis attendance at residential schools was not regulated through governmental policies such as the Indian Act. As with other areas of policy, “Métis fell between the jurisdictions of federal and provincial governments and were subject to inconsistent and disorganized policies.”<sup>57</sup>

When Métis children were admitted to residential schools, it was often owing to low incarceration rates of First Nations children and precipitated by successful negotiation for per capita funding from the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA). As such, Métis children could be incarcerated, moved around to balance enrolments at different residential schools, or excluded altogether.<sup>58</sup> Schools in places such as Fort Ellice and Camperville, Manitoba; Lebret and Isle a la Crosse, SK; and St. Paul's, Alberta, saw residential schools constructed in those areas because of long missionary presence in Métis communities – and as such in those areas Métis attendance was high.<sup>59</sup> As a result of the location of many residential schools, far more commonly Métis children attended day schools, taught by the same composition of priests and nuns, but wherein they were permitted to go home at the end of the day. This translated to some ability among Métis to retain their traditional languages, but with great disincentive among children owing to the heavy punishments visited on them at school.

Métis women and girls were particularly impacted by their subjection to the schools in a number of ways. Attitudes within the schools saw Métis in a similar vein as First Nations – as requiring

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<sup>56</sup> Logan, Tricia. (2008). “A Métis Perspective on Truth and Reconciliation.” From Truth to Reconciliation: Transforming the Legacy of Residential Schools. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation: 75.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*: 76.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*: 77.

“civilization” and an assimilation into largely Anglo-British-Canadian ways of life. For Métis girls, this would manifest in the form of entrenched divisions of labour and education along sexist lines – that innately saw girls and women as inferior to men and as only suited to the functioning of the immediate home. This clearly contributed to the further destabilization of Métis family and community life organized on egalitarian principles and with an emphasis on balance, equity, and fairness. At the same time, Métis children were subjected to sexual violence and other forms of abuse, at the hands of priests, nuns, and other students. Michif elder Rita Flamand details her experience at Christ the King School, a day school run by nuns from the residential school in her community in Manitoba: “After lunch, a priest would play with us and take us girls to the mission on the pretense of helping him in the Shomoo Hall. There, he would grab and touch us inappropriately. I did not feel right.”<sup>60</sup> Even outside of the school dynamic, when the children and young girls attended church run by those same priests and nuns, “the priests would rub us against them... They knew we would not say anything. We were about eight to ten years old” (Flamand 2009: 70).

Flamand’s account, published by the Aboriginal Healing Foundationd (AHF) and tied to the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), is one of many accounts of Métis women and girls’ experiences with sexual violence by educators sanctioned by the Canadian government. This sexual violence extends, she notes, beyond the school itself. When second-hand clothing arrived to the church in her community and Métis women in states of deprivation desperately needed clothes for themselves and their children, they would go to get the clothes and be subjected to a priest that “would get the women to try on the tops and blouses, touching them on the breasts and saying, ‘Oh, it’s too big’ or ‘too small,’ while running his hands down the breasts pretending to straighten the blouse.”<sup>61</sup> Métis women’s and girls’ bodies were repeatedly violated by priests and Flamand recounts one particularly troubling instance wherein her young friend (presumably on the cusp of puberty) would “make me tie a folded koosh (diaper) around her chest. I would pin it in the back with safety pins so she would have a flat chest.”<sup>62</sup> Her friend’s request demonstrates one of the many strategies used by Métis girls to try to protect themselves from sexual abuse. At the same time that her friend was working to prevent her own sexual assault, she was also responding to nuns making derogatory comments about the size of her chest.<sup>63</sup> Métis girls were sexualized by priests but also by nuns who from a young age taught them to be ashamed of their bodies and fomented damaging and harmful stereotypes that Métis girls were sexually promiscuous. They were further criminalized for struggling to cope with the trauma inflicted by sexual abuse. Historian Joan Sangster documents one such case in Ontario wherein a Métis girl was remanded to the Ontario Training School for Girls (in operation from 1933 to 1960). The young girl continues to resist her incarceration and training in domestics and “sexual purity.” She was ultimately tranquilized and then transferred to an adult reformatory wing before being released because “no one could help her.”<sup>64</sup> Staff within the school insisted that she was a “lost case” because as Métis she represented the worst of “both worlds” and that as a “mixed race” girl she inherited “the worst of both cultures” that directly resulted in her purported lack of “cultural moorings.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Flamand, Liza Rita. (2009). “Truth about Residential Schools and Reconciling this History: A Michif View.” Response, Responsibility, and Renewal: Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Journey. Eds. Gregory Younging, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation: 70.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*: 71.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Sangster, J. (2002). “She Is Hostile to Our Ways”: First Nations Girls Sentenced to the Ontario Training School for Girls, 1933–1960. *Law and History Review*, 20(1): 92.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

## b. Child Apprehension

Métis experiences with residential and day schools, and with training schools such as the one identified above, set the foundation for Métis experiences with the child welfare system. While Métis were not the primary targets of residential schooling, day schools, or training schools, Métis mothers were nevertheless critiqued for what missionaries viewed as their “lax approach” to childrearing. Nathalie Kermoal cites the well-known Oblate Alexandre Taché who “opined that Métis women on the Prairies sacrificed the overall well-being of their children because of the pleasure they took from them and their apparent fear to correct their behaviour (*la crainte de les reprendre*).<sup>66</sup> By contrast, Métis were horrified by the severity and aggression of the model of socialization present within the schools.<sup>67</sup> Most troubling, however, is that the negative characterization of Métis women’s parenting, however, established a discursive construction of Métis mothers as unsuitable parents that fed the growing social welfare system’s intrusion into Indigenous families in the mid-20th century.

As social workers within provinces gained permission from provincial and federal governments to enter into First Nations and Métis communities, Métis children were targets for child apprehension. Métis children make up a large number of children taken in what is known as the “Sixties Scoop,” and continue to be overrepresented in the child welfare system today. Child apprehension has directly targeted Métis women as mothers, as they are the forces for cultural continuity and stability within Métis families. Métis women cared for siblings and younger relations from a young age and continued this as they matured into adulthood. Traditionally, if issues were to arise with respect to a child’s ability to be cared for by their parents, children were nevertheless kept within the immediate or extended family network. Métis elder Angie Crerar recounts: “There was no such thing as welfare. There was no such thing as children being taken away because the next relative looked after the children. Children stayed within the family circle...And it is a way of life for us...We shared everything we had.”<sup>68</sup> Similarly, if children were in a vulnerable position, Métis looked out for each other’s children collectively: “If a family was drinking, the welfare was not called. The family would go there and get the children, or somebody would go there and look after the children for somebody else. It was because people felt a responsibility to look after children.”<sup>69</sup>

As many researchers have noted, removing Métis children from their families and placing them in non-Indigenous adoptive homes is the extension of the logic of residential schools – eliminate Métis people by assimilating us into non-Indigenous society: “The widespread practice of removing children from their Métis families and placing them in white, middle-class foster and adoptive homes was ideologically an extension of the residential school model, perpetuating the false image of the unfit Métis parent.”<sup>70</sup> In her comprehensive study of Canada’s child welfare system, Australian scholar Margaret Jacobs similarly identifies that the residential school system gave way to a comprehensive system of child apprehension. While Métis weren’t as directly targeted by residential schools, Métis children were targeted under the auspices of “child welfare.”<sup>71</sup> The displacement of Métis from their homelands and ensuing poverty came to be characterized as a “social ill” and in both Alberta and Saskatchewan various “rehabilitation schemes” were devised for Métis families.

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<sup>66</sup> Kermoal qtd. in Andersen, Chris. (2014). *Métis: Race, recognition, and the struggle for Indigenous peoplehood*. UBC Press: 67.

<sup>67</sup> Logan (2008): 77.

<sup>68</sup> Crerar, Angie qtd. in Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. 2008. “In The Words of Our Ancestors: Métis Health and Healing.” Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization: 57.

<sup>69</sup> Richardson, Rose. qtd. in Ibid: 61.

<sup>70</sup> Logan (2008): 80.

<sup>71</sup> Jacobs, Margaret. D. (2014). *A generation removed: The fostering and adoption of Indigenous children in the postwar world*. Omaha: University of Nebraska Press.

In Saskatchewan, the Adopt Indian-Métis Program (AIM) that formally ran from 1967-1972 saw the forceful removal of a sizeable number of Métis children from their homes and their “adoption out” into non-Indigenous homes in other provinces, and for a time, in the United States and overseas. In spite of requests by children and parents themselves, all contact was generally severed, and children were denied access to their parents, other family, and identities as Métis. As Jacob writes, the program was enabled after successful petitioning by social workers in provincial outfits convinced the federal government to allow social workers access to reserve communities and to involve themselves in the lives of Métis families. This was bolstered by a 1966 study into the situation for Indigenous people titled the “Hawthorn Report” issued by anthropologist Harry Hawthorn at the behest of the federal government. In the report, he and his coauthors suggest that extending “provincial child welfare services to reserves as a key step in promoting equal rights for Indians.”<sup>72</sup> Métis were thus swept up into child welfare schemes. In spite of the fact that First Nations and Métis children made up only 7.5% of the population of children in Saskatchewan in 1968-1969, they represented 42% of children in the social welfare system.<sup>73</sup> As of 2018, this number has only increased, with Indigenous children in care generally comprising 52.2% of the population. The AIM program aggressively advertised Métis children to “white families” – and in fact the organization funded by the Province hired an advertising firm to develop TV and radio spots as well as newspaper ads.<sup>74</sup> Métis children were thus treated as marketable objects. This is reinforced by the dispassionate approach taken by the Department of Social Services who rationalized that the project’s objective was to ‘generate interest’ rather than inspire sentimentality.<sup>75</sup> The program was marketed as generating “racial reconciliation” but in a particularly troubling case, an adoption agent working out of the North Battleford agency was, in 1973, nominated by their fellow AIM colleagues for “Salesperson of the Year.”<sup>76</sup> Parallel apprehensions of Métis children continued throughout other provinces and in 1985, Judge Edwin Kimelman of Manitoba condemned the practice of apprehension arguing that: “native people [this includes Métis] of Manitoba had been victims of cultural genocide” that “cultural genocide has been taking place in a systemic, routine manner...[at least under the residential school system] children knew who their parents were and they returned home for the summer months.”<sup>77</sup>

Métis women mobilized and political organized alongside other Indigenous women in Saskatchewan and in other provinces in response and have laid the foundation for some of the political organizing that brings us here today. Métis women have consistently led the calls to stop the apprehension of Métis children, which renders all Métis children vulnerable to violence, sexual exploitation, and continued intergenerational trauma. Métis women have repeatedly pressed various levels of government for adequate and just support to establish Métis-run midwifery programs, daycare centres, and community residences that allow for the protection of the integrity of the extended kinship structure at the heart of Métis family, community, and national life – centres of elder and child care along with additional services to mothers who are working, taking training, or who are ill – to create and combine services with elderly for a family-like atmosphere.<sup>78</sup> Métis women have continued to push for recognition and support and, truly, redress for the violence visited upon us and our ancestors. But at every turn, the federal government has sought to direct us to provincial funding sources, and both levels of government have tried to compel Métis women to access funding through maledominated organizations. This lack of recognition of the deep roots of sexism and sexist inequality perpetuated by Canada’s own system is another enactment of violence against Métis women and girls. Transferring already vulnerable Métis girls into a system rife with

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*: 175.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*: 177.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*: 177-178.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*: 178.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*: 207-208.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*: 184-185.

sexual exploitation and abuse is a continued politics of neglect that contributes to the slow genocide of Métis that Judge Kimelman and so many others have identified. It continues to enable the ongoing state of deprivation that many Métis women and girls live within, that renders some of our women and girls vulnerable to the most extreme forms of violence and exploitation. Make no mistake: this is genocide in the truest meaning of the UN Convention on Genocide.

### **C. Rendering Métis Women and Girls Vulnerable: The Long-Term Impacts of Colonization, Racism, and Sexism**

*“Many of the first nations women, other than in maybe the past two decades, have come from reserve communities where there were structures in place and homes in place and things that were available to them that have never been available to the Métis women. First nations women have access to health care resources, so they can get medicine for their children. They can get eye care or dental care. Those things have never existed for Métis women, so our experiences have been very different” (Melanie Omenihio 2007).*

The historical roots of violence against and negative sentiments towards Métis people, especially women, have had particularly harmful impacts on Métis women and girls that linger today. These beliefs have also been imported into Métis families and communities and many Métis women and girls live in marginalized circumstances that contribute to their vulnerability to violence. This section, although not comprehensive and accounting for all impacts of the legacies of racism, sexism, and colonization, highlights some key areas in which Métis women and girls experience notable marginalization.

#### **1. Poverty, homelessness, housing precarity, and food insecurity**

The destabilization of traditional forms of cohabitation among Métis have left Métis women in a particularly vulnerable position. The dispossession of Métis of our land is a direct cause of high rates of poverty, homelessness, housing precarity, and food insecurity. For example, as of 2011, 65% of Métis people lived in urban areas and were more likely than non-Indigenous households to experience “mobility,” or housing instability, characterized by being a Métis household that moved “at least once in the five years prior to Census Day in May, 2011.”<sup>79</sup> Métis households reported household mobility at 46% compared to 39% for non-Indigenous households. Further, between the 2001 and 2011 Census, Métis consistently reported living in below standard housing at rates notably higher than that of non-Indigenous people (in 2001, 39.4% for Métis vs. 29.7% for non-Indigenous households and in 2011 35.2% for Métis vs. 30.5% for non-Indigenous households). It is worth noting that these statistics do not account for “nonfarm” households wherein Métis living in rural areas might be accounted for. In urban areas, Métis live in overcrowded housing.<sup>80</sup> Métis are far less likely to be homeowners (65%) when compared with non-Indigenous households (70%).<sup>81</sup> Métis are also more likely to live in homes in need of major repair than non-Indigenous people (14% vs. 7%). This translates to Métis homes needing major repairs at a rate that is double that of non-Indigenous people.

Métis women have not traditionally been wage labourers, but instead engaged in work that is intimately connected to the functioning of Métis home life. While Métis women initially found work as domestic labourers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the decline in domestic labour, Métis women have continued to struggle to access stable and gainful employment. Racial stereotypes of Métis women as lazy, indolent,

<sup>79</sup> CMHC. (2017). “Housing Conditions of Métis Households.” <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/housing-observeronline/2017-housing-observer/housing-conditions-of-m-tis-households>. 1.

<sup>80</sup> “Census in Brief: The Housing Conditions of Aboriginal People.”(2016). Statistics Canada. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016021/98-200-x2016021-eng.cfm>.

<sup>81</sup> CMHC (2017): 1.

etc. continue to plague Métis women in their working life and is reflected in the fact that as of 2001, 30% of Métis women reported incomes below the low-income cut-off line. This translates into both housing and food insecurity. Although statistics demonstrating food insecurity and hunger within Métis households are much harder to locate, as of 2012, 17.5% of Métis girls age 15 and older reported living in a food insecure household – vs. just 7.6% of the general Canadian population.<sup>82</sup> This is acutely reflected in the fact that Métis women have fewer support programs in place in urban centers than other Indigenous women (with 69% of Métis women live in urban spaces and 42% of these women being single parents). In urban centers, Métis women do represent a sizeable portion of the population of sex workers who engage in sex work to support their children, while staving off intrusive child welfare agents, and managing with the criminalizing of sex work. Some Métis women then are vulnerable to unique forms of violence and in some cases are kidnapped from the streets and are trafficked by sex traffickers. These things are all directly linked to the dispossession of Métis women.

As mentioned, Métis women are particularly marginalized as a notable portion of Métis households are single parent households. First, Métis women ages 15 to 24 make up a higher proportion of young, lone mothers than non-Indigenous women (9% vs. 4%).<sup>83</sup> This resonates with the made highlighted by Angie Crerar earlier in this report, that Métis men's attitudes toward young girls continue to frame Métis women and girls as sexual objects, reflecting a substantial breakdown in Métis familial structuring. This is also reflected in other statistics that reveal that Métis girls under the age of 15 were less likely than non-Indigenous girls under 15 to live in a 2-parent household (57.6% vs. 76%), and for Métis girls over the age of 15, the statistics are 50.1% vs. 56.8% respectively for Métis and non-Indigenous girls. Further, a higher proportion of Métis girls over the age of 15 lived with a single parent (13.1% vs. 8.2%), the majority of which would likely be single mothers.<sup>84</sup> For Métis girls under the age of 14, the number living with lone parents is markedly higher – 30%.<sup>85</sup> The rate of Métis girls living in a “skip generation family” (with grandparents) is also notable at 1.4% vs. 0.4% for the non-Indigenous population. This points to the long-term impacts of things such as residential and day schooling, along with the legacies of child apprehension – the violence of colonization and racism continue to impact Métis families. To add to this, 1.8% of Métis girls live as foster children while on 0.3% of non-Indigenous girls live as foster children. This points to the ongoing systemic crises of child apprehension in Métis families that shows vast differences in the experiences of Métis and non-Métis girls. All of these things point to systemic crises plaguing the live of Métis families, and that have a particularly grave impact on Métis women.

## **2. Physical and mental illness, and a lack of general well-being**

As a direct result of the impacts of colonization that have worked to severe Métis women's relationships to land Métis women have experienced grave changes to their overall health and well-being. Métis women have a shorter life expectancy than non-Indigenous women (approximately 4.5 years).<sup>86</sup> The transition from land-based diets rich in “country foods” have been replaced by highly commodified diets filled with prepackaged, processed food that has in turn lead to Métis women developing high rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and various forms of cancer. In fact, the leading causes of death among Métis women are cancer, circulatory system diseases, and respiratory diseases (ibid). For

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<sup>82</sup> Arriagada, Paula. (2016). “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women.” Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.htm>.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Métis Centre, National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2012). “Métis Women and Disease: A Preliminary Examination.” Ottawa: National Aboriginal Health Organization: 2.

Métis women, statistics demonstrate that they report much higher rates for all cancers (save for breast cancer) than non-Indigenous women.<sup>87</sup>

Of particular relevance to this report is that in addition to being impacted physically, Métis women have also experienced grave psychological impacts owing to the trauma of colonization. While the field of psychology has been slow to recognize the severely damaging psychological harms of racism, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) recognizes that a “discrete racist event, such as an assault” can trigger PTSD symptoms.<sup>88</sup> Métis women and girls who live with the impacts of multilayered forms of violence and oppression find them as having serious impact on their mental well-being. Métis women and girls suffer from depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and a variety of other mental illness arising from colonization. While available stats specific to Métis are currently limited and this most certainly flags an important area for future study, a study undertaken by the Métis Nation of Alberta on “Injuries Among Members of the Métis Nation of Alberta” revealed that among Métis women, 21% of Métis women had considered suicide, a significantly higher number than the 14% reported by Métis men.<sup>89</sup> The research revealed that of those Métis women who reported considering suicide, “22% did so in the past 12 months.”<sup>90</sup> For Inuit, the statistics are 23% for both men and women, so while higher there appears no significant statistical difference between men and women. Not only do Métis women contemplate and attempt suicide at higher rates than non-Indigenous women, they also report at significantly higher rates than Métis men – undoubtedly owing to the detrimental impacts of colonization, racism, and sexism.

This is also reflected in substance abuse rates experienced by Métis women. The unhealthy use of substances introduced by non-Indigenous people and that have increasingly been used as numbing agents for intergenerational trauma – in the absence of culturally relevant, safe, and accessible mental health healing programs – have produced high rates of abuse. According to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Métis in Alberta experience very high rates of opioid use, and visits to emergency rooms and hospitalizations owing to opioid use when compared to non-Métis in Alberta.<sup>91</sup> This is the tip of a statistical iceberg, as we quite simply do not have more detailed information that can support what we hearing qualitatively in working with Métis women and communities. The link between substance abuse and precarious living is well-established, and Métis women and girls’ high incidence of substance abuse reveals a key contributing factor in the vulnerability of Métis women and girls owing to the legacies of racism, sexism, and colonization.

### **3. Poor attrition rates/lack of education**

Métis girls have historically faced a number of social and structural barriers in accessing education, owing to racism and sexism. Métis were largely ostracized by formal education in the form of residential schools, and for those who did not attend day schools, attendance rates at public school were low owing to experiences of racism and the precarious living situation of Métis in road allowances and other communities under threat. This struggle is reflected in educational statistics wherein 18.4% of Métis women ages 25 to 64 have no institutional education, while the number is only 11% for non-Indigenous women in the same age range. While slightly more Métis women have a high school diploma than other

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Williams, Monnica T. (2013). “Can Racism Cause PTSD? Implications for DSM-5.” *Psychology Today*.

<sup>89</sup> Métis Nation of Alberta. (2013). “Injuries: Among Members of the Métis Nation of Alberta.” Edmonton: Métis Nation of Alberta: 28.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Health Canada. (2018). “Strengthening Canada’s Approach to Substance Use Issues.”

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/canadian-drugs-substances-strategy/strengtheningcanada-approach-substance-use-issue.html>.

women (First Nation, Inuit, and non-Indigenous), fewer have postsecondary credentials – and substantially fewer (13.9% vs 27.8% Métis vs. non-Indigenous) have a university degree at the bachelor level or higher.<sup>92</sup> As reflected by the stats on single parenthood and education, 1 in 4 Métis women cited dropping out of school for pregnancy and the need to care for their children, while all Indigenous men generally cited their reasons for dropping out as owing to “a desire to work, money problems, school problems, and [or] lack of interest.”<sup>93</sup> This demonstrates the substantive caregiver responsibilities that Métis women still contend with, as well as the structural challenges Métis women face when working to obtain higher levels of education. In spite of the gradually expanding push toward Métis entrance into institutional education systems, Métis women are known to attend post-secondary institutions at a lower rate than First Nations and Inuit women. This owes to a general lack of funding support for Métis women to attend postsecondary education – as neither beneficiaries of modern land claim agreements nor considered wards of the state who are owed educational support via pre-existing treaties, Métis “fall in the cracks” of educational funding and support, a continuation of the federal government’s long practice of disregard of Métis well-being. Métis women are subject to racism, and sex discrimination, both within our communities and at the hands of non-Indigenous societies. As Melanie Omeniho profoundly states, “The Canadian public lives under the misconception that we have free education, free health care, and free housing, but there is no free anything. Métis people pay taxes, and for education and housing.”<sup>94</sup> Misconceptions about the challenges facing Métis women often have grave consequences – for example, a disproportionately high number of Métis women are represented within the victims of serial killer Robert Pickton – the position of vulnerability which places Métis women as racialized and gendered subjects in unsafe spaces be they social, cultural or economic must be addressed for us to understand why Métis women experience victimization which parallels First Nations and Inuit women’s experiences. Further, this must all be addressed in order to bring justice for the families of Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S people who have been made to go missing or who have been murdered.

## Trauma-Informed Care/Support

### Introduction

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak has undertaken a project to articulate how the experiences of Métis people have compounded and created a collective trauma. The project involved the development of a toolkit to lay down foundational work to support leaders, Indigenous and other service providers to provide culturally safe trauma-informed approaches to work with Métis women and their families. We would like to acknowledge the work of Bridges for Women Society who have co-developed the toolkit and focus-tested the training modules. This is an analysis of a promising practices in the delivery of Métis-specific trauma-informed programming that informed the development of our toolkit.

In order to serve Métis women and their families in a culturally safe and trauma-informed way, we believe it is essential to understand the unique Métis experiences of historic and contemporary trauma and loss. Effectively, the unique impacts of colonization on Métis people. In order to safely and effectively support our Métis Women and families who are healing from and overcoming violence, abuse or neglect, we want to balance our knowledge of the Métis historic and contemporary traumas and losses with recognition of strength and resilience. Our vision is to empower Métis communities, leaders, facilitators, and elders to name and share our unique experience of colonization, trauma, and loss as well as focusing on our inherent resilience in a strength-based approach.

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<sup>92</sup> Arriagada, Paula. (2016). “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women.” Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.htm>.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Omeniho, Melanie. “Standing Committee on the Status of Women, Number 051 1<sup>st</sup> Session 39<sup>th</sup> Parliament” April 26, 2007. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.ourcommons.ca/DocumentViewer/en/39-1/FEWO/meeting-51/evidence>.

An inspirational metaphor for resilience after trauma is found in the oral history of (Métis, Michif) Apihtokosisan Knowledge Keeper Tom McCallum. Tom relates a story of how the Anishinaabe described the Métis people, the emergence of new shoots growing up out of the fertile earth after a fire has burned everything to the ground. Our experiences of trauma and challenges create an opportunity for growth, renewal, strength and enduring resilience. Thus, our challenge becomes a place from which we grow, strong, renewing and so resilient.

*“There was another name that the Anishinaabe people, commonly known as Ojibwe, called them, “wesahkotewenowak.” This translates to mean “where a fire has gone through, burnt everything, and new shoots are coming out of the ground.” That’s how they referred to the Métis, the new Nation of people who emerged.”*  
Elder, Tom McCallum

### **Métis Voices: Historical and Contemporary Traumas, Losses, and Impacts of Colonization**

The vision of the programming is to increase awareness of Métis-specific impacts of trauma and colonization, and create strength-based trauma informed communities of care to support recovery and reduce violence against Métis women. The intent is to educate, and inspire discussion in our communities, but also in the systems of law enforcement, justice system, medical, mental health services, and child and family services. By creating awareness and building trauma-informed services, Métis women impacted by trauma, violence, abuse or neglect can be better served, supported and understood. With Métis specific cultural safety training, we believe that Métis women and families should be able to have access to better advocacy, to improved services, and should receive safe and effective support.

#### **Foundations of a Métis-specific Trauma-Informed Approach Were Identified As:**

Understanding of Métis diversity, culture, history and impacts of colonization

- Understanding the unique historical and contemporary impacts of colonization on the Métis
- Understanding the basics of trauma and its effects
- Non-Judgmental of others
- Honoring self-determination, choice, and difference
- Community and Relational Connection
- Being Strength-Based and seeing the good in others
- Compassion for self and others
- Mindfulness and self-awareness
- Social Justice and Ethics

In our work with Métis survivors of trauma, violence, abuse and neglect, the infusion of cultural teachings, values and the promotion of connection to one’s cultural strengths greatly enhance healing. This approach utilizes a Métis specific, strength-based perspective, highlighting the need to promote trauma-informed approaches in our communities to build and promote resilience.

### **Métis Voices: Awareness and Naming of Métis Resilience**

In our work with elders and knowledge keepers, we have found that through storytelling, cultural activities, and healing ceremonies, Métis values can be explored, felt, recognized and shared. The following is a list of terms that our women have shared to describe the resilient qualities of Métis people:

Adaptive	Humble	Positive
Being together	Humor	Protecting each other
Child-rearing	Kinship ties	Relationship building
Come together & help	Loving	Resilience
Faith	Optimistic	Resourceful
Forgiving	Passionate	Seeing the silver lining
Generous	Patient	Thrifty
Hardworking	Persevering	Values
Hopeful		

### Métis Voices: Exploring and Naming Métis Values

Being together	Generous	Parenting
Caring	Hardworking	Patience
Come together and help	Harmony	Protecting each other
Care for Dependents	Hope	Respect for all life and land, water
Dance and Movement	Humor	Respect traditions and teachers
Extended Family Supports the child	Independence	Sacrifice - Altruism
Faith & Spirituality	Kinship ties	Show deference to Elders and Seniors
Food and Music	Loving	
Forgiving	Non-judgment	
	Obedience	

The Métis Nation has diversity in their experiences of colonization. Métis people have struggled to maintain traditional worldviews and have experienced the loss of culture, language and understanding from a traditional perspective. Through the exploration of Métis experiences and stories through a lens of strength, resilience and resistance, we can re-engage with traditional values and Métis world views.

*“Speaking Michif and living Michif are never described separately. To live Michif means showing respect to Elders and children; and the need to work to earn the respect of others. The Elders’ memories of speaking Michif are drawn from a time when their parents and grandparents were still alive and their communities and homes were filled with Michif... Use of Michif language kinship terms (nohkom, mataant, mon nohk, mon kozin) should be recognized as a widely used method of identifying one’s Métis identity. Michif kinship terms were often used with great affection and retaining the use of these terms is critical to the continued use of Michif. The names and terms described important relationships in the Métis community. Importance of the extended family in Métis communities was, and continues to be, key to the health of Métis.”*  
(Métis Centre, NAHO, 2008)

### Métis Voices: Worldviews and Related Priorities That We Heard Included:

Apihtokosisan; recognition of our Indigenous ancestry, and our emergence as a mixed-race people;	Connected to all life and the earth; Family ties;
Care for our young and old;	Independence;
Caring for each other;	Interconnection;
Connection to Land;	Interconnection of the people;
Contributing to Community and Family;	Justice;
Kindness to one another;	Kinship connections to one another, and to our First Nations relations, our European relations;
Love and Compassion;	Listening and Learning; an approach to gaining knowledge over time from knowledge keepers;

Mentoring from our grandparents, our parents  
and our relations;  
Michif;  
Nonjudgmental;  
Pride in our Heritage;  
Respect, tolerance and acceptance of  
LGBTQ2S+ or Two-spirited Métis;  
Teaching Life Skills and Traditions to Children  
and Youth;  
Respect for Elders;

Equality and Fairness  
Traditions;  
Self-sustaining;  
Relationships are of prime importance; building  
and maintaining are essential to survive, and to  
prosper, and to be well;  
Culture as a way of life;  
“Do no harm” to each other;  
Spiritual impact of choices; and  
Wahkotohwin.

### Summary of Positive Impacts and Benefits

Counsellors and facilitators of this program have tracked some qualitative data on the circumstances our participants face based on what they have shared with us and one another in group settings and individual conversations.

Many of the women reported facing food and housing insecurity. Much of their time and energy were consumed in working to feed themselves and their children and to maintain housing. Not much time remains available in their lives to delve into personal healing and development including connection with their Métis communities. Many women share that they rely on the foodbank and grocery store dumpsters for food and have taken risks in order to access shelter and transportation. It was expressed how helpful and meaningful it is to receive food and transportation support in order to facilitate their participation in programming and mitigate some of the harm to health and well-being that is inherent in a survival-based quality of life.

Many of the women have experienced disrupted attachments with family of origin either due to their parents' own struggles with mental health and addiction as well as a system that they identify as being unsupportive of their families remaining intact due to systemic colonial, racist ideologies. This type of programming supports a broad demographic in terms of education and employment levels.

### Métis Women's Voices, Favourite Parts of the Programming:

*“My favorite part of the program was the hands-on projects. These projects were not just giveaways, they were meaningful gifts both physically in the take-aways that we made, but more importantly in the knowledge and the memories which they produced. Being able to learn these practices, such as drum making and medicine bag making are healing projects and therefore become healing objects which I can draw on now that this program has ended.”*

New friendships & cultural tracing/teaching;  
The Collage/artwork;  
Storytelling, singing;  
Meeting the people in all sessions;  
Group discussions getting to know people;  
Watching “women in the shadows” film and discussion;  
Beading & medicinal plants & singing;  
Beading lessons and ongoing practice;  
Really enjoyed meeting and talking to the women;  
Learning about medicines and herb; and  
Medicine pouch making.

### Métis Women's Voices: What Were the Impacts of the Program on You?

*“This program was the highlight of my year. The group and the associated counselling have been at the core of my exponential personal, mental health, and cultural growth and healing this year. I implore those involved to renew this unique, transformative program; I know I will always measure future groups and programs using the measuring stick of this program.”*

- Huge impact on me during my time at the program – it helped me through and provided strength.
- Learned to harvest stinging nettles through my friendships – which is helping to pass on the wisdom of foraging on the land here.
- Inspiring – regarding learning some of the Michif and Cree language(s).
- My favorite part is seeing everyone's happy faces and hearing how full and happy our tummies are! Sometimes too full. I've been looking at our Métis healing cards – they are potentially a social enterprise and people really like them.
- I think it impacts the strength of the Métis community here because there are more lasting connections made and knowledge of culture is shared.
- I learned and did some jigging at a community gathering! Probably would not have were it not for the group and being uplifted.
- GREAT memories have been made and will be around for a long time. I have more confidence and a feeling of belonging.
- A positive, warm, culturally focused group has lifted my spirit, it has helped me to reconnect with my past.
- It is helping me to have a better sense of identity, feeling grounded and learning from everyone else.
- I am grateful to be a part of a women's group and learn about Métis culture and local medicines etc.
- I am beginning to feel like a part of something/more connected to other people; which I struggle with.
- I always long to learn more about my Métis and First Nations past & traditions. It's wonderful to have this group of women.
- I struggled with whether I belong here but after talking with my counsellor I decided that I do belong.
- Bonding with other women.
- It is a community that I can connect with that has a relationship to my identity.
- It has been grounding and soothing to be connected.
- More hope for the future.
- Reconnecting with my Métis family.
- Found a new community.
- Identity, cultural grounding, and feeling engaged in our community.
- feeling heard and supported by others.
- Makes me want to learn more about my Cree ancestry
- My confidence in my cultural knowledge/identity, my overall well-being social time, having something.
- The need to learn more about my roots as my family was from prairies, and I was born on the west coast.
- Feeling less alone in journey to who I am/where I'm from and what it means to me.

- Depression and anxiety have been alleviated.

### **Métis Women's Voices: How Has This Group Impacted Your Family and Community?**

*We had many family members of the participants attend the closing feast and ceremony, and it was very apparent that the group impacted people greatly. We had parents, grandparents and other family members thank us and comment on the positive outcomes that the group inspired.*

*"I am the second youngest in my family, and one of the few with a drive to learn about our culture. By participating in as many cultural programs as I can, I am becoming the only knowledge and culture keeper in my family. I hope that those of us doing this work now can learn as much as we can so our children can grow up knowing who they are and where they come from, more than many of us have."*

- Sharing stories of our families
- It has helped me to reconnect with my past
- Brought my mom
- It affects my ability to support my family in a better way
- My family is happy I can learn more about Métis Culture
- I have been bringing the cultural teachings back home to my mom and grandma/students at UVIC
- I will be able to pass down my learned traditions & create items for my family & community
- It brought me closer to my children and they are proud of me for attending and learning about our culture.

### **Métis Women's Voices: How Did This Group Support Safety and Resilience?**

- Meeting in a safe space
- Sharing in good food
- Exploring food from a Métis perspective, perhaps for the first time
- Building community
- Supporting each other in our process: triumph, pain, laughter...
- Finding roots
- Filling in that missing gap, that undefinable something that's always been missing
- Exploring culture and identity, some for the first time
- Music, crafts, and cultural teachings from various Métis perspectives
- Building self-esteem and a sense of belonging and purpose
- Asking the question, "who am I", and getting an answer, even if it's only a seed currently
- Supporting cultural identity - particularly loves the beading
- Being \*heard\* and cared about
- Being believed
- Being taken seriously
- Assistance navigating systems (applying for bursaries, accessing income assistance)
- Decrease in social isolation
- Food (a nice meal once per week)
- Transportation supports bus tickets or gas cards

### **Métis Women's Voices: How Has This Project Furthered, Promoted or Maintained Métis Culture or Language?**

*We created a catalyst for the women to connect and live out traditions together, explore language, spirituality, hands-on creation of cultural items, creation of their own sash, healing cards to share and help others as well. This group of women has a live support system that grew out of trauma-informed sessions to continue to address and reduce isolation, and vulnerability. There are many more activities and requests that the women have been able to identify – we need to continue to provide Métis-specific programming focused on healing from trauma, strengthening resilience and identity with culture, language, teachings, removing barriers and risks through psychoeducational workshops and counselling, and promoting safety with advocacy, support, and reduction in isolation.*

### **In Their Voices: Family Stories**

#### **Not Enough**

The stories of families merit primary consideration in arriving at recommendations to change the course of the epidemic of missing and murdered Métis women. Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Métis Nation (LFMO) seeks to provide recommendations to prevent gender-based violence and to effect systemic change by documenting the experiences of missing and murdered Métis people and their families. We acknowledge the journey of families of the missing and murdered who participated in this process.

The intent is to lay foundational pieces of a complicated puzzle of the historic trauma facing Métis people and how this translates to an overrepresentation of Indigenous people who are missing or murdered. Although an incredibly delicate subject, LFMO intends to produce a strength-based report with concrete recommendations to improve outcomes for Métis people.

Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak captured the stories of families thematically. In the presence of a Métis Elder, when requested, families were provided with a brief introduction to the intent of the project and informed on how their stories would be shared. Although no specific line of questioning was used, it was sometimes necessary to provide prompts as a means of opening up communication.

It is the voices of the families that provide direction. Their insights and lived experience collectively point to the path required to reduce the incidence and prevalence of missing and murdered Métis people. It is clear through their stories that there simply was not enough: not enough consideration of Métis experiences, reduction of the marginalization faced by Métis people, or reconciliation to heal the collective trauma of the Métis Nation.

## **Child and Family Services**

### **If Only They Believed Me<sup>95</sup>**

All of the family members who were interviewed had interactions with child and family services. We heard stories of apprehension, of relinquishing custody, and of jurisdictional footbaling within the child and family services systems.

One family described challenges with reporting abuse of a loved one. A minor themselves at the time of reporting, it was evident by the lack of action that the child and family services authority, that they did not believe their story. They stated “I called to report the situation six times”. The family described that what they learned from that experience was to be silent and not tell family secrets.

Another family described their loved one being caught between non-Indigenous and First Nation child and family services. When their loved one was in the care of both systems, customary or kinship care from a Métis perspective was not recognized or honoured. Despite taking the required courses and being an “approved” foster family, their loved one was placed in another foster home. Further, it was explained that the loved one was at one time transferred to another province. Once in the other province, all ties were severed with the kinship network as the other province was not required to facilitate access cross-jurisdictionally. The family member recounted feeling helpless in this instance. Once the family member in care reached a specific age, they requested return to the family in the province of origin. This family emphasized the importance of child and family services to understand Métis culture and tradition in order to make culturally safe recommendations in the best interest of the child.

In some instances, victims were reported as “aging out” of child and family services by their family members. It was expressed that there was no follow-up after their family members aged out. It was clear to the families that their loved ones did not possess the skills and experience to successfully launch into independent life. What they recommended was follow-up and ongoing support after aging out. Further suggestions included life skills training.

Final suggestions from families were centered around child and family services incorporating Métis-specific preventative programs and parenting supports. Another significant inclusion would be to have support groups for families of Métis children in care. This inclusion would ensure the integration of a strong network systemically and culturally.

## **Grieving process**

### **“If Love Alone Could Save Them...”<sup>96</sup>**

One family member shared their story of “anticipatory grief” before the murder of their loved one. They described almost a premonition and sense of impending loss and that through a series of adversity the victim of murder faced, they “could almost predict it.”

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<sup>95</sup> Family quote; not attributed.

<sup>96</sup> Family quote; not attributed.

Theresa Rando describes anticipatory grief as the form of grief that occurs when there is an opportunity to anticipate the death of a loved one (or oneself).<sup>97</sup> The family member went on to describe how various systems had failed to identify the origin of the challenges their loved one faced which led to a series of compounding risk-taking behaviours.

For the families, the grief and anguish expressed after the murder was not linear.

“For every traumatic death or loss from the community there are often many family members, friends and community members who are affected. While people work through their personal anguish differently, some aspects of traumatic bereavement are common due to the societal stigma associated with the violence and the pain of the need for resolution of the violent crimes. Traumatic grief can affect physical and mental health and may sometimes include dealing with thoughts of suicide or self-harm. It is vital that, people themselves, and the community around them, respond to the person experiencing traumatic grief with compassion, respect and ongoing support”.<sup>98</sup>

Further compounded by collective grief and trauma facing Métis people, families expressed that their grief was ever present, never subsiding and at times intensified by external factors. The very public nature of the murders left families in a raw emotional state. Protracted court proceedings and media depictions of their loved created perceptions of family member’s grieving processes often misjudged in public opinion.

Sadly, none of the family members interviewed were offered any grief counselling around the time of the disappearance or murder, and more specifically no culturally-grounded Métis-focused grief support was available. One family member expressed that it took almost twelve years for someone to open a doorway to grief support in attempts to unpack the compounded grief they experienced. In one instance, a family disclosed they had experienced two murdered family members as well as one family member missing. Because none of the families provided testimony to the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and they had distanced themselves from the process, they were not aware of “Family Information Liaison Units” as established through the Inquiry.

## Victim's Services

### “There Was Nothing Left for Me.”<sup>99</sup>

The family members each had different experiences with victims’ services across different provinces. The common thread through all their experiences was that victim’s support was not sufficient and did not extend beyond the immediate family and did not extend to the kinship network. One family member speaking of the experience with victims’ support stated “My mom got supports but the fund was quickly depleted and there was nothing left for me.”<sup>100</sup> Similar to experiences expressed regarding Child and Family Services, traditional Métis kinship networks are not considered in the delivery of non-Métis services.

Respecting and honouring Métis kinship networks is integral to providing blanket services and changing the course of precipitating factors and challenging the systemic discrimination faced by Métis

<sup>97</sup> Rando, Theresa A. *Loss and anticipatory grief*. Lexington Books, 1986.

<sup>98</sup> Mantini, Anne; and Smylie, Janet. "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder & Traumatic Grief." October 18, 2016.

<sup>99</sup> Family quote; unattributed.

<sup>100</sup> Family quote; unattributed.

people. In *Land, Family and Identity: Contextualizing Métis Health and Well-being*, Dr. Brenda Macdougall states “As an Indigenous people, Métis identities are nurtured and sustained by the stories, traditions and cultural practices taught by our grandmothers, grandfathers, and ancestors.”<sup>101</sup>

Another family member recommended that follow-up from support is required. They described their experience as not being able to reach out or not knowing where to reach out. All families recommended system navigators who are Métis to guide families through all interactions from the education system, child and family services, policing, health and healing supports, and through the justice system process.

## **Justice System**

### **“I Was Alone in the Courtroom”<sup>102</sup>**

Each family told a different story of the justice system, both before and after the murder or disappearance of their loved one. Of the experiences heard, each person who was murdered or missing had an interaction with the justice system from a victim’s perspective and/or as a person facing charges. The families discussed that the entire justice system was re-traumatizing. One family recounted a feeling of being treated as the criminal when attending the trial of the person accused of murder. The justice system puts victims on the back burner.

In terms of navigating through the justice system with their family members prior to their murder or disappearance, families were either not aware of information or were not provided information on Gladue reports. In one instance, one person disclosed that they wished they had known about Gladue reports when their deceased family member interacted with the justice system as an accused. They felt that had the option of a Gladue report been introduced that the application of it would have changed outcomes and (maybe) stopped further risk-taking behaviours of their family member.

Some of the families expressed misery caused by the protracted justice process. One family member described “It drug through the system over many years and I was triggered each time there was an appeal.”<sup>103</sup> For the participating families, the process spanned from 3-7 years. And through the entire process, the families described that they had no support.

One family member explained that one member of the prosecution team did let her know before explicit information about their loved one was presented; however she went on to say, “But I accidentally saw one (picture) they didn’t warn me about”. Another family member lamented that “I wish I could have had the support of my family”. They went on to explain that some of their family members just could not physically attend court through their paralyzing grief.

The families all spoke to the notion that what is required for victims is the support of advocates at all intersecting points of the justice system. They felt that there was no concern given to their cultural background. It was highlighted by one family member that their family member was not First Nations and therefore, was not entitled to access any Indigenous support.

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<sup>101</sup> National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. *Land, Family and Identity: Contextualizing Métis Health and Well-being*, 2017.

<sup>102</sup> Family quote; unattributed.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

## **Police Services**

### **“The Police Didn’t Tell Me It Was a Homicide”<sup>104</sup>**

Of the families who participated, none spoke at great length to their interactions with police during the investigative portion of the murder or disappearance. One very difficult experience conveyed is that of one family who was informed by police that their family member passed away. The police did not explain the circumstances surrounding the death and informed the family that they would be in touch. Unfortunately, prior to the police returning to speak with the family, they found out in the media that there were suspicious circumstances and their family member’s death was being investigated as a homicide.

Another family spoke of reporting the ongoing abuse of their family member to police but “they did not believe me.”<sup>105</sup> They stated that because of their personal prior and ongoing involvement with another police investigation, they felt that the incidents were not examined. It was the sincere belief of this family member that if they would have been believed by the police, safety nets may have been introduced and their family members would have been afforded different opportunities, such as ongoing counselling and support.

One family member described the trauma she experienced when walking into an exhibition area and seeing her loved one’s picture on an unsolved murder poster. The family member expressed regret in seeing the photo that was used rather than a portrait of the murder victim that would highlight their positive characteristics. A recommendation to mitigate this would be ongoing interaction between the police and the victim’s family beyond the initial investigation.

## **Mental Health and Addictions**

Some of the families who participated expressed that their family members had ongoing battles with mental health and addictions. It was expressed that their family members had never received formal mental health diagnoses and had not participated in ongoing counselling. When one family spoke about their loved one’s interactions with child and family services, they stated that “the agency missed the target. They should have dealt with mental health issues.”

The families reported that the victims of murder had attended non-Indigenous rehabilitation centres prior to their murder. The shared thread with these rehabilitation programs is that they were not designed to address specific historic and complex trauma faced by Métis people. It was reported that one of the victims of murder had sought to access and ‘Aboriginal’ treatment centre; however, they were refused entry as they were not First Nations and not in receipt of non-insured health benefits to cover the cost of the rehabilitation. It is evident that neither mainstream nor First Nations treatment centres address the distinct needs of Métis people.

One family member reported, “I have attempted suicide many times”. They described the feeling of helplessness and hopelessness as well as guilt resulting from the murder of their family member “I tried to get help. But there was nothing available or I couldn’t afford it. I tried to get help after the murder. There are not enough mental health supports. We need advocates, someone to help us get services.”

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

## **Cultural Identity**

Family members also explained experiences of racism in the education system. Specifically, the education system was ill-equipped to support Métis students. It was commonplace for educators to treat Métis students differently than non-Indigenous and First Nations and Inuit children. There was no respect given to their family members as Métis. One family member recounted hearing their loved one express that “I’ve never even set foot on a reserve;” however, they were still being directed through First Nations systems not intended or designed for them.

In hearing the experiences of families, it was noted that all of the stories reported zero access to Métis cultural resources or even Indigenous-based support groups. One family member expressed that culture should be the driver in all programs and support. Their experience showed them that their Métis culture was a “shame-based” motivator. This is evidenced through the naming of our people in archaic pan-Indigenous language (such as Native) and through their actions or experiences (addict, prostitute) rather than focusing on the person first. It is therefore import to provide ongoing Métis-focused cultural safety training – designed and developed in partnership with the Métis Nation – to all employees of Canadian systems to ensure true reconciliation.

The Métis Nation, often described as being hidden in plain sight, has thrived despite disparate government policy aimed at its assimilation in the non-Indigenous population. Leadership of the Métis Nation have fought on behalf of their people to emphasize the cultural distinctiveness and positioning of Métis people with a collective experience, language and Indigeneity to Canada as separate and distinct from other Indigenous people in Canada. Family members expressed that we need to remember the teachings and we need to embrace our Métis culture.

## **Jurisdiction**

Although not specifically named as jurisdiction by the family members, challenges expressed in navigating systems such as child and family services, mental health and addictions, and justice were brought forth. It was also discussed in terms of cultural identity and the political footballing between provincial and federal jurisdiction.

In most instances, Métis families were not seen as Indigenous. Where convenient, systems such as Child and Family services would identify Métis children as “Other Aboriginal” as the funding formulary is different. Citing this example, the outcomes are that Métis people do not receive the support that is required to meet their distinct needs and one family described the scenario of their loved one “being used as a statistic”. From a position of strength and resilience, one family member recounted that their father said, “you have the best of both worlds”. With this teaching, the family member moved forward in life with their head held high.

Métis families discussed the importance of tailored support and services provided through their own nation as paramount in navigating jurisdictional boundaries. This is yet another area where systems navigation and advocacy came to the fore.

## **Media Portrayal**

### **“I Found Out in the Media”<sup>106</sup>**

Families described that the media portrayed their loved one in terms that were completely foreign to the families. They expressed that media did not highlight the positive characteristics of the families. In some instances, police mugshots were used to depict the victim rather than a photo supplied by the family. Use of police mugshots, rather than pictures supplied by the family, also exacerbates victim blaming.

The act of detailing at-risk behaviours or relying on police reports rather than relying on the eyes of families or kinship network places the blame on murder victims. One family member continues to hear descriptors of activities in which their loved one was engaged at that point in time rather than their murder. Media chooses to depict Métis people in stereotypical ways instead of depicting more of the victim’s life experiences.

The families that shared their stories all spoke about the lives of their loved ones prior to the murder. Unilaterally, the families express sorrow that the world did not know the victims through their family’s eyes and that they could do nothing to change the misrepresentations.

## **Commemoration**

### **“Who is Going to Cook for You When I’m Gone”<sup>107</sup>**

When asked specifically what commemoration of their missing or murdered loved one looks like to the families, the initial response was always akin to “nothing can bring back my loved one.”

Families spoke to the need for legacy commemoration for their loved one. They want to ensure that their family members did not die in vain. They want to make sure the lives of their loved ones are not forgotten. One family member expressed that the names of those who have been murdered should be displayed in a public place with high visibility. Another family member described that a legacy piece for them would look like a scholarship or bursary for the children of murder victims.

What is of vital importance is that family members of Métis people who have gone missing or been murdered must be involved in the design of any commemoration work. Each family experience is unique, as is their expression of grief; there is no one cookie cutter solution to commemoration.

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid..

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

## Statistical Analysis

### Demographics of Métis Women and Girls

As of 2011, there are 718, 500 Indigenous women and girls living across Canada, comprising up to 4% of the total female population.<sup>108</sup> 61% of these women and girls identify as First Nations; 32% identify as Métis, and 4% identify as Inuit.<sup>109</sup>

Indigenous Identity	Number of Indigenous-Identified Women	Percentage of Indigenous Population
First Nation	439,775	61.2%
Métis	228,465	31.8%
Inuit	29,950	4.2%

### Métis Women and Girls Across the Métis Homeland

Métis women represent 34% of Indigenous women across the Homeland, which includes the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario.<sup>110</sup>

	Indigenous Women	Métis Women	Métis Representation
British Columbia	119,210	35,535	29.8%
Alberta	112,400	48,525	43.2%
Saskatchewan	81,895	27,670	33.8%
Manitoba	100,290	39,570	39.5%
Ontario	156,405	44,260	28.3%
Métis Homeland (Total)	570,200	195,560	34.3% <sup>111</sup>

In 2006, 471,590 people self-identified as Métis across the Métis Homeland; 241,625 identified as women and 229,965 identified as men.<sup>112</sup>

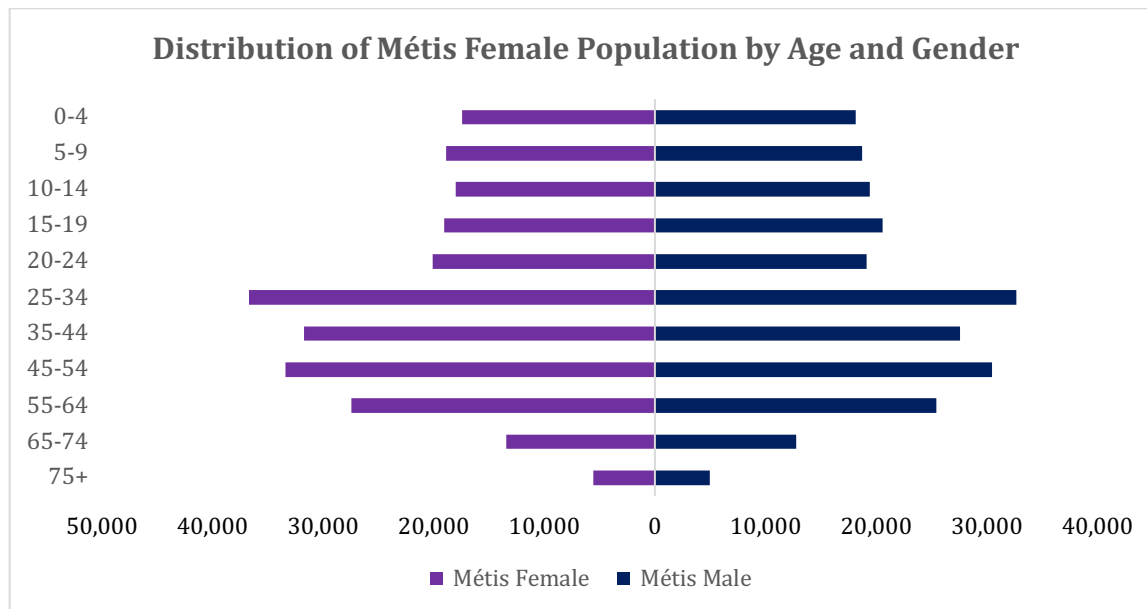
<sup>108</sup> Arriagada, Paula. "First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women." Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*: 5

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*



### Métis Women and Girls in Cities

Across Canada's census metropolitan areas (CMAs)<sup>113</sup>, the largest concentrations of Métis women and girls were found in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa-Gatineau and Saskatoon.<sup>114</sup> Specifically, 57% of the total female Indigenous population in Winnipeg was Métis, followed by 49.3% in Edmonton.<sup>115</sup>

	Total Indigenous Population	Métis female Population	Métis Representation
Winnipeg	40,935	23,340	57.0%
Edmonton	31,830	15,700	49.3%
Vancouver	27,305	9,705	35.5%
Calgary	17,015	8,440	49.6%
Ottawa-Gatineau	15,985	6,175	38.6%
Saskatoon	12,860	6,075	47.2%
Toronto	19,645	5,395	27.5%
Regina	10,635	4,370	41.1%
Victoria	7,550	2,580	34.2%

<sup>113</sup> A census metropolitan area (CMA) is formed by one or more adjacent municipalities centred on a population centre (known as the core). A CMA must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more must live in the core. To be included in the CMA, other adjacent municipalities must have a high degree of integration with the core, as measured by commuting flows derived from previous census place of work data.

<sup>114</sup> Arriagada, Paula. "First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women." Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

According to NHS 2011, Métis women and girls are the most likely of the three Indigenous groups to live in rural areas<sup>116</sup>.<sup>117</sup> Specifically, 27% of Métis women live in rural areas compared to 17% of the non-Indigenous female population. In addition, about four in ten (41%) Métis women live in large population centres while 20% live in small population centres, with the remaining 12% in medium population centres.<sup>118</sup>

### Métis Nation Self-Identification

Methods used to determine Métis identity differ between the government and the Métis Nation itself. Statistics Canada uses a self-identification method to identify Métis populations. This method was used in the 2011 National Household Survey and the 2016 Canadian Census (see the following table):

<p><b>18</b> Is this person an Aboriginal person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit)?</p> <p><b>Note: First Nations (North American Indian) includes Status and Non-Status Indians.</b></p> <p>If "Yes", mark "X" the circle(s) that best describe(s) this person now.</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> No, not an Aboriginal person → Continue with the next question</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, First Nations (North American Indian)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Métis</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Inuk (Inuit) → Go to question 20</p>	<p><input type="radio"/> No, not an Aboriginal person → Continue with the next question</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, First Nations (North American Indian)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Métis</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes, Inuk (Inuit) → Go to question 20</p>
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This self-identification method is very different when compared to the identification method used by the Métis Nation itself, as the Métis National Council adopted the following definition of "Métis" in 2002:

*"'Métis' means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Indigenous peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.*

*In 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that Métis are a rights-bearing Indigenous people. Its judgement in R. v. Powley set out the components of a Métis definition for the purpose of claiming Indigenous rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.*

*These are:*

- *Self-identification as a member of a Métis community.*
- *Ancestral connection to the historic Métis community whose practices ground the right in question*
- *Acceptance by the modern community with continuity to the historic Métis community.*"<sup>119</sup>

To remedy this discrepancy, Statistics Canada is working in partnership with the Métis National Council to more accurately articulate Métis questions in Census 2021 so that the federal government can better collect information related to Métis Nation citizens. The objective is to design a question(s) regarding Métis Nation identity, so that the Métis Nation's population can be distinguished from the general self-identified Métis.

<sup>116</sup> Rural areas (RAs) refer to all areas outside of population centres.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> "Métis Nation Citizenship." Métis National Council. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://www.Métisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-Métis/citizenship>.

## Métis Family Dynamics

### Fewer Métis Girls living with parents

In 2011, fewer Métis girls aged 14 and under (57.6%) lived with both of their parents when compared to non-Indigenous girls (76%).<sup>120</sup> The percentage of Métis girls living in a lone parent family almost doubled compared to their non-Indigenous counterparts.<sup>121</sup>

	Métis Girls	Non-Indigenous Girls
Children of both parents	57.6%	76.0%
Stepchildren	8.5%	5.7%
Children of lone parents	30.2%	17.4%
-of a female parent	26.1%	14.6%
-of a male parent	4.1%	2.8%
Grandchildren in skip-generation family	1.4%	0.4%
Foster children	1.8%	30.0%
Children living with other relatives	1%	0%

### Métis Women are less likely to live as part of a couple

In 2011, merely a third of Métis women aged 15 and over and living in a private household reported being a part of a married couple, ten percent less than their non-Indigenous counterparts.<sup>122</sup> More Métis women (13.1%) are lone parents compared to non-Indigenous women (8.2%).<sup>123</sup>

	Métis Women	Non-Indigenous Women
In a couple	50.1%	56.8%
- in a married couple	35.5%	45.9%
- in a common-law relationship	14.6%	10.9%
Lone parents	13.1%	8.2%
As children	16.3%	13.9%
with relatives	2.8%	2.8%
with non-relatives only	5.4%	3.9%
Alone	12.3%	14.4%

<sup>120</sup> Arriagada, Paula. "First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women." Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

## Métis Early Childhood Education

It is well known that quality Indigenous early learning and childcare is essential to Indigenous cultures; it privileges Indigenous pedagogies, promotes Indigenous languages and culture and empowers Indigenous parents and communities. In 2011, there are 54,280 Métis girls living across the Métis homeland, representing 3% of the total population of girls in the 5 provinces.<sup>124</sup>

Age	Métis Girls	Non-Indigenous Girls
0-4	17,405	592,655
5-9	18,845	626,310
10-14	18,030	609,590
Total	54,280	1,828,555

In 2011, federal investments in Indigenous early learning and childcare were realized through three core programs: Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) funded by Health Canada (HC); Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) and the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative (FNICCI) funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC.)<sup>125</sup> However, these programs have failed to either directly or sufficiently address the needs and barriers experienced by Métis children and their families in accessing early learning and childcare opportunities.

## Child Welfare System

Indigenous children, including Métis children, are overrepresented in the child welfare system. In Manitoba, there are approximately 11, 000 children in care; 10, 000 of these children are Indigenous.<sup>126</sup> In many cases, Indigenous children in foster care have been placed with non-Indigenous families (approximately 40-60% depending on province of residence).<sup>127</sup>

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

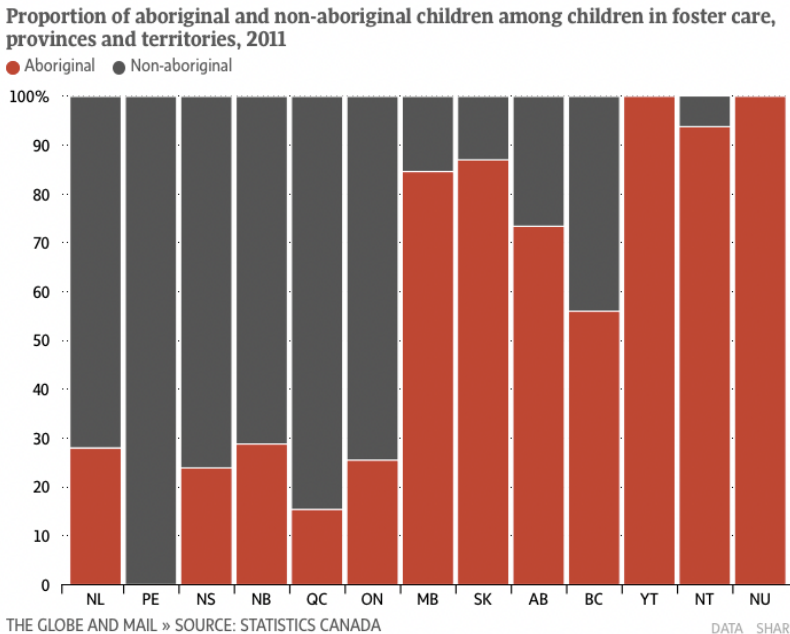
<sup>125</sup> “MNC Recommendations for ASETS Renewal.” Métis National Council. March 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://www.Métisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MNC-Report4-Recommendations-1.pdf>

<sup>126</sup> Barrera, Jorge. “Indigenous child welfare rates creating 'humanitarian crisis' in Canada, says federal minister.” Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. November 02, 2017. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/crisis-philpott-child-welfare-1.4385136>.

<sup>127</sup> Turner, Annie. “Living arrangements of Aboriginal children aged 14 and under.” Statistics Canada. April 13, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2016001/article/14547-eng.pdf?st=hNiVLD> -

## Indigenous Children in Foster Care

The following graphics show the high levels of Indigenous children in foster care in Canada.<sup>128</sup>



## Métis Children in Foster Care

Métis children are 8.3 times more likely to be in foster care than non-Indigenous children.

**Métis, First Nations, and non-Aboriginal identity children aged 0-14 in the five western provinces, including those in foster care, and percentages of each group.**

Prov.	Métis	Foster child	%	First Nation	Foster child	%	Non-Aboriginal	Foster child	%
BC	20,605	440	2.13	46,970	2,290	4.87	619,925	1,320	0.002
AB	28,980	400	1.38	43,955	2,345	5.33	696,910	1,160	0.166
SK	15,505	195	1.25	41,400	1,260	3.04	155,570	310	0.199
MB	21,820	730	3.34	46,790	3,525	7.53	169,620	670	0.395
ON	23,775	110	0.46	61,590	1,570	2.54	2,114,165	4,195	0.198
Tot.	110,685	1,875	1.69	240,705	10,990	4.56	3,756,190	7,655	0.203

<sup>128</sup> Yükselir, Murat, and Annett, Evan. "Indigenous Kids Made up Almost Half of Canadian Foster Children in 2011: Statscan." The Globe and Mail. February 25, 2019. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/indigenous-kids-made-up-almost-half-of-canadian-foster-children-in-2011statscan/article29616843/>.

While Métis children compose just 1% of all children aged 0-14 in the Métis homeland, 9.1% of foster children across the Homeland are Métis. In the four most western provinces, 12.1% of foster children are Métis.<sup>129</sup>

#### Foster Children aged 0-14 in the five westernmost provinces

	Foster Children	% of Métis
<b>British Columbia</b>	4,050	10.9%
<b>Alberta</b>	3,905	10.2%
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	1,765	11.1%
<b>Manitoba</b>	4,925	14.8%
<b>4 provinces Subtotal</b>	14,645	12.1%
<b>Ontario</b>	5,875	1.9%
<b>Métis Homeland Total</b>	20,520	9.1%

#### Housing and the Métis Nation

##### Métis Households Across the Homeland

The majority of Métis households (84.9%) are located in the West and in Ontario.<sup>130</sup> The greatest proportion live in Alberta (21.4%), followed by Ontario (19%), Manitoba (17.4%), British Columbia (15.4%), and Saskatchewan (11.6%).<sup>131</sup> Close to two-thirds (68%) of Métis live in urban areas.<sup>132</sup>

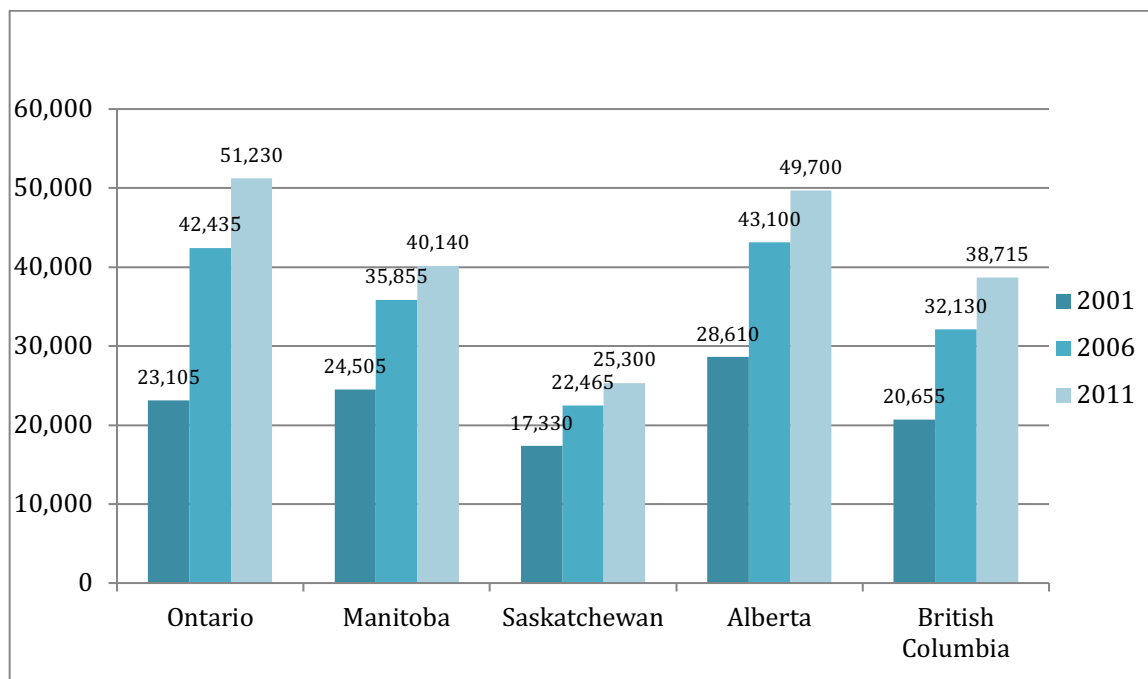
<sup>129</sup> Turner, Annie. "Living arrangements of Aboriginal children aged 14 and under." Statistics Canada. April 13, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2016001/article/14547-eng.pdf?st=hNiVLD\\_-](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-006-x/2016001/article/14547-eng.pdf?st=hNiVLD_-)

<sup>130</sup> "Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis, and Inuit." Statistics Canada. National House Hold Survey, 2011. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.pdf>

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

### Métis Households in Métis Homeland, 2001-2011

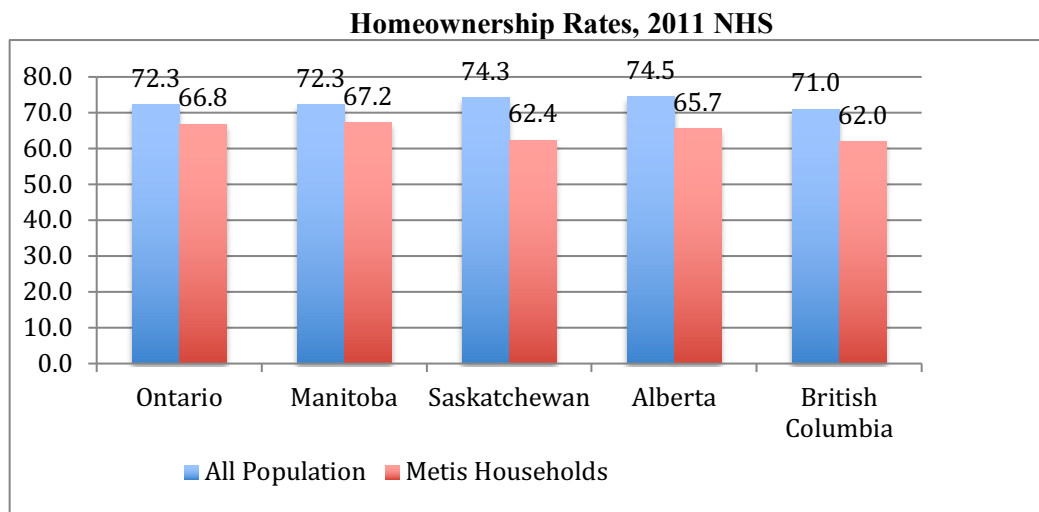


### Métis Homeownership

The homeownership rates among Métis households is increasing but remains lower when compared to non-Indigenous households.

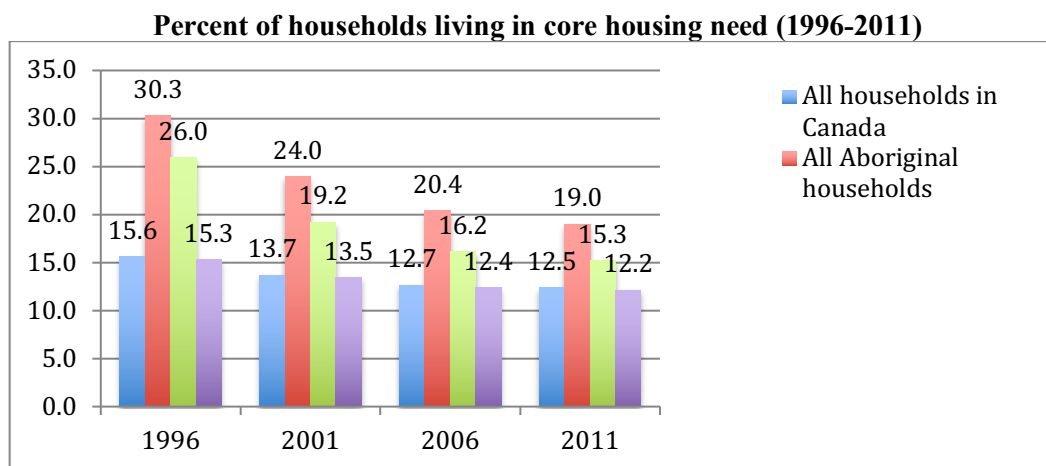
- In 2011, 65.2% of Métis households owned a home (up from 62% in 2006), compared to 69.9% of non-Indigenous persons owning a house.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Housing Conditions of Métis Households. Gatineau, Québec: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/cmhc/pubsandreports/pdf/69032.pdf?sv=2018-03-28&ss=b&srt=sco&sp=r&se=2021-05-07T03:55:04Z&st=2019-05-06T19:55:04Z&spr=https&sig=bFocHM6noLjK8rlhy11dy%2BkQJUBX%2BCDKzkjLHfhUIU0%3D>



### Métis Core Housing Need

A household is in **core housing need** if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards as set by the Government and if it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to pay the median rent (including utility costs) of alternative local market housing that meets all three standards.<sup>134</sup> In 2011, 32, 110 Métis households across the Homeland were in core housing need.<sup>135</sup> Core housing need is 25% higher for Métis households (15.3%) compared to non-Indigenous households (12.2%).<sup>136</sup>



For Métis households, as with non-Indigenous households, not meeting the **affordability** standard is a far more common reason for being in core housing need than housing that is unsuitable or

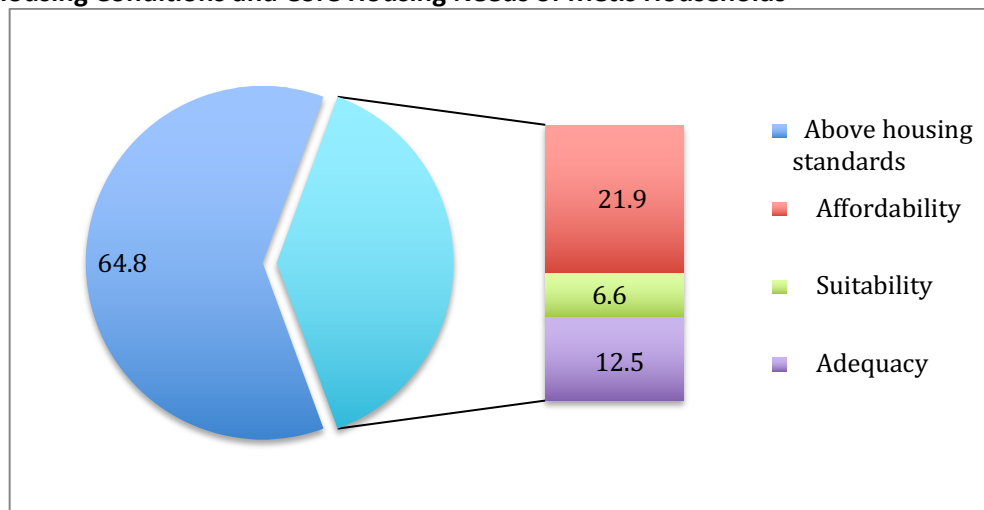
<sup>134</sup> Statistics Canada. "Dictionary, Census of Population, 2016-Core Housing Need." January 03, 2019. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/households-menage037-eng.cfm>.

<sup>135</sup> Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "2006 Census Housing Series: Issue 20 – Métis Households: Housing Conditions and Core Housing Need." January 2013. Accessed June 05, 2019. [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2013/schl-cmhc/NH18-23-113-001-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2013/schl-cmhc/NH18-23-113-001-eng.pdf)

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

inadequate.<sup>137</sup> Both Métis renters and owners are more likely to find themselves in core housing need than their non-Indigenous counterparts. However, Métis owners enjoy better quality housing. In 2011, more than 30% of Métis renter households and 7% of owner households were in core housing need, compared to about 26% of non-Indigenous renter households and 6% of non-Indigenous owner households.<sup>138</sup>

### Métis Housing Conditions and Core Housing Needs of Métis Households



### Métis Women's and Girls' Health

#### Physical Health

In general, Métis women and girls experience lower health standards when compared to non-Indigenous Canadians. APS 2012 shows that only half (51%) of Métis women rated their health as excellent or very good compared to 64% of non-Indigenous women.<sup>139</sup> About 65% of Métis women aged 15 and over reported that they have been diagnosed with one or more chronic conditions. The most commonly reported chronic conditions for Métis women are girls are arthritis (21.3%), anxiety disorders (17.8%), high blood pressure (17.1%), asthma (16.7%), and mood disorders (16.2%).<sup>140</sup> Indigenous women reported a higher prevalence of disability than the general female population. In 2012, 22% of Indigenous women aged 15 and over reported having a disability that limited their daily activities, compared to 15% of the total female population.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> Arriagada, Paula. "First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women." Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>141</sup> Canadian Survey on Disability 2012.

### **Mental Health**

Based on results from APS 2012, six in ten (61%) Métis women aged 18 and over rated their mental health as excellent or very good, compared to 72% of non-Indigenous women.<sup>142</sup> Over 21% of Métis women had considered suicide at some point in their lives, a significantly higher number than non-Indigenous females (12%).<sup>143</sup>

### **Unmet healthcare need**

15% of Métis Women aged 15 and over have felt they needed healthcare at some point but did not receive it, compared to 13% of non-Indigenous women.<sup>144</sup>

### **Food Insecurity Issues**

Food security refers to “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.<sup>145</sup> According to APS 2012, 17.5% of Métis women and girls aged 15 and over lived in households that experienced food insecurity in the past 12 months, compared to 7.6% of non-Indigenous women and girls. 8.7% of Métis women and girls reported that they had been hungry in the past 12 months due to food insecurity, compared to 1.8% of non-Indigenous women and girls.<sup>146</sup>

### **Lifestyles**

Métis persons across all age groups had higher rates of heavy drinking and daily smoking than their non-Indigenous counterparts. APS 2012 shows that 21% of Métis women report heavy drinking, compared to 17% of non-Indigenous women. 26.6% of Métis women report they smoke daily, compared to 15.9% of non-Indigenous women.<sup>147</sup>

### **Education**

#### **Métis Women’s and Girls’ Education**

Only 16% of Métis women aged 25-64 hold university degrees, compared to 33% of non-Indigenous women. 42% of Métis women hold a post-secondary certification, compared to 33% of non-Indigenous women. 15% of Métis women do not have any certificate, compared to 9% of the general female population.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Arriagada, Paula. “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women.” Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

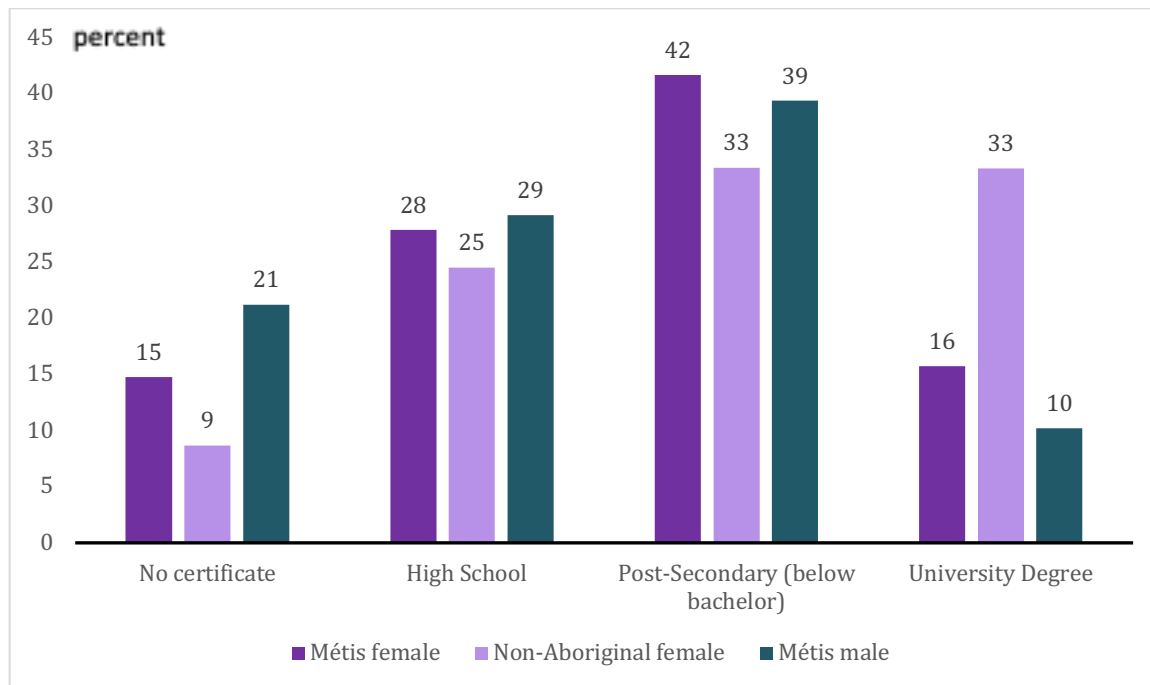
<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> Canadian Feed The Children. “Why Is There Food Insecurity in Canada?” June 06, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://canadianfeedthechildren.ca/the-feed/why-food-insecurity/>.

<sup>146</sup> Arriagada, Paula. “First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women.” Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*



### Métis Women's and Girls' Literacy and Numeracy Levels

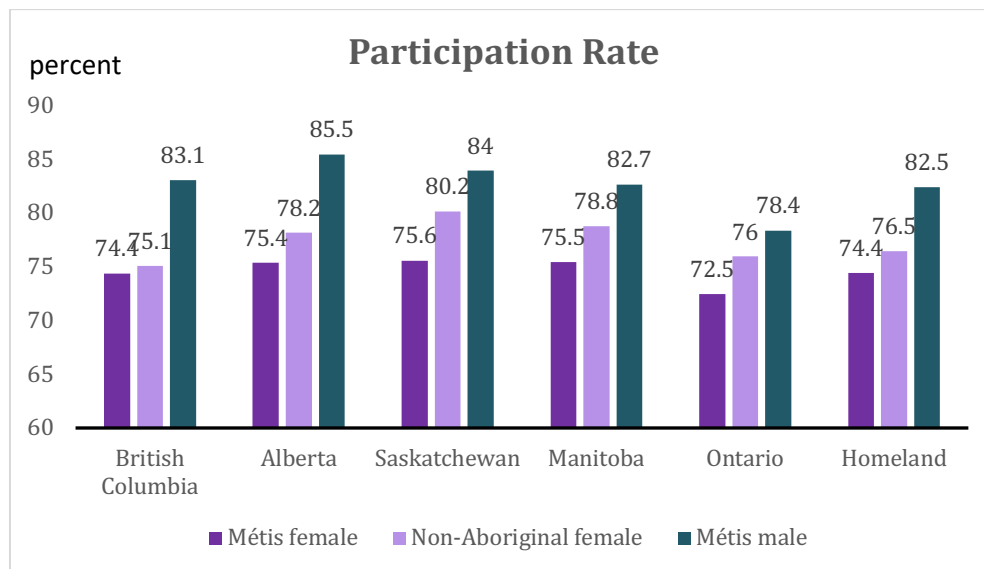
The 2012 Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), an initiative of OECD, attempts to understand the levels of skills in literacy and numeracy that vary across Indigenous groups (excluding reserves).<sup>149</sup> In PIAAC, respondents answered questions aimed at measuring their information-processing skills and obtained scores ranging from 0 to 500. In the case of literacy, respondents were measured on their ability to engage with written texts, both print-based and digital. As for numeracy, respondents were measured on their ability to engage with mathematical information “in order to manage the mathematical demands of a range of situations in everyday life.”<sup>34</sup> The higher the score, the more capable respondents are considered to be in processing complex information. Results presented here are an average proficiency of the population (that is, “average scores”).

<sup>149</sup> “Skills in Canada: First Results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).” Statistics Canada. November 30, 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-555-x/89-555-x2013001-eng.htm>

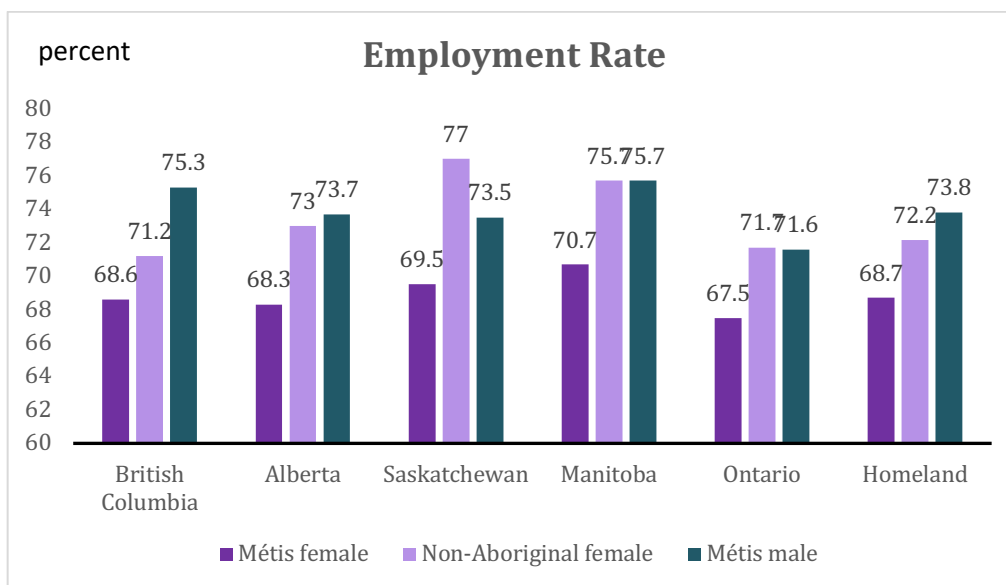
## Métis Women and Girls Labour Market Experience

### Workplace Participation and Employment

Fewer Métis women participate in the labour market when compared to non-Indigenous women.

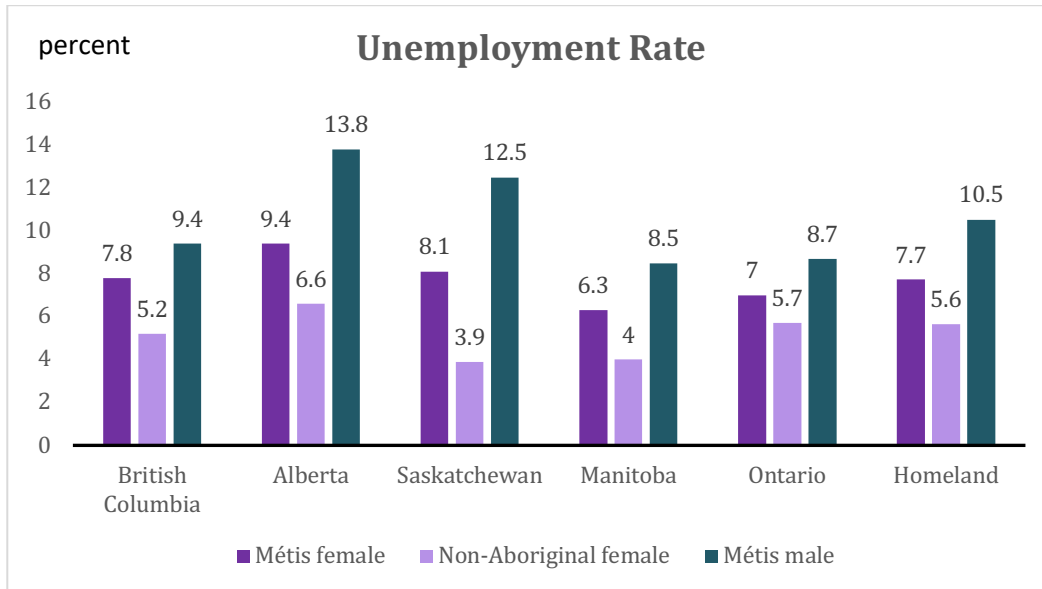


For those who do participate in the labour market, only 68.7% of Métis women are employed, compared to 72.2% of non-Indigenous women.<sup>150</sup>

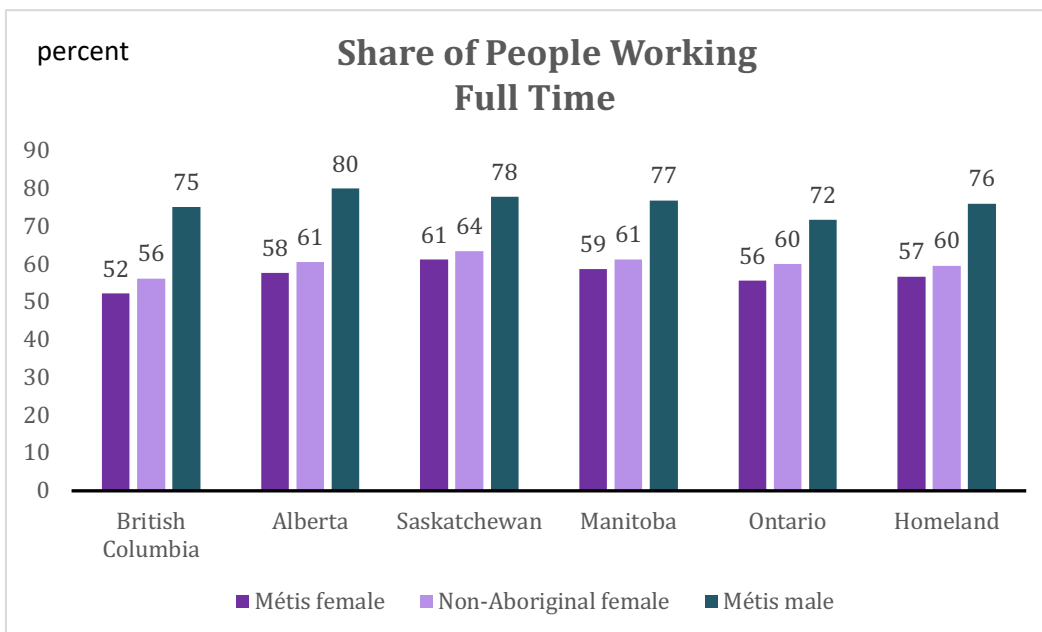


<sup>150</sup> “The Aboriginal Peoples Survey 2012. Gender Differences in Métis Education and Employment.” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. 2012. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ-AI/STAGING/texte-text/rs\\_aps\\_gender\\_mmetis.pdf\\_1422290221721\\_eng.pdf](https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ-AI/STAGING/texte-text/rs_aps_gender_mmetis.pdf_1422290221721_eng.pdf)

Métis women face more difficulties finding employment and experience an unemployment rate of 7.7%, compared to non-Indigenous women's unemployment rate of 5.6%.<sup>151</sup>



For those who are employed, 57% of Métis women work full-time, compared to 60% of non-Indigenous women who work full time.<sup>152</sup>



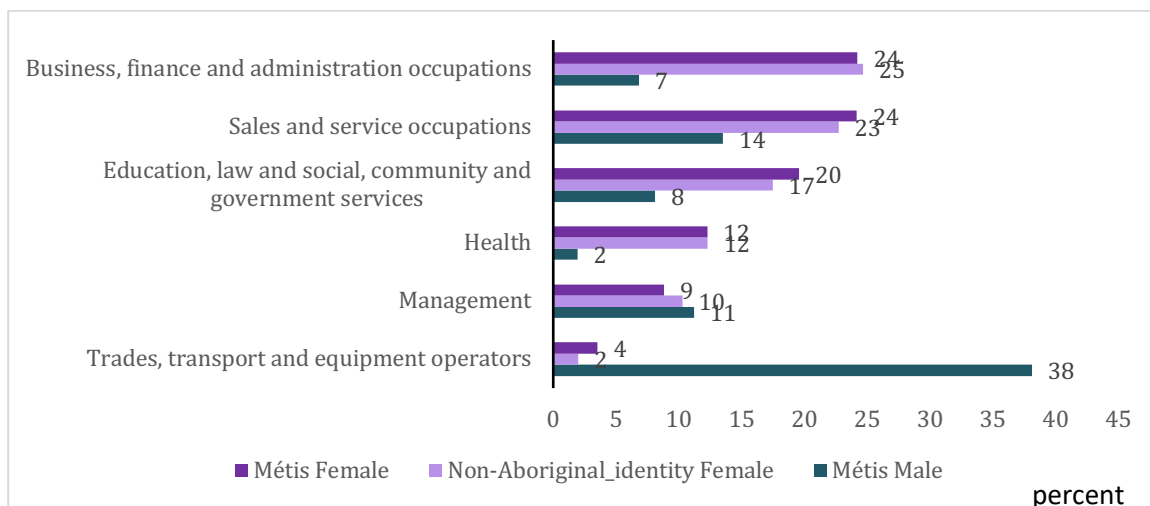
<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

More Métis women (19%) work part-time compared to Métis men (8%) and non-Indigenous women (18%).<sup>153</sup> Métis women (11%) are less likely to be self-employed when compared to Métis men (16%).<sup>154</sup>

## Occupations

Métis women's occupations are concentrated in business administration (24%), sales and services (24%), education and social services (20%) and health (12%). These career choices are shared among Métis and non-Indigenous women. On the other hand, the majority of Métis men worked in trades, transport and equipment operations (38%), while the remainder worked in sales and services (14%) and management (11%).<sup>155</sup>



## Barriers to Employment

According to the Indigenous People's Survey 2017, Métis women (49%) are more likely than Métis men (37%) to report difficulties in finding employment due to lack of experience.<sup>156</sup> Métis women are more likely to search for work through their social networks of friends or family than Métis men.<sup>157</sup> Métis women largely agreed that more education would allow them to find better quality employment. About a third (31%) of Métis women and a fifth (22%) of Métis men who planned on looking for work in the next 12 months stated that more education would help them find employment.<sup>158</sup> Métis women of core working age reported that childcare assistance would help them find work. Around a quarter (23%) of core working age

<sup>153</sup> "Labour Market Experiences of Métis: Key Findings from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey." Statistics Canada. November 26, 2018. Accessed June 5, 2019. [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2018002-eng.pdf?st=flIG\\_4OA](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2018002-eng.pdf?st=flIG_4OA)

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*: 5

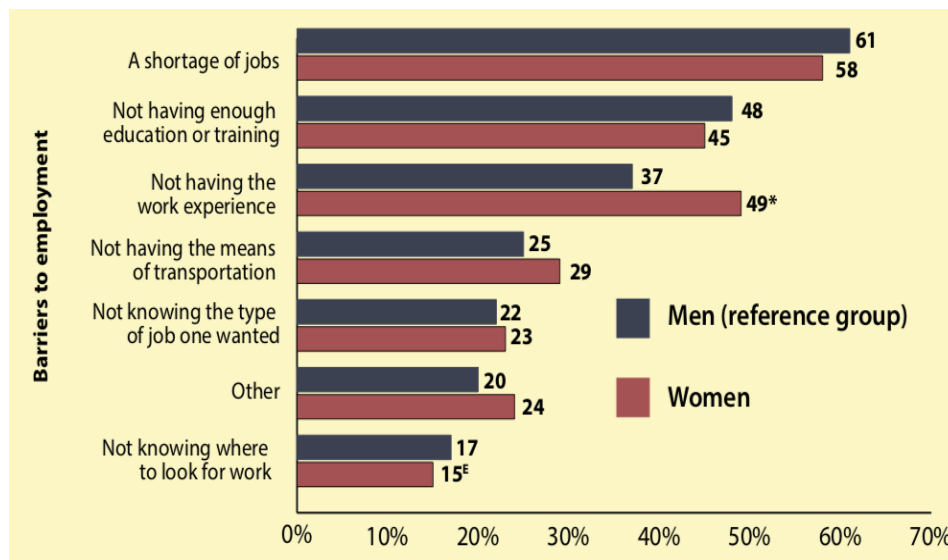
<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> self-identified Métis aged 15 years or older in 2017

<sup>157</sup> "Labour Market Experiences of Métis: Key Findings from the 2017 Aboriginal Peoples Survey." Statistics Canada. November 26, 2018. Accessed June 5, 2019. [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2018002-eng.pdf?st=flIG\\_4OA](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-653-x/89-653-x2018002-eng.pdf?st=flIG_4OA)

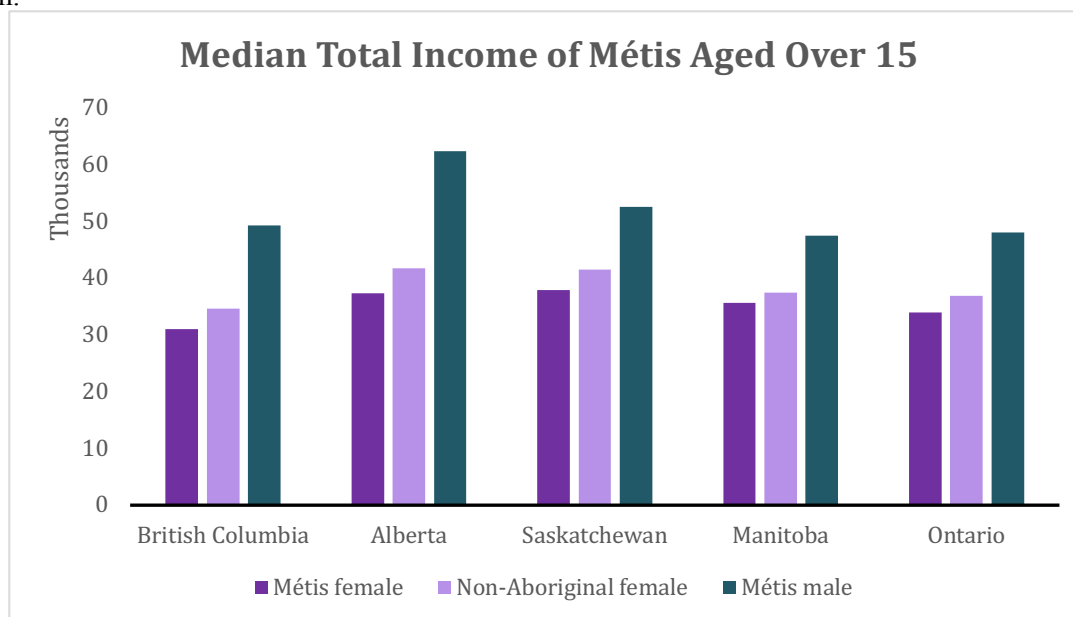
<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*: 13

Métis women who planned on looking for work in the next 12 months reported that childcare assistance would help them find work.<sup>159</sup>



## Income

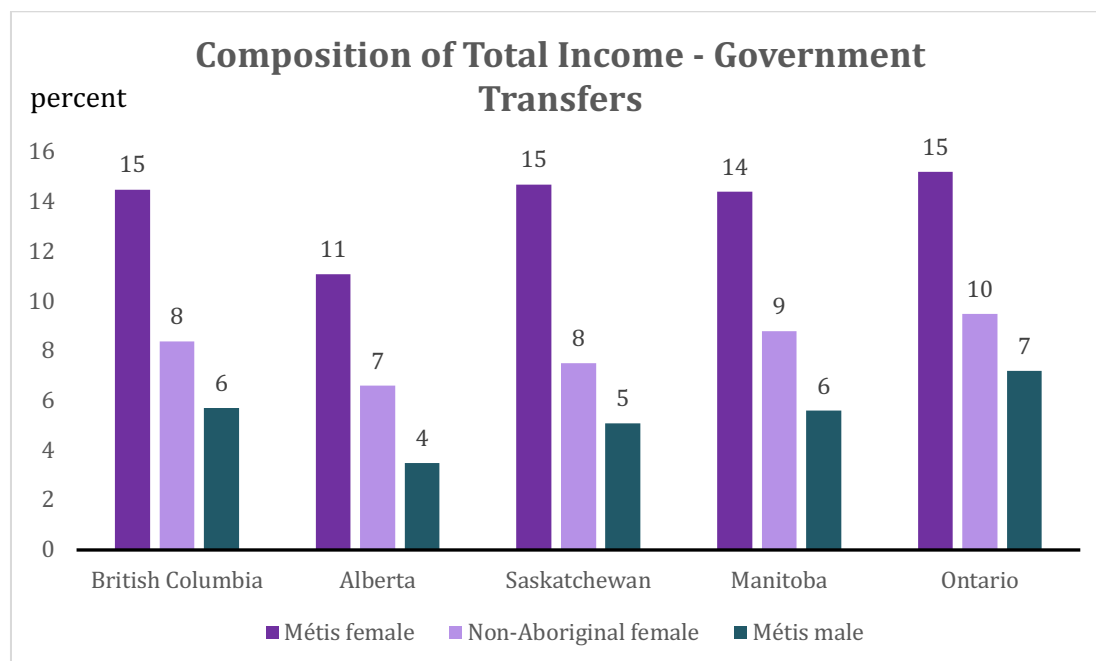
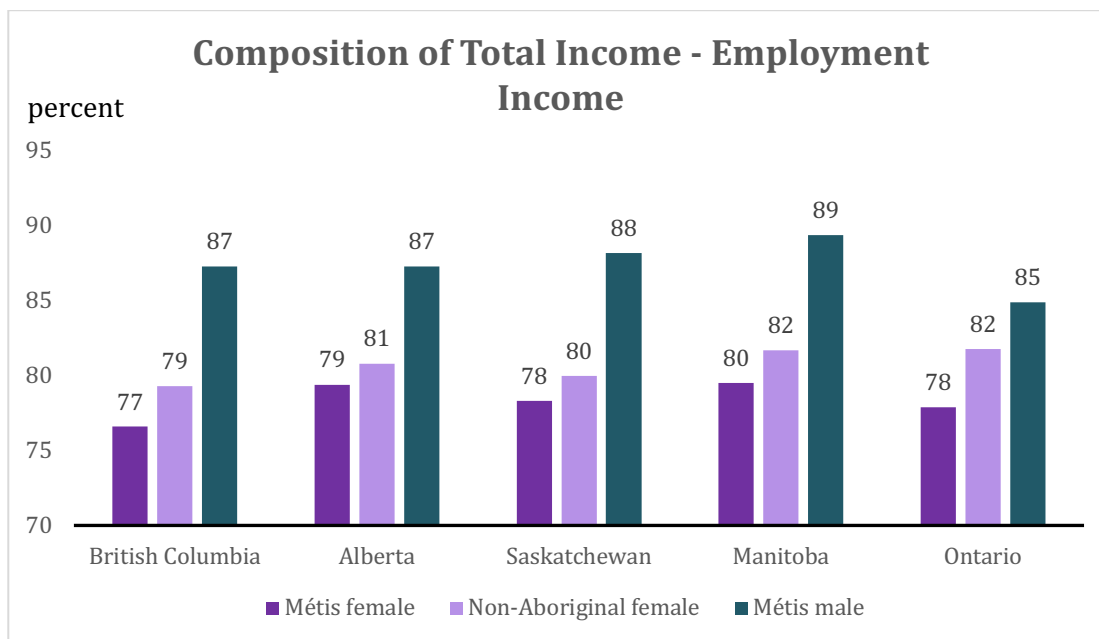
Métis women earn 40% less compared to Métis men, and 10% less compared to non-Indigenous women.<sup>160</sup>



<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*: 13

<sup>160</sup> “Aboriginal Women in the Canadian Economy. The Links Between Education, Employment and Income.” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada. 2006. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/ai\\_res\\_aborig\\_econ\\_pdf\\_1331068532699\\_eng.pdf](https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/DAM/DAM-INTER-HQ/STAGING/texte-text/ai_res_aborig_econ_pdf_1331068532699_eng.pdf)

Around 15% of Métis women's total income came from government transfers, higher than that of non-Indigenous women (8%) and Métis men (5%).<sup>161</sup>



<sup>161</sup> "Aboriginal Women in Canada: A Statistical Profile from the 2006 Census." Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. May 11, 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1331664678840/1331838092221?pedisable=true>

## Residential School Attendance

Canada's residential school system began in 1830 and existed until the 1990s. Run by the federal government and churches, these schools forcibly removed Indigenous children from their families, communities and cultures. An estimated 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children attended residential schools and experienced devastating abuses and neglect as a result.<sup>162</sup> The Aboriginal People's Survey 2012 asked respondents if they were ever students within the residential school system or if any members of their families (grandparents, parents, spouse/partner, sibling or other relative) had ever attended.<sup>163</sup> In this survey, 4% of Métis women over 25 years of age reported having attended a residential school.<sup>164</sup>

## Violence Against Métis Women and Girls

The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on the State of Public Health in Canada 2016 states that "family violence impacts health beyond just immediate physical injury, and increases the risk for a number of conditions, including depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as high blood pressure, cancer and heart disease."<sup>165</sup>

The report's key findings include:

- An average of 172 homicides are committed every year by a family member;
- For approximately 85,000 victims of violent crimes, the person responsible for the crime was a family member;
- Just under 9 million, or about 1 in 3 Canadians said they had experienced abuse before the age of 15;
- Just under 760,000 Canadians said they had experienced unhealthy spousal conflict, abuse or violence in the previous five years.<sup>166</sup>

Due to a lack of disaggregated data and research, Métis women's and girl's experiences of violence are not known; however, what is known is that Indigenous women and girls experience disproportionate rates of violence and injury when compared to non-Indigenous women and girls.

The Report observed the following:

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<sup>162</sup>"100 Years of Loss: Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools." Legacy of Hope Foundation. 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://100yearsofloss.ca/en/>

<sup>163</sup> Vivian O'Donnell and Susan Wallace. "First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women." Statistics Canada. November 30, 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2010001/article/11442-eng.htm#a33>

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> The Chief Public Health Officer. "A Focus on Family Violence in Canada." Public Health Agency of Canada. October 21, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/canada/public-health/migration/publications/departement-ministere/state-public-health-family-violence-2016-etat-sante-publique-violence-familiale/alt/pdf-eng.pdf>

<sup>166</sup> Sinha, Maire. "Measuring violence against women: Statistical trends." Statistics Canada. November 30, 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2013001/article/11766-eng.pdf?st=CvqoFLq7>

- There is a higher prevalence of violence perpetrated against Indigenous women. Indigenous women are 2.5 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to report being the victim of violent crime (279 versus 106 per 1,000 population);<sup>167</sup>
- There is a higher prevalence of injury experienced by Indigenous women. 59% Indigenous female spousal violence victims reported injury, while 41% non-Indigenous female victims were injured;<sup>168</sup>
- The severity of violence that Indigenous women experience is greater than that of non-Indigenous women. Indigenous female victims are more likely to fear for their lives as a result of spousal violence (52% versus 31% of non-Indigenous female victims). Indigenous women also reported the most severe forms of violence, including being sexually assaulted, beaten, choked, or threatened with a gun or a knife;<sup>169</sup>
- Younger women are more likely to become a victim of spousal violence and girls are more likely than boys to become the victims of family violence. In fact, girls aged 12 to 17 years are nearly twice as likely as boys to experience family violence;<sup>170</sup>
- Women and girls with disabilities, particularly those who live in institutional settings, are more vulnerable to abuse;<sup>171</sup>
- Older women experience spousal violence at twice the rate of older men and senior women are more likely than senior men to be victimized by their children;<sup>172</sup>
- In 2014, the rate of homicide of Indigenous women was six times that of non-Indigenous women.<sup>173</sup>
- Approximately 75% of survivors of sexual assault in Indigenous communities are young women under 18 years of age;<sup>174</sup>
- Approximately 50% of these girls are under the age of 14 and approximately 25% are under the age of 7.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>167</sup> Brennan, Shannon. "Juristat Article: Violent victimization of Aboriginal women in the Canadian provinces, 2009." Statistics Canada. May 17, 2011. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11439-eng.pdf?st=VgI\\_Nh3p](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/85-002-x/2011001/article/11439-eng.pdf?st=VgI_Nh3p)

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Sinha, Maire. "Section 3: Family violence against children and youth" November 30, 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2012001/article/11643/11643-3-eng.htm>

<sup>171</sup> "Family Violence Against Women with Disabilities." Health Canada. February 1993. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/H72-22-9-1993E.pdf>.

<sup>172</sup> Taylor-Butts, Andrea. "Section 4: Family Violence against Seniors." Statistics Canada. November 30, 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2014001/article/14114/section04-eng.htm>.

<sup>173</sup> Mulligan, Leah; Axford, Marsha; and Solecki, André. "Homicide in Canada, 2015 Homicide in Canada, 2015." Statistics Canada. November 23, 2016. Accessed June 06, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2016001/article/14668-eng.htm>.

<sup>174</sup> "Youth Focus Part 2." Native Women's Association of Canada. 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Youth-Focus-Part-2.pdf>.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

## Overrepresentation of Indigenous Women in the Correction System

While Indigenous peoples make up only 4% of the general Canadian population, they account for 20% of the total incarcerated offender population.<sup>176</sup> This pattern of Indigenous overrepresentation among incarcerated populations is even more noticeable when it comes to female offenders. Indigenous women comprise 32.6% of the total female offender population, meaning one in three women who are incarcerated is Indigenous.<sup>177</sup> This pattern shows no signs of stopping either. The rate of incarcerated Indigenous women has grown by 90% in the past ten years, situating Indigenous women as the fastest growing offender population. As of April 2010, there were 164 Indigenous women serving federal sentences.<sup>178</sup>

## Environmental Scan

### Introduction

An important aspect of understanding Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples' experiences with violence is knowing what services are available to these individuals when they are fleeing violence. It is also important to know whether those services are culturally safe spaces for Métis families. As mentioned earlier in this report, LFMO is currently working on a project entitled: "Building a Métis Women's Blueprint." Within this project, LFMO is reaching out to service providers across the homeland to understand if they provide culturally safe services to Métis families.

One service area that is being investigated is the area of Emergency Shelters for women and children fleeing violence. To date, approximately twenty-five percent (varies depending on the region) of shelters have responded to research requests. The following analysis summarizes the preliminary data on how Emergency Shelters have responded to the research questions within the Environmental Scan. The "Building a Métis Women's Blueprint" project will conclude before the end of 2019 and a final report will include updated findings as more research is gathered.

## Emergency Shelters (for women and children fleeing violence)

### Statistics

The term emergency shelters, for the purpose of this research, has been inclusive of shelters for women in crisis, second stage housing and transition housing. In Ontario, there are approximately 98 emergency shelters for women fleeing violence. Manitoba has far fewer shelters, with approximately 19 throughout the province. There are approximately 21 shelters in Saskatchewan. In Alberta there are about 48 emergency shelters. British Columbia has roughly 72 shelters throughout the province. Most of the shelters (in all regions) are concentrated in metropolitan areas with very limited services in rural and remote communities (reserves often being an exception to this). So far, the response rate has been

<sup>176</sup> Malakieh, Jamil. "Adult and Youth Correctional Statistics in Canada, 2016/2017." Statistics Canada. June 29, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2018001/article/54972-eng.htm>

<sup>177</sup> "Accountability Framework, Year-End Report 2009/2010, Aboriginal Initiatives" Correctional Service Canada. May 11, 2012. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/publications/005007-2517-eng.shtml>

<sup>178</sup> "Corrections and Conditional Release Statistical Overview" Public Safety Canada. February 07, 2019. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ccrso-2017/index-en.aspx>

approximately 25% per province (with the exception of British Columbia, which is currently only around 13%).

### **Culturally Appropriate Services**

Most emergency shelters do not apply a Métis lens to their services. Some offer a pan-Indigenous lens, and many refer women to external service providers (through friendship centres, governing bodies or other Métis service providers). Some shelters have indicated they believe they can do better in applying a Métis lens and have asked for suggestions on how to go about doing this. Other shelters have stated that due to limited funding/capacity, they are unable to provide services that meet the unique needs of Métis women. There are a small number of shelters run by First Nations band councils, but there are no emergency shelters run by and for Métis families.

### **Rural/Remote Challenges**

Shelters in rural areas have noted that they face greater challenges than those in urban areas. Some shelters have indicated that they are at capacity and often have to turn women away due to the limited number of beds available. Shelters in rural and remote areas have indicated that it is very challenging to provide culturally based services and it is also challenging to find Métis specific services where they can refer clients. Often, there are no service providers available locally, and shelters have to direct clients to larger communities.

### **Service Provision Frameworks**

Many shelters use a trauma-informed and harm-reduction approach to their service provision, but this is not always the case. Most shelters have indicated that they take a feminist approach or an intersectional approach to their work and operate under an anti-oppression/anti-racism framework. Shelters that indicated they do apply a Métis lens often work with one of the governing bodies, other Métis service providers or with local Elders to develop that lens or provide staff training. Some shelters that currently operate under a pan-Indigenous lens have indicated they want and need to do more to provide a Métis lens to their programming and would like to continue dialogue with LFMO on how to go about doing so. Many shelters also indicated that limited funding has been a barrier to being able to provide more culturally appropriate services and training to staff.

### **Harmful Service Provision Practices**

Some shelters provided some troubling feedback that could create an unsafe environment for Métis women and their families. While almost all shelters have indicated they are open to women of all backgrounds, a small percentage of shelters have stated that they do not serve Métis clients or that they have no intention of providing culturally appropriate services (even in the form of a referral to another organization). One shelter indicated that they do not serve Métis clients. Even after a teachable moment, where LFMO indicated that there are indeed Métis women in the community (and there is an active Métis local in the area) and that there is a possibility they do serve Métis women that have chosen not to self-identify, shelter staff insisted that they do not serve Métis women and there is no need to provide a Métis lens to their services. Some shelters have indicated they do not use a harm-reduction approach and that any drugs or alcohol are strictly forbidden from coming into the shelter and women that use these substances are not welcome to stay at the shelter.

## Conclusion

Shelters are underfunded in many regions, with many having to turn away women because they are at capacity and do not have any empty beds. Many shelters apply trauma-informed and feminist/anti-oppression lenses. However, most shelters do not apply a Métis lens to service provision and are not culturally safe spaces. Shelters are primarily concentrated in urban areas, leaving women in rural communities more at risk. Some shelters have not moved to a harm-reduction framework, meaning Métis women struggling with addictions will be turned away. There are a small number of First Nations band-operated shelters, but none run by and for Métis communities. Therefore, there is a need for greater investment in Emergency Shelters so no one fleeing violence is turned away. Furthermore, there is a gap in culturally-safe service provision for Métis families. Governments must invest in Emergency Shelters run by and for Métis families.

## Rights

### Overview

On October 26, 2018, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Métis Nation (LFMO) received an invitation from a senior Assistant Deputy Minister, on behalf of the Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNA) the Honourable Carolyn Bennett, to put forward a “Policy Submission” that provides a Métis women’s perspective on the Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework (RIRF). Following the launch of the Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework on February 14, 2018, Canada worked collaboratively with Indigenous Peoples to fulfill a plan that would result in legislation and policies that would recognize, among other things, the inherent rights of self-determination and self-government for Indigenous Peoples. As such, Canada would finally acknowledge that the Métis Nation possesses these inherent rights which are protected under Section 35 of the *Constitution Act*, 1982 and would finally begin a Nation-to-Nation and government-to-government relationship with the Métis Nation. Subsequently, Indigenous groups were invited to offer their input on the Framework. An Engagement Discussion Guide was sent out for responses. These could include written responses, email responses, and/or participation in a series of Engagement Sessions. The Guide sets out questions for reflection, broken down into themes such as what new legislation include; how current claims and treaty implementation can be improved; should there be a new distinctions-based policy for claims; what is the role of the provinces; what powers and functions would a Métis government have, and how can the two newly-created Indigenous departments best serve, and be accountable to, Indigenous Peoples. Summaries of the 102 Engagement Sessions have been posted on Canada’s website. Although some Métis women may have participated in these discussions, CIRNA’s invitation to develop this policy document will allow LFMO to provide a distinct set of recommendations and policy options specifically for Métis women.

The Engagement Discussion guide had one question explicitly referencing Indigenous women: “What role does the re-empowerment of women play in defining and rebuilding Indigenous Nations?” When reviewing the summaries of these engagement sessions, there were few references to the role of women. One comment referred to the role of women that would be determined once self-government is achieved. Another comment stated that “there needs to be more laws and frameworks to guarantee protection for women and children in order to contribute to the rebuilding of families.” Neither of these sample comments could be attributed to Métis participants, but they do set a certain tone that either sees women’s issues as relevant, albeit an afterthought, or sees women as a group in need of protection. It is important

to provide the much broader reality and vision of Métis women. This paper takes the approach that the “re-empowerment” of women starts from the very beginning of the process: first, by equal participation in defining the vision and scope of a Métis government; and, second, by ensuring that women’s rights, needs and aspirations are reflected in legislation, constitutions and the policies and practices of the new Métis governments. Beginning with this basic assumption, the paper sets out to define, in part, the means by which Métis women are empowered by the process moving toward recognized Métis nationhood and further, how empowerment can flow through and lift the broader Métis female population.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the views of the Women of the Métis Nation in response to Canada’s Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework. It is a policy document which can inform current and future processes that would promote the empowerment of women and ensure their participation in addition to their clear reflections in actions and undertakings across all levels of government. While the points raised in this paper have a female focus, it considers the deep concerns and sense of responsibility carried by Métis women on behalf of the whole family unit. This would include their male children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+ members and men as well. Therefore, along with female-specific recommendations set out below, certain family-oriented policy options are included.

## **Methodology**

A literature review was conducted which resulted in the collection of a body of rich information and data concerning the political, social, economic and cultural lives of Métis women in the Homeland. From this review and discussions with people working at the national level of the Métis Nation, a list of questions was drawn up that would guide further discussions.

There were several in-depth discussions with members at the national level, including those with years of local experience in the Métis community as well as respected lawyers who have worked on Métis legal issues. Further, the author reached out for input from women’s representatives from the five provincial governing members. This included women from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario.

## **Canada Recognizes Role of Indigenous Women and Girls**

Canada’s vision includes that of being a leader on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In addition to a long history of work on employment equity in the public service, several federal policies (including the establishment of the Status of Women Department now known as Women and Gender Equality or WAGE), signal that dignity, human rights, and the equality of women are high priority. The acknowledgement of the role of women follows through in Canada’s Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework in several ways. The Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework sets out a federal commitment to be guided by the Ten Justice Principles expressing the conduct of the Canada-Indigenous relationship and the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Both have explicit references to the role of Indigenous women in self-determination and self-government.

In its statement on “Principles Respecting the Government of Canada’s Relationship With Indigenous Peoples,” (known as “The Ten Principles,”) the Department of Justice states that “these principles are a starting point to support efforts to end the denial of Indigenous rights that led to disempowerment and assimilationist policies and practices. They seek to turn the page in an often-troubled relationship by advancing fundamental change whereby Indigenous peoples increasingly live in strong and healthy communities with thriving cultures. To achieve this change, it was recognized that Indigenous nations are self-determining, self-governing, increasingly self-sufficient, and rightfully aspiring to no longer be marginalized, regulated, and administered under the *Indian Act* and similar instruments. The Government of Canada acknowledges that strong Indigenous cultural traditions and customs, including languages, are fundamental to rebuilding Indigenous nations. *As part of this rebuilding, the diverse needs and experiences of Indigenous women and girls must be considered as part of this work, to ensure a future where non-discrimination, equality and justice are achieved* (emphasis by author). The rights of Indigenous peoples, wherever they live, shall be upheld.” (GOC, Dept. of Justice, pp. 3-4.)

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) made a clearer reference to the consideration and protection of Indigenous women. By its commitment to implement UNDRIP, Canada agrees to measures to improve the economic and social conditions of Indigenous peoples by taking into account the special needs of Elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities (Article 22). Canada’s adoption of UNDRIP also ensures that Indigenous children and women are protected from violence and discrimination (Article 23). Finally, in overarching language, Article 44 states that, “...The rights and freedoms herein are guaranteed equally for male and female Indigenous individuals.” *In conclusion, there exists clear authority for Métis women to press Canada to honor its commitments concerning the needs, interests and aspirations of Métis women under UNDRIP.*

## Rights Recognition

The Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework is premised on the recognition of Indigenous rights through federal legislation which, according to the “Overview,” could, among other things:

- “enable the Government of Canada to recognize Indigenous Nations and Collectives as legal entities with the status and capacities of a natural person;
- enable the exercise of self-government by federally recognized Nations and Collectives;
- affirm Canada’s intent to enter into government-to-government fiscal relationships with recognized Nations and Collectives; and,
- require Canada to co-develop further measures to support these elements” (pp. 11.)

To the extent that the RIRF contemplates a process for recognition of Métis governments, there is a need to ensure the representation of women.

In “Overview of a Recognition and Implementation of Indigenous Rights Framework,” a Government of Canada document, it is stated that:

“It is intended that through the Framework:

- Canada will remove barriers that have prevented the exercise of Indigenous rights, including inherent and treaty rights, and the achievement of true self-determination by Indigenous Nations and Collectives.

- Indigenous peoples will have flexibility to determine their own paths forward and governance systems for their Nations and Collectives.
- Rights-holding Indigenous Nations and Collectives will have the choice to immediately exercise certain jurisdictions, consistent with their constitutions.
- Canada will impose accountability measures on itself to ensure that rights, treaties and agreements are fully implemented.
- Independent bodies could be established to keep Canada further accountable;
- New dispute mechanisms could become available so that Indigenous Peoples have access to remedies outside of costly, adversarial court processes” (pp. 2-3).

### **HER Story: What Métis Women Say**

Two main themes emerged from the discussions: Métis women spoke of the rich history of Métis women in the building of the Métis Nation and the equal role of Métis women in the development of communities, through political, social, and economic participation. The ongoing strength of Métis women in Métis governments is demonstrated by the fact that approximately 50% of the elected leadership of the provincial Métis organizations is women and Métis women are often the community leaders working with families and cultural events in their home areas. Métis women expressed strong views on equal representation in Métis governance and indicated that there is a need to ensure the continued leadership and representation of Métis women in Métis government structures.

Along with an expressed need to ensure appropriate support for women’s participation in leadership, it was also clearly indicated that there is much more work required to empower women from the grassroots and beyond. In order to achieve this objective, Métis women have pointed to the need for concrete steps to eliminate racism, sexism, poverty, trauma and loss of cultural identity. In this regard, Métis women identified a number of matters that need to be addressed. It must be noted that the presence or severity of the challenges listed below varies among the five provinces. Across the board, however, the lack of awareness and the absence of safe and appropriate housing topped the list for all discussants.

- Financial barriers: This point arose not only because of the lack of money to provide for basic needs but also in respect of the absence of culturally appropriate financial and budgetary counselling and skills development. The difficulty in accessing credit in support of small businesses is also of note.
- Employment barriers: The necessity of obtaining a good education in order to participate in the workforce is a strong value held by Métis women. Also, job readiness skills were identified as a pressing requirement as was the need for improved access to affordable childcare.
- Need for raised awareness: This was a regularly articulated by respondents. In particular, it was expressed as imperative to inform and educate Métis girls and women about their rights, their history, and their cultural traditions. However, at some point, it was acknowledged that the early engagement of men and boys in this awareness education will produce the best results. In addition, women expressed an understanding that public education can work to banish ignorance and reduce racism in the general public. There was some expression of concern over the lack of awareness of services, especially when threats to personal safety

were eminent. How, for example, do a woman and her children flee from a non-urban community and where do they go?

- Need for more educational opportunities: This was expressed in terms of access to institutions offering high school completion, followed by post-secondary training opportunities, particularly outside of urban areas. The absence of broadband services is a real barrier to online training for many Métis girls and women; indeed, this absence has deeper, more far-reaching impacts on the lives of those who live in a world where so many of life's transactions are online. Additionally, more support is needed to aid the working poor who have limited time and limited access to institutions for more training.
- Lack of affordable childcare: Since a large proportion of women are heads of their households, affordable daycare is cited as a serious barrier to Métis women's abilities to access further education or when seeking work. However, this issue is equally important for two parent families where both parents are employed.
- Lack of safe, affordable and suitable housing: This point produced an interesting observation, *the Métis Nation will only flourish over the long term if they have access to land*. Not only was the vision expressed through the Métis Nation's collective access to land and resources, but more from a grassroots level where access to land simply means the ability to own your own house. Home ownership is seen as a hedge against future financial insecurity, homelessness and fear of few options during senior years.
- Lack of mental health and trauma-related counseling: The effects of layers of unresolved trauma manifests in multiple barriers to success. These may include poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, lower education, spotty employment record and an inability to form healthy relationships. Some of the trauma arose because of residential school and the Sixties Scoop experiences, which the Métis women feel have not been seriously acknowledged by governments. Availability of culturally sensitive trauma counselling is limited or simply unavailable, some said.
- Job readiness: This line of thinking arose in relation to education and financial barriers (covered above) and availability of job counselling services; resume writing, interview skills, conduct expected on the job, and access to affordable, appropriate attire.
- Access to technology: Mention was made about the lack of access to technology, both in terms of up-to-date devices such as smart phones and portable and desktop computers, but further, the lack of service in some rural and remote areas was seen as a huge barrier to communication networks and all the benefits including health and safety issues.
- Improved health: Access to improved health services outside urban areas was mentioned, particularly in respect of lack of transportation. Further, points were raised for all Métis women regardless of where they live, in terms of costs of prescription drugs, vision and dental care, physiotherapy and trauma and addictions counseling services.
- Healthy and safe family structures: Concerns were raised in terms of the need for acknowledgement and support for all types of family structures. This would include supports

for grandparents, both single or couples raising grandchildren, LGBTQ2S+ families and single mothers or fathers. The role of the extended family including aunts, uncles and cousin kinships must be acknowledged, particularly in relation to foster care. There is a huge need for more childcare workers and more assessments of foster homes even if within family kinships. Financial aid should be made available to extended family members who take on the care of children. “It is shocking how non-kinship families have made an industry out of fostering Indigenous children while family foster parents receive no assistance.”

- Cultural activities and supports: Cultural activities and supports are seen as a positive way to build healthy communities. It was expressed that they work well to create a sense of inclusiveness and they can offer the opportunity to enhance one’s cultural identity and reduce the impacts of isolation and loneliness. Intergenerational bonds can be strengthened and the betterment of parent-child relations as well as sibling relations could be developed in a safe environment.
- Women’s voice in governance: There was some discussion about the work that women are doing to ensure that their voices are heard and how those efforts must continue now and in future self-governments. Expressions of the need to encourage and support women in leadership were offered. In terms of the Métis Nation’s moving to self-government, a consistently expressed theme was the importance of women being consulted; women participating in the design and development of the legislation creating the government; representation in all branches; equal opportunities in the public service and the creation of a Women’s Department within the Métis government. The legislation should include protection of human rights, the right to be consulted, appeal mechanisms and protections in the public service, such as an ombudsman function. Also, Human Resources policies on hiring, retention, career planning, harassment avoidance and so on should be developed as part of the new public service.

## Conclusion

This paper marks an important step in developing a better understanding of the experiences and aspirations of Métis women. It addresses the unique needs of Métis women and how the Recognition and Implementation of the Rights Framework can respond to these unique needs. While there can be no denying the intergenerational effects of colonialism, racism, sexism, and violence, the paper sets forward recommendations that are intended to facilitate the objectives of re-empowerment of Métis women.

## Modern justice

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (“MMIWG”) is pressing in Canadian society. As this issue persists in our country, there have been many organizations that have mobilized to combat this crisis. It is evident that there is a serious need for Canada to positively contribute to the ongoing efforts already occurring all across the country. As part of mobilizing, there has been an Inquiry

launched into MMIWG; however, throughout its term, it has lacked a Métis Nation-specific lens for much of the work it has endeavoured to accomplish.

The Métis Nation is a unique group of Aboriginal Peoples whose culture and identity should be considered in the issue of MMIWG. Despite the acknowledgement that Métis are one of three Aboriginal peoples of Canada in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*<sup>179</sup>, they are oftentimes conflated with Inuit and First Nations groups by way of a pan-Indigenous approach that does not account for their unique intersectionality. A pan-Indigenous approach is always ineffective. This uniqueness should always be considered, especially when looking at the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

One of the main issues facing Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples is that there is a great lack of identity data (i.e. racial, ethnic, and Indigenous data) on victims of violence gathered and shared by provincial police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the “RCMP”). There are some policies in place regarding the collection of victim’s identity data across the country; however, collection is often still not common practice and is not guaranteed. Furthermore, even if there is such data being collected, the likelihood it is being shared with third parties such as outside organizations, stakeholders, communities or families is unlikely due to privacy concerns or the possibility of potential misuse of information.

Another important issue affecting Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples is their treatment as victims of violence and crime within the Canadian justice system. More specifically, many individuals, and even the family of individuals who are affected by violence, are treated negatively by various figures in the justice system. This is unacceptable. Furthermore, there is a complete lack of support that caters to Métis people’s specific needs.

This paper will discuss the two major contemporary issues faced by Métis women in Canada outlined above. First, it will address the issue of identity data collection across Canada, specifically as it relates to Métis people. This will include an overview of the current state of Canadian policing institutions and will be followed by key arguments for this type of data collection. Following this, this paper will address the issue of the treatment of Métis women and their families as victims of violent crime. It will do this by observing and analysing a current case regarding a Métis woman who was murdered and how the criminal justice system treated the victim and their family throughout the trial process.

## DATA COLLECTION

### Issue

A major issue for Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples specifically is the lack of collection of identity data for victims of crime. Currently, data collection varies by province and jurisdiction. In some provinces there are policies currently in place to address the collection of these statistics. Despite this apparent commitment, identity data is rarely collected. Furthermore, if this data is obtained, it is rarely shared with relevant stakeholders due to a variety of reasons, such as privacy. There are two main ways in which data has historically been collected for victims, either by survey data or through police reporting.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Millar, Paul, and Akwasi Owusu-Bempah. "Whitewashing Criminal Justice in Canada: Preventing Research through Data Suppression." *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 26, no. 3 (2011): 653-61.

These will be further discussed below.

### **Victim Surveys**

The first way in which victim data is recorded is in the form of victim surveys.<sup>180</sup> There are a number of surveys that are used to collect this data, such as Statistics Canada's General Social Survey (the "GSS") which has cycles devoted specifically to collecting information on general victimization, the Canadian specific data in the International Crime Victims Survey (the "ICVS") as well as the Statistics Canada survey on Violence Against Women (the "VAWS").<sup>181</sup>

Every five years, there is a survey of victimization that goes out as part of the GSS wherein it contains questions on ethnic background.<sup>182</sup> The article titled *Whitewashing Criminal Justice* noted that in 2009, the categories became consistent with the census, which reflects a category for Aboriginal ancestry as well as further sub-categories of "First Nations", "Métis", and "Inuk".<sup>183</sup> Although these categories are outlined in detail, they are not available as part of "public-use versions", which only show one category, that is "visible minority".<sup>184</sup> This category muddles all minorities together, including Indigenous people, which does not allow for clear-cut information or data on Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples specifically. Millar and Owusu-Bempah noted that the detailed data above may be found at the Statistics Canada Research Data Centre (the "RDC"), although there are a limited number of locations where you may obtain this information and it is only accessible by a researcher "affiliated with an accredited institution".<sup>185</sup>

In addition to the survey above, the ICVS is conducted every four years and includes information on a victim's social location, save for information on race or ethnicity.<sup>186</sup> The VAWS contains no information on victim race or ethnicity.<sup>187</sup> The authors noted that any statistics on race have only been available through the Statistics Canada GSS since 1999.<sup>188</sup>

### **Police Reporting**

The second way in which data on race is collected for victims and accused individuals alike is through police records.<sup>189</sup> One source noted that there are in fact three surveys which police complete across the country; these include the Uniform Crime Reporting Survey (the "UCR Survey"); the Uniform Crime Reporting Incident-Based Survey (the "UCR-2 Survey") and the Homicide Survey.<sup>190</sup> In the UCR Survey, information on race is not recorded, however, it does collect general information on offenders.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*: 656.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*: 655.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*: 656.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*: 657.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*: 657-658.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*: 657.

Additionally, it was noted by the authors that all police services across the country have replied to this survey since 1962.<sup>192</sup>

Contrarily, the UCR-2 Survey has been collected beginning as early as 1988 and has been recording detailed data on a number of topics, including victims.<sup>193</sup> In this Survey, data in regard to a victim's social characteristics is collected, data which includes an "Aboriginal indicator".<sup>194</sup> It is noted that as of 2009, the UCR-2 Survey has been inclusive of all but ten percent of Canada's population by police jurisdictions.<sup>195</sup> The article does state however, that the reporting of racial data in particular has gone down, and as of 2009, approximately twenty percent of police services across Canada refused to report on the "Aboriginal status" of a victim in accordance with policy.<sup>196</sup> The article goes further to introduce evidence that many police departments do not report racial data, and it has resulted in more than eighty percent of cases missing such information.<sup>197</sup>

Finally, the article also discusses the Homicide Survey which is collected through police-reported crime.<sup>198</sup> They mention that this survey also collects information on the victims of crime and incorporates detailed social characteristics, including detailed Indigenous origin which they state includes "North American Indian, Métis, and Inuit".<sup>199</sup> This survey is specific to homicides in particular, thus the name of the survey.

### **United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) Considerations**

In May 2016, Minister Carolyn Bennett made a statement that Canada was a full supporter of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ("UNDRIP"), without qualifications.<sup>200</sup> Within the declaration, Article 22 communicates that "particular attention" is to be paid to the rights and needs of Indigenous women and children.<sup>201</sup> It goes on to say that states are to take measures to work with Indigenous peoples in order to ensure that Indigenous women and children are able to "enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence...".<sup>202</sup> This relationship working with states should and must include working with police institutions, as they are at the forefront, often encountering vulnerable Indigenous peoples, specifically women, children and LGBTQ2S+ peoples, and they are the state institution that is most concerned with the prevention of violence.

Furthermore, Article 39 states that "Indigenous peoples have the right to have access to financial and technical assistance from States...".<sup>203</sup> It may be argued then that this technical assistance includes data

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<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*: 658.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*: 659.

<sup>200</sup> "Canada's Endorsement of the Declaration/United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples." Government of Canada. September 03, 2017. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1309374407406/1309374458958>.

<sup>201</sup> *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, UNGAOR, 61st Sess, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2007) 1 at art 22 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*: art 39.

as well as its collection and access and that this assistance is critical for addressing Indigenous and other rights issues such as violence and MMIWG. With these statements stemming from UNDRIP, it is evident that the identified issues of vulnerability and access to assistance are pressing and critical to Indigenous peoples across the country and around the world. If we look at the issue of identity data collection more broadly and create room for this international declaration, it may assist with creating a compelling argument in favour of collecting this specific data.

### **Need to Consider Métis**

It is evident that there is much work to be done in order to ensure consistency in the collection of identity data across jurisdictions, and to encourage all police jurisdictions to be consistent with their own collection of this data. Since the time of many of the articles and reports cited within this paper, there has not been much further information on this topic of identity data collection in Canada. Currently, with the National Inquiry into MMIWG, the focus has shifted from police slightly and onto this quest for answers as to why Indigenous women are at higher risk of being victimized and what the root causes may be for these unfortunate fates. Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples have been largely left out of this Inquiry and therefore, they should be given space and consideration to ensure their voices are heard and their specific and unique data be collected.

Within the Métis Nation, there is currently no national missing and murdered database that exists. It was noted in the MMIWG National Inquiry Interim Report that Indigenous peoples each have their own distinct cultures across Nations, and that because of these differences, there is no pan-Indigenous approach.<sup>204</sup> That being said, so far there has been little action on the part of police to ensure Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples are being identified with their differences when they are victimized. At this time, more than ever before, it is critical with the issue of MMIWG, for police to cooperate and assist in any way they can to stop this epidemic. Without such cooperation, it is difficult to both identify and understand this issue as statistics and data are crucial for any analysis.

### **Next Steps**

#### **Policies**

The next step in addressing the issue of victim data collection could be to conduct a legal analysis in regard to the disclosure of this data to key stakeholders and any duty that may arise, and how it may be communicated and shared with stakeholders such as Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak. Millar and Owusu-Bempah suggested we must turn our minds to the issue that data on race has been declining in recent years, and that in order to identify and reduce any racism that is currently existing in our society and institutions, there must be tools embedded into those institutions for collecting the appropriate data.<sup>205</sup> They further discussed that if policing institutions are serious about being responsive to crime and victims, they must then work to systematically collect data on race.<sup>206</sup> That being said, another step in the right direction may be to create a nation-wide policy which applies to all law enforcement, stating they must collect identity data and Métis specific data.

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<sup>204</sup> *Our Women and Girls Are Sacred: Interim Report*. Vancouver, BC: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2017. Accessed June 05, 2019, <http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/files/ni-mmiwg-interim-report-en.pdf>.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*: 655.

## **Partnerships**

Within its articles, UNDRIP reminds us that these relationships are important in ending violence against Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples, and that support is needed from state institutions.<sup>207</sup> It is evident that Métis leaders cannot make meaningful change without the proper collection and disclosure of data from police across Canada, specifically data in regard to an individual's Métis ancestry and social location. Partnership is ultimately required in order to ensure proper steps are taken to end the violence that is perpetuated against Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples. It is imperative that police forces across Canada and RCMP adopt a practice of ongoing and timely communication with relevant stakeholders including Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, as it may allow for an easier route to collect identity data. This improved communication and partnership could further assist police in avoiding misidentifying an individual, completely taking out that concern.

## **TREATMENT BY JUSTICE SYSTEM**

### **Issues**

Another issue that has left a mark on the Canadian justice system is the treatment of victims and their families. Although there are many Indigenous peoples and allies who attempt to navigate judicial processes in this country and make them more manageable, the truth and unfortunate reality is that it can be a scary and daunting environment for Métis people. This is the experience of many for a couple reasons. The first is that the treatment of victims and their families is flawed in our system. Secondly, there is a serious lack of support for Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples and their families throughout the judicial process, which leads to further trauma and confusion.

### ***Treatment of Victims of Violent Crime***

The treatment of Métis victims of violent crime and their families in the Canadian justice system is oftentimes deplorable. Most recently is the case of Ms. Cindy Gladue, *R v Barton*, which has been at the forefront of many of our minds and hearts. This is yet another case of one of our Métis women's lives being lost too soon; however, it shed serious light on the mistreatment of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples in the criminal justice system when they are the victims. It is important to understand this case in order to know how we can do better.

On June 22, 2011, Ms. Gladue bled to death in a bathtub as a result of a large cut to her vaginal wall which was inflicted upon her by the accused, Mr. Barton.<sup>208</sup> In this case, the jury found Mr. Barton not guilty of first degree murder and not guilty of the lesser offence of manslaughter.<sup>209</sup> This case is a tragedy. There is no denying that a horrific act was committed, and yet no one is being held accountable. It is despicable that many men feel that they can do whatever they want to women's bodies, more specifically, to Métis women's, girls' and LGBTQ2S+ peoples' bodies, without any regard for their physical or emotional wellbeing. The act of violence itself was just the tipping point for further emotional and physical trauma for both the family and the victim herself.

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<sup>207</sup> UNDRIP, supra note 24.

<sup>208</sup> *R v Barton*, 2017 ABCA 216 at para 3 [*R v Barton*].

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*: para 5.

This case had many failures. The first was that Ms. Gladue's past sexual history was brought into the trial without an application to bring this evidence to court. From the outset, the Crown identified Ms. Gladue as a "prostitute who struck up a working relationship with Barton"<sup>210</sup> Throughout the trial, Ms. Gladue was referred to by both the defense counsel and the Crown as a "prostitute" at least 25 times.<sup>211</sup> Section 276 of the *Criminal Code*<sup>212</sup> sets out a mandatory decision-making process when the defence wishes to adduce evidence of prior sexual conduct, which was at issue in this case.<sup>213</sup> Because of the nature of this evidence, there is a written application required before bringing it forward in court. This step is supposed to occur prior to trial.<sup>214</sup> Furthermore, the trial judge is to provide reasons for their ruling on this application and must be employed for a particular purpose as set out by the judge.<sup>215</sup>

The Alberta Court of Appeal found that the regime under section 276 should have applied to the charge of first-degree murder and thus should have been followed by the Crown, defence, and the trial judge in this case.<sup>216</sup> The unfortunate reality is that this simply was not the case.

Another failure was the complete lack of morality displayed by the chief medical examiner, the Crown and the Court. During the trial, Ms. Gladue's pelvic area was cut prior to her cremation. This part of her body was preserved and further presented in court as evidence for the jury to observe.<sup>217</sup> Ms. McLeod became aware of the chief medical examiner's decision in the courtroom. For his testimony, the chief medical examiner put on a pair of latex gloves and placed Ms. Gladue's body part on a projector for the jury to observe from a three-metre screen in the courtroom.<sup>218</sup>

Although they stated it would permit the jury to see the injury more clearly, it would appear there was no legal precedent for bringing Ms. Gladue's remains to court. This must not become the new status quo in our courtrooms. The deceased in most jurisdictions across Canada have the right to determine if their organs are harvested upon death, but their explicit consent is needed.<sup>219</sup> There is no reason why a victim of extraordinary violence should not be afforded the same consideration in death. Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples should be allowed to maintain that autonomy over their bodies, even in death.

### **Lack of Support**

The lack of victim and family support throughout our judicial process is yet another failure of our Canadian justice system. As an example, *R v Barton* does an unfortunately good job at displaying the

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<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*: para 85.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*: para 123.

<sup>212</sup> *Criminal Code*, R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46.

<sup>213</sup> *R v Barton*, supra note 31 at para 92.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*: para 109.

<sup>217</sup> Morin, Brandi. "'I've Never Even Put Her to Rest Yet ...' Cindy Gladue's Mom Waits to Hear of Appeal." APTN News. April 25, 2019. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://aptnnews.ca/2017/03/07/ive-never-even-put-her-to-rest-yet-cindy-gladues-mom-waits-to-hear-of-appeal/>.

<sup>218</sup> Elliott, Candace. "'This Was Demeaning': Body Part as Evidence in Cindy Gladue Murder Trial Comes under Fire." National Post. March 30, 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/this-was-demeaning-body-part-as-evidence-in-cindy-gladue-murder-trial-comes-under-fire>.

<sup>219</sup> "Consent for Organ Donation in Canada." January 23, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://hillnotes.ca/2018/01/23/consent-for-organ-donation-in-canada/>.

shortcomings of our justice system. In this case, there was a lack of support for Ms. Gladue's family throughout the entire process from a legal perspective.

Support comes in many forms; there are victim services that vary by province, such as the Vulnerable Victims and Family Fund<sup>220</sup> in Ontario or the Family Information Liaison Unit<sup>221</sup> in Alberta. Despite these many options upon which victims and families may rely to access information and assistance they need, they often lack cultural consideration and don't offer an entirely well-rounded support to individuals. It is integral for support persons to be available throughout the process; however, it is also necessary that information is provided to victims from the perspective of police and the Crown's office as to the status and inner workings of the trial. Furthermore, it may be difficult for families and victims to access any of the supports that are offered for a variety of reasons including location, lack of financial support, lack of internet, etc.

During the trial process for Ms. Gladue's family, it appeared there was no one from the Crown's office taking the time to consciously discuss what was going on at the various levels of trial with her family, which should be at the heart of any criminal justice process and ultimate conviction. There was in fact very limited communication. This was evident as Ms. Gladue's mother made it clear to the Crown at trial that she did not want to see any photographs of her daughter that might be unsettling.<sup>222</sup> Despite this simple request, Ms. McLeod witnessed a photograph of her daughter lying in a bathtub surrounded by blood.<sup>223</sup> She further attested that throughout the entirety of the trial, she "sat through a lot of stuff" of similar nature.<sup>224</sup> This is an unacceptable standard in our justice system and is by no means ethically sound.

Ms. McLeod also attended her daughter's trial, for the most part, alone.<sup>225</sup> Had it not been for the assistance of Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, upon being made aware of the situation, the family would have been left without meaningful or Métis specific support and ultimately would have had to endure the remainder of this painful case alone. This is unacceptable. This needs to change.

## Next Steps

With such grim experiences endured by Métis women in the Canadian justice system, it is difficult at times to view a clear path forward with such hurt and blatant disregard leading the way. However, it is integral that we identify what needs to change and begin the work towards fixing this colonial system so that no other woman, girl, member of the LGBTQ2S+ community or family is forced to go through a process not truly made for Métis people to survive in. This system has broken many spirits, but through education and partnership, there may be a way to improve it.

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<sup>220</sup> "Programs and Services for Victims of Crime." Ministry of the Attorney General. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.attorneygeneral.jus.gov.on.ca/english/ovss/programs.php>.

<sup>221</sup> Alberta, "Family Information Liaison Unit", online: <<https://www.alberta.ca/family-information-liaison-unit.aspx>>.

<sup>222</sup> Morin, Brandi. "'I've Never Even Put Her to Rest Yet ...' Cindy Gladue's Mom Waits to Hear of Appeal." APTN News. April 25, 2019. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://aptnnews.ca/2017/03/07/ive-never-even-put-her-to-rest-yet-cindy-gladues-mom-waits-to-hear-of-appeal/>.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Consultation and Partnerships**

Fundamentally, our justice system needs to acknowledge its flaws and understand that assistance is required in order to better the system as a whole. This starts with recognizing that there may be other stakeholders, organizations, and governments who have a better understanding of what their communities' needs are and inviting them to the table to provide support.

Consulting with Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak and the Métis Governing Members by way of partnerships should also be considered. Consultation with the Métis Nation could serve to ensure culturally appropriate support for Métis families and victims going through the Canadian justice system and any related processes. This meaningful support could help ensure that no family is left uncertain of what to expect in a courtroom. Since the justice system can be a daunting environment for anyone who isn't familiar with it, it is important to include supports that are familiar and reassuring to the individuals going through the process.

As we have well understood, consultation with Indigenous people and more specifically Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples is critical within our society and government. There is absolutely no reason why our court systems cannot act in accordance of this where permissible, such as in supporting victims and families. Committing to partnering with Métis stakeholders could ensure there are no further missteps within our justice system.

### **Education**

Ultimately, it is integral that we educate all the practitioners in Canadian justice systems, both current and future. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action<sup>226</sup> 27-28 addressed the issue of educating the actors in our Canadian justice system. They read as follows:

27. We call upon the Federation of Law Societies of Canada to ensure that lawyers receive appropriate cultural competency training, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

28. We call upon law schools in Canada to require all law students to take a course in Aboriginal people and the law, which includes the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and antiracism.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*: para 27-28.

Call to Action 27 addresses the issue of educating individual actors in the justice system who are already working in the field.<sup>228</sup> This is integral as there are many legal practitioners working with Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples and other Indigenous people everyday who may maintain certain biases, whether conscious or unconscious. Providing training across the board could assist in ensuring situations as outlined earlier never occur again. It is important however, that we go even further and educate our current judges who are determining these cases as well.

Call to Action 28 addresses the issue of educating our future legal practitioners. This education is truly critical at this time in our country. If upcoming lawyers are not receiving training in understanding Indigenous peoples or their clients, then these terrible errors will continue within our justice system.

Despite these Calls to Action, there is a great deal of work to be done to meet them by an acceptable standard. These Calls to Action are not a quick fix. All students, lawyers, and judges will need to give more than just a brief thought to these issues. Changing the functions of our legal system will take time, diligence, and ensuring Métis and other Indigenous people are taking on roles to assist in enforcing this standard of treatment should be inherent. It is also important that any training include proper information on all Indigenous Nations across Canada, including the Métis.

To conclude, there are a few major issues facing Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples in today's Canadian justice system. There is a lack of identity data readily and willingly available regarding Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples who have fallen victims to violence. This can potentially be mitigated, should the provincial police as well as RCMP across Canada work with stakeholders and rights-holders to understand the relevant circumstances of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ peoples. Data collection could be done by obtaining relevant statistics on Métis populations such as identity data as well as other social locators while conducting regular business. This collection should be supported through meaningful policy and could be developed nation-wide.

We have now observed the appalling mistreatment of Métis women, girls, LGBTQ2S+ peoples and their families in the Canadian justice system. We know there is a lack of effective and well-rounded support for Métis during judicial processes. These issues may be addressed through meaningful consultation and partnerships with Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak as well as the Governing Members of the Métis Nation. This process would ensure Métis voices are heard and ultimately listened to, which could lead to better court experiences. Furthermore, education is a critical step to address the recent mistakes committed within our justice system. If legal practitioners do not have any knowledge base from which to start, they will certainly not improve upon the treatment of Métis women and families, nor will they be capable of providing culturally sensitive support for them. Acknowledging errors is important; however, approaching them with mutual respect will create meaningful change.

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<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*

## Anti-Racism & Métis Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People

### Introduction

The Métis Nation is one of three distinct groups of Indigenous peoples in Canada. We have our own history, customs, laws, language, culture and traditions. Métis women are vibrant, strong, resilient and resourceful and are the backbone of the Métis Nation. Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, operating as Women of the Métis Nation, is the national voice of Métis women across the Homeland, which includes the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario.

Historically, the Métis Nation has struggled for recognition as a distinct Indigenous nation. It is only recently that the federal government has prioritized the recognition of the Métis Nation. In December 2016, the Métis Nation was recognized with the establishment of a permanent bi-lateral mechanism between the Government of Canada and leaders of the Métis Nation. On April 13<sup>th</sup> 2017, the Métis Nation and the Government of Canada signed an Accord which formalized this agreement. Both the bi-lateral mechanism and Accord bring the Métis Nation one step closer to a Nation-to-Nation governing approach. As Prime Minister Trudeau stated, we are now “partners in Confederation” and for the first time ever, the Métis Nation is working with Canada as a partner rather than as an adversary.<sup>229</sup>

However, despite this progress, Métis women, girls and gender diverse people continue to experience a unique form of racism due to their distinct historical contexts and the ongoing systemic discrimination perpetuated by Canadian governmental policies and practices. Métis women, girls and gender diverse people experience racism not only because of their Indigeneity but also because of a multitude of other identity factors including, but not limited to, gender identity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, age, geographic location, level of education, and physical and/or mental ability. These layered experiences of discrimination and racism stem from the historical mistreatment of Indigenous Peoples by the Government of Canada as mentioned earlier in this report.

### Key Themes

This paper is a response to inform the Government of Canada’s public engagement on racism in Canada through the “Cross-Country Conversation on Anti-Racism”. Métis women, girls and gender diverse people experience racism in a variety of interconnected ways; it is impossible to address all forms of racism in one document and many of these forms of racism are outside of the scope of this paper. The focus of this paper will be around three key themes: *Employment & Income Support*, *Social Participation*, and *Justice*.

### Employment & Income Support

As a result of Métis experiences of the residential school system and racism encountered when accessing services, Métis women often experience distinct gaps in income and income support. There also exist

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<sup>229</sup> Métis National Council. "Canada and the Métis Nation." YouTube. October 24, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=613&v=Clfzn7WCopA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=613&v=Clfzn7WCopA).  
Métis National Council. "Canada and the Métis Nation." YouTube. October 24, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=613&v=Clfzn7WCopA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=613&v=Clfzn7WCopA).

distinct gaps in educational attainment, unemployment rates and median incomes between Métis women and men, and between Métis women and non-Indigenous women for the same reasons. Métis women (32.3% in 2006 and later 18.4% in 2011) are much more likely than non-Indigenous women (11% in 2011) to drop out of high school before completion. Métis men and women drop out for different reasons; men are more likely to leave for work and women are more likely to leave for personal or family-related reasons, such as a lack of childcare services or caring for a dependent family member. Indigenous women also have higher fertility rates when compared to non-Indigenous women in Canada, meaning they are more likely to limit their education or employment opportunities due to limited childcare services and other family needs.

Métis women have higher labour force participation rates (65.9%) and employment rates (59.6%) than non-Indigenous women (61.7% and 57.3%, respectively) in Canada. Métis women (9.6%) have higher unemployment rates than non-Indigenous women (7.2%). The median annual income for Métis women is approximately \$19,289 which is about \$5,500 less than non-Indigenous women and \$3,600 less than Indigenous men. Additionally, employment rates and median annual income of Métis women increase with higher levels of education. Younger Métis women have higher levels of education than older Métis women; therefore, Métis women are demonstrating strength and resilience by closing these attainment gaps in spite of service gaps that still exist.<sup>230</sup>

Traditionally, Métis people have been excluded from Indigenous childcare programs, which only targeted First Nations on-reserve and northern Inuit communities.<sup>231</sup> As mentioned previously, the lack of childcare availability disproportionately impacts Métis women because these women are more likely to leave school or employment to care for children and family. Recently, Early Learning and Childcare (ELCC) has been identified as one of the priorities of the Métis Nation.<sup>232</sup>

In September 2018, the Government of Canada released the Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare Framework and announced new funding for Métis ELCC. This document was co-developed with the Métis Nation and has a section dedicated to Métis ELCC that identifies the principles, goals, practices and strategies for creating accessible and culturally-relevant ELCC programming for Métis communities and families.<sup>233</sup> While the Framework and funding announcement is a step in the right direction, longitudinal tracking of each initiative funded is required to ascertain efficacy on how the new approach and funding will impact grass-roots Métis women.

Several initiatives have also been implemented by governments and employers to try to reduce discrimination in the workplace. One common initiative is the introduction of cultural awareness or competency training opportunities, especially in the field of healthcare. The goal of the training is to reduce and ultimately eliminate discrimination against Indigenous peoples by teaching service providers about their own biases and debunking stereotypes about various Indigenous communities. While the goal behind cultural awareness or competency training is admirable, there is very little empirical evidence on

<sup>230</sup> Arriagada, Paula. "First Nations, Métis and Inuit Women." Statistics Canada. February 23, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.pdf?st=6NeR5zWM>

<sup>231</sup> "MNC Recommendations for ASETS Renewal." Métis National Council. March 2015. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://www.Metisnation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/MNC-Report4-Recommendations-1.pdf>

<sup>232</sup> Métis National Council. "Canada and the Métis Nation." YouTube. October 24, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=613&v=Clfn7WCopA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=613&v=Clfn7WCopA).

<sup>233</sup> "Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework." Employment and Social Development Canada. September 17, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/indigenous-early-learning/2018-framework.html>.

the effectiveness of these programs. A multitude of studies conducted in the healthcare field question the effectiveness of cultural competency training.<sup>234</sup> One study in particular notes that there is limited review of the effectiveness of this type of training, beyond self-reporting mechanisms which can be subject to a variety of biases.<sup>235</sup> Therefore, it is essential make training initiatives adhere to distinctions-based knowledge of Métis people and to find better ways of evaluating cultural competency training programs to ensure they are effective in reducing discrimination of Métis women, girls and gender diverse people.

## Social Participation

Despite Métis people waging an ongoing battle for recognition, the government's historic and continued denial of the Métis Nation as a distinct group of Indigenous peoples has caused immeasurable damage. It is because of this lack of recognition that whole generations of Métis people have been invisible to the world. Indeed, the term “hiding in plain sight” is a fitting description of the Métis reality.

Historically within federal legislation and program delivery, it has been easier to omit Métis identification in development and design, forcing Métis people to instead navigate provincial jurisdictions in attempts to receive incredibly low “project” funding to meet their basic needs. Jurisdictional issues have always been a barrier to the Métis Nation's social participation. The most impactful action the government can take to combat racism against Métis people is to ensure their inherent rights are affirmed and recognized.

Government policies, programs and services must also migrate from a pan-Indigenous approach to a distinction-based approach that fully reflects the unique realities of Métis, First Nations and Inuit women. When a distinctions-based approach and the recognition of Métis rights across all jurisdictional levels are both applied, Métis women will have more positive experiences when navigating these systems, systems which previously saw to their outright exclusion.

With the new permanent bi-lateral mechanisms in place to facilitate a Nation-to-Nation relationship between Canada and the Métis Nation, Métis women will finally have the ability to highlight their own stories on their own terms. They will speak to their experiences and the unique situations of Métis women and girls in Canada. Facilitating the full social participation of Métis women in both Métis and Canadian governance structures in this way will ensure that Métis women have improved outcomes, including reduced experiences of racism.

Sustainable capacity and long-reaching program funding is also required to ensure that proper programs and services exist for Métis women, to ensure there is enough space in these programs for the Métis women who need them and to ensure Métis women's unique perspectives and voices drive any and all considerations that may impact their health.<sup>236</sup> Métis women's participation in policy design must start from the ground up; they must be included in the planning and implementation phases of policy to ensure their realities are not considered merely as afterthoughts.

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<sup>234</sup> Clifford, Anton, Janya Mccalman, Roxanne Bainbridge, and Komla Tsey. "Interventions to Improve Cultural Competency in Health Care for Indigenous Peoples of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA: A Systematic Review." *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 27, no. 2 (2015): 89-98.

<sup>235</sup> Truong, Mandy, Yin Paradies, and Naomi Priest. "Interventions to Improve Cultural Competency in Healthcare: A Systematic Review of Reviews." *BMC Health Services Research* 14, no. 1 (2014).

<sup>236</sup> “Pathways to Improving Health and Well-being for Indigenous Peoples: How living conditions decide health.” National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. Accessed on June 05, 2019. [https://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/495/Pathways\\_to\\_Improving\\_Well-being\\_for\\_Indigenous\\_Peoples\\_How\\_living\\_conditions\\_decide\\_health\\_nccah?id=102](https://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/495/Pathways_to_Improving_Well-being_for_Indigenous_Peoples_How_living_conditions_decide_health_nccah?id=102)

At the heart of the Métis Nation are Métis women. Métis women have always been equal partners in the development and life of Métis communities. They were and are fully engaged in the political, social, and economic life of the Métis Nation. Métis women have always held the honoured role as traditional knowledge keepers and have been accorded respect and held in high esteem by the Métis Nation. Colonialist constructs have impacted the traditional roles of Métis women, thereby altering Métis women's roles in their families and communities.

## Justice

For many Métis women, the circumstances leading to their involvement in the criminal justice system is the result of a complex set of collective and individual life circumstances, marked with systemic discrimination, violence, and poverty. This has led to “the current crisis of highly disproportionate rates of Aboriginal women in the Canadian Federal Corrections system.”<sup>237</sup>

According to Mandy Wesley's report, Indigenous peoples “account for 4% of the Canadian population; however, within the federal corrections population, Aboriginal peoples comprise 20% of the total incarcerated offender population.”<sup>238</sup> Between 1998 and 2008, the number of federally incarcerated Indigenous women increased by 131%.<sup>239</sup> Conversely, Indigenous women are also much more likely to be the victims of violent crimes.<sup>240</sup> The overrepresentation of Métis women in the justice system is a direct result of the discrimination these women face.

Discriminatory practices within policing have led to this overrepresentation crisis. One of these police practices is carding which, in its execution, has directly targeted Métis men and women. Carding is a practice where police officers ask for identification and record information on an individual without the individual having committed any offence or crime. In multiple studies it has been proven that this practice targets racialized and marginalized communities disproportionately. For example, in British Columbia, 15% of all carding incidents between 2008 and 2017 targeted Indigenous people, even though Indigenous people only make up 2% of the population in this region.<sup>241</sup> Even more troubling, carding practices do not actually deter crime and only serve to perpetuate racism against marginalized communities.<sup>242</sup> Additionally, police services in Canada refuse to recognize racial bias as a problem in their practices and policies, and police are not required to record racial data in their reports, making it even more difficult for Indigenous people and advocates to push for change in policing practices.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Wesley, Mandy. “Marginalized: The Aboriginal Women's experience in Federal Corrections” Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrcts/pblctns/mrgnlzd/mrgnlzd-eng.pdf>

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> Mann, Michelle. “Good Intentions, Disappointing Results: A Progress Report on Federal Aboriginal Corrections” Accessed on June 05, 2019.: <http://www.oci-bec.gc.ca/cnt/comm/presentations/presentationsPRAC-RESCFA-eng.aspx>

<sup>240</sup> “Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.” Research and Statistics Division of Justice Canada. Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/jf-pf/2017/docs/jan02.pdf>

<sup>241</sup> Payne, Jason. “Racial Profiling Cited as Groups Demand Probe into Vancouver Police Carding.” Vancouver Sun. June 15, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/racial-profiling-cited-as-groups-demand-probe-into-vancouver-police-carding>

<sup>242</sup> Tulloch, Michael H. “Report of the Independent Street Checks Review.” Accessed on June 05, 2019 <http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/sites/default/files/content/mcscs/docs/StreetChecks.pdf>

<sup>243</sup> Ireland, Nicole. “Canadian Police Must Acknowledge Racial Bias to Fix It, Indigenous Advocates Say.” CBCnews. September 26, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/police-racial-bias-aboriginal-canada-1.3761884>

One initiative that is designed to mitigate the systemic racism faced by Indigenous people in the justice system is the use of a Gladue report. This approach to sentencing and bail hearings allows judges to consider sentencing alternatives to incarceration when appropriate.<sup>244</sup> Although this initiative is aimed at reducing the number of incarcerated Indigenous people, the effectiveness of Gladue has been called into question by various research reports. For example, the Research and Statistics division of Justice Canada noted in its report that in British Columbia, “representatives stated that independent reports are prepared rarely because (1) most judges are not familiar with the availability of this type of report; (2) most judges believe that pre-sentence reports will include all the information relevant to Gladue; and (3) funding for this type of report is very limited.”<sup>245</sup> For Gladue to be effective, judges must receive adequate training and Gladue must be fully funded so that all Indigenous people involved in the justice system can be considered.

When Métis women are incarcerated, there is limited access to culturally-relevant programming. It is evident that Métis women are not receiving the supports they need while incarcerated, as the only programming available is pan-Indigenous and preference is given to First Nations women over Métis and Inuit women. The 2009-2010 figures from the Aboriginal Initiatives Directorate indicate that no Inuit women were receiving programming and that Métis women were participating in only Indigenous-specific programming. Furthermore, the average wait time for a Métis woman to enter into in Aboriginal specific programming was 264 days from the date of admission, whereas the average wait time for a First Nations woman was 238 days.<sup>246</sup> Even more alarming, Indigenous women are more likely to have a higher security classification, to have force used against them, to be segregated and to be denied parole once inside prison walls.<sup>247</sup> All of the above mentioned factors are part of the discrimination that Métis women face within the justice system.

## Conclusion

Métis women, girls and gender diverse people continue to experience racism even today and disaggregated data regarding Métis women, girls and gender diverse people is sparse at best, resulting in many gaps in services and programs for them and continued institutionalized racism.

Research and data regarding Métis women, girls and gender diverse people can be used to support evidence-based recommendations to meet the distinct needs and circumstances of Métis women and girls. The Government of Canada must create a standard data collection tool that reflects the unique and intersectional realities of all Canadians, and use this data to develop strategies to address systemic human rights issues such as racism, and to monitor and measure the effectiveness of these strategies. Race and gender-based data analysis can highlight how the intersection of systemic inequality and discriminatory practices faced by Métis women and girls reinforces disadvantage. Deciding to commit to collecting and

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<sup>244</sup> “Gladue and Aboriginal Sentencing.” Justice Education Society. Accessed June 05, 2019.

<https://www.justiceeducation.ca/about-us/research/gladue-and-aboriginal-sentencing>

<sup>245</sup> “Gladue Practices in the Provinces and Territories.” Research and Statistics Division Department of Justice Canada. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/ccs-ajc/rr12\\_11/rr12\\_11.pdf](https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/ccs-ajc/rr12_11/rr12_11.pdf)

<sup>246</sup> Wesley, Mandy. “Marginalized: The Aboriginal Women’s experience in Federal Corrections” Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/mrgnlzd/mrgnlzd-eng.pdf>

<sup>247</sup> Pate, Kim. “Increasing Over-representation of Indigenous Women in Canadian Prisons.” Senate of Canada. Accessed on June 05, 2019. <https://sencanada.ca/en/speeches/speech-by-senator-pate-increasing-over-representation-indigenous-women-canadian-prisons-inquiry-debate-concluded/>

making available disaggregated data is only one step towards dismantling systemic barriers, but it is an essential one.

Community stakeholders must also sit at the table to ensure that this data is interpreted appropriately; there needs to be more opportunities for Métis women stakeholders to co-create solutions to reduce the systemic barriers that Métis women and girls face.<sup>248</sup> Métis women have demonstrated immense strength in the face of overwhelming discrimination. Despite all of the systemic barriers they face, they are determined to continue to work towards cultural revitalization.

Métis women's resilience is based on self-reliance, autonomy and independence. Métis women have their own way of doing things which is one part of how they express their distinct identities as Métis people.<sup>249</sup> As an organization, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak demonstrates this resilience; its very name is Métis, or Michif, for the women who own themselves. Métis women's resilience is grounded in cultural values that have persisted despite continued systemic discrimination and racism. These values continue to emerge through the cultural revitalization that Métis women are working towards every day.

## Pop Culture

### Introduction

During discussions at LFMO's Expert Research Team, there were conversations surrounding the negative portrayal of Indigenous women in popular culture. The Elder in the working group pointed out that even in her own home, where she teaches traditional values and healthy ways of being to her grandchildren, her grandchildren are absorbing harmful stereotypes about women through their consumption of popular culture (such as television, movies and video games). The group agreed that it is important to highlight how negative stereotypes within mass media can contribute to the dehumanization of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people. Negative stereotyping and the dehumanization of Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people create an environment where these women are disposable in the eyes of society and the disappearances or deaths are normalized. This normalization is a factor that cannot be ignored when looking at the epidemic of MMIWG.

### Media, Toxic Masculinity and Violence Against Indigenous Women

MMIWG is not an issue that can be solved by looking at Indigenous communities alone. There is a broader connection to the society in which we live that must be examined. Gender-based violence does not exist in a vacuum, but is created by narratives within society at large. Society perpetuates narratives of whiteness, masculinity, and heteronormativity as the norms or standards of human behaviour. These narratives are maintained through popular culture and media representations. When colonizers and settlers were arriving to the 'New World' they documented the peoples they encountered in travel tales and adventure novels. These representations characterized Indigenous peoples as 'savages' 'uncivilized' and 'hyper-sexualized' in comparison to European society. Europeans imposed hierarchy through colonial domination and Indigenous peoples were (and still are) seen as disposable or dehumanized.

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<sup>248</sup> Beggin, Miranda. "Race and Data: Identifying Race-based Disparities." Accessed June 05, 2019.

<https://www.thirdsectorcap.org/blog/identifying-race-based-disparities/>

<sup>249</sup> Kirmayer, Laurence J., Stéphane Dandeneau, Elizabeth Marshall, Morgan Kahentonni Phillips, and Karla Jessen Williamson. "Rethinking Resilience from Indigenous Perspectives." *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 56, no. 2 (2011): 84-91.

These representations have been maintained through different forms of media and into present day. Media representations often depict the prominent ideologies within society at large. Indigenous peoples still face discrimination in society and this is often reflected in the way various forms of media and popular culture tell stories about Indigenous peoples. Fantasy novels, film (and specifically the classic Western genre), television, news, and video games all continue to perpetuate toxic masculinity, systemic racism, patriarchy and settler colonial narratives as mechanisms of power and control over Indigenous peoples.

Video games have become one of the most consumed mediums today and this has greatly influenced how youth (and, to a growing extent, adults) understand society at large. Michael Kimmel notes that video games are of particular interest when examining media biases because of the level of consumption: video games outsell movies and other mediums without question and the average teenage boy plays 13 hours of video games weekly (with teenage girls playing an average of 5 hours weekly).<sup>250</sup> In fact, because video games exist in a society characterized by hierarchically arranged categories of race, class, gender and sexuality, these virtual worlds ultimately assume the same normative framework that privileges young white heterosexual masculinity and subjugates or represses anything else.<sup>251</sup> The level of consumption paired with the normative framework of privilege and subjugation means that youth (and adults) are being subjected to toxic messages about gender, race, sexuality, and indigeneity. These messages contribute to the continued dehumanization of Indigenous women, which cannot be detangled from the gender-based violence Indigenous women face including the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls.

The labelling of video games as toys trivializes them. The lack of seriousness attached to the medium has created the rhetoric that video games are boy's spaces where "boys will be boys".<sup>252</sup> As Kimmel points out, video games are just one of many mediums that boys are consuming, paired with music, television, radio, and pornography, in which the dominant emotions being mirrored to young men are anger and vengeance.<sup>253</sup> According to Kimmel, what is most problematic about the use of entertainment mediums as an escape from reality is that "the fantasy world of media is an escape *from* reality and an escape *to* reality – the 'reality' that many of these guys would secretly like to inhabit".<sup>254</sup> Video games can be seen as a tool of empowerment to these men and boys that often feel their lives don't live up to standards of masculinity or the "Guy Code." In this way, the virtual world may allow them to create a fantasy version of their self that displays no weakness and is always in control. Furthermore, Kimmel states, "For women to enter this virtual men's locker room is unacceptable".<sup>255</sup> Video games provide an escape that turns back the clock to a time where men ruled and no one challenged it.<sup>256</sup> The virtual men's locker room, as Kimmel so aptly illustrates with his metaphor, has created a climate in the game where gender-based violence is cultivated.

<sup>250</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008.

<sup>251</sup> Embrick, David G., J. Talmadge. Wright, and András Lukács. *Social Exclusion, Power, and Video Game Play: New Research in Digital Media and Technology*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

<sup>252</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008; Embrick, David G., J. Talmadge. Wright, and András Lukács. *Social Exclusion, Power, and Video Game Play: New Research in Digital Media and Technology*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014; Shaw, Adrienne. "Do You Identify as a Gamer? Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Gamer Identity." *New Media & Society* 14, no. 1 (2011): 28-44.

<sup>253</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*: 150.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*: 155.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

Diverse female representations are almost non-existent and negative tropes and stereotypes about women are the norm in video game worlds.<sup>257</sup> Negative tropes and stereotypes create an environment where women are dehumanized and violence against them is normalized. Gender-based violence is a common topic in analyses of video game content and violent behaviour of players.<sup>258</sup> The imagery in video games often depicts the physical, emotional and sexual abuse of women. When players interact with one another online there the narrative of gender-based violence continues, as demonstrated clearly by the #GamerGate phenomenon that began in 2014.<sup>259</sup> Often, sexual abuse of women is glamorized and that it is especially problematic in extremely popular mainstream games like *Grand Theft Auto* that reach billions of gamers.<sup>260</sup>

However, as Kimmel notes, the “monkey see monkey do” mentality does not interrogate the larger complexities involved in understanding the effects of games.<sup>261</sup> Jackson Katz echoes these concerns in the documentary film *Tough Guise 2*, stating that violent video games (and other pop culture products) are often blamed by the media and general public in instances of mass shootings, while ignoring that even as video games are played by people of many different identity categories, these acts of violence are being committed by primarily white heterosexual men.<sup>262</sup> Therefore, the issue of violence in video games cannot be understood outside the context of toxic masculinity, systemic racism, patriarchy and settler colonialism.

Systemic racism is also present in popular culture and contributes to the dehumanization of Indigenous women. There is much debate around the use of racial imagery in popular mediums, because arguments focus on the intentions of the author or producers failing “to acknowledge how issues of racism, which are embedded in the fabric of Western society, penetrate these mediums and reflect the dominant racial ideologies rather than individual intent”.<sup>263</sup> In video games, the evil avatars are racialized through stereotypes including their dress, design and the environment; moreover, the animal-like features these characters are given further serve as mechanisms of dehumanization, whereas the white races or good guys are considered heroic and brilliant, allowing them the exclusive title of full humanity.<sup>264</sup> Similarly, other realms such as film and television reproduce similar tropes and stereotypes

Whiteness gives the status of individualism, whereas racialized bodies are seen as parts of groups and this dynamic deflects any “charges of group-based blame or undue privilege for whites while at the same time engendering stereotypical, group-level interpretations of acts committed by racial minorities”.<sup>265</sup> This

<sup>257</sup> Shaw, Adrienne. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

<sup>258</sup> Gutiérrez, Enrique Javier Díez. "Video Games and Gender-based Violence." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 132 (2014): 58-64; Yao, Mike Z., Chad Mahood, and Daniel Linz. "Sexual Priming, Gender Stereotyping, and Likelihood to Sexually Harass: Examining the Cognitive Effects of Playing a Sexually-Explicit Video Game." *Sex Roles* 62, no. 1-2 (2009): 77-88.

<sup>259</sup> Quinn, Zoe. *Crash Override How to Save the Internet from Itself*. Touchstone Books, 2016.

<sup>260</sup> Gutiérrez, Enrique Javier Díez. "Video Games and Gender-based Violence." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 132 (2014): 58-64.

<sup>261</sup> Kimmel, Michael S. *Guyland: The Perilous World Where Boys Become Men*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2008: 152.

<sup>262</sup> Katz, Jackson. *Tough guise 2: Violence, manhood & American culture*. Media Education Foundation, 2013.

<sup>263</sup> Ritsema, J., and B. K. Thakore. "Incere Fictions of Whiteness in Virtual Worlds: How Fantasy Massively Multiplayer Online Games Perpetuate Color-blind White Supremacist Ideology." In *Social Exclusion, Power, and Video Game Play: New Research in Digital Media and Technology*, 141-54. Lanham: Lexington Books.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>265</sup> Dietrich, D. "Worlds of whiteness: Race and character creation in online games." In *Social exclusion, power, and video game play: New research in digital media and technology*, 101-116. Lanham: Lexington Books.

solidifies the interpretation that it is the nature of racial minorities to act in a deviant way; while at the same time white people that behave in a similar way are loners or unusual individuals acting on impulse.<sup>266</sup> In this way, Dietrich argues that media representations act as a platform for normative whiteness.<sup>267</sup>

There are some examples of games that very obviously portray Indigenous people in a negative and stereotypical way. One of the most horrifying examples of this is *Custer's Revenge* (1982). This game has been called the worst and most offensive game in history.<sup>268</sup> As Shaw describes that game has "overlapping offenses of sexual violence, misogyny, racism, sexism, and colonialism".<sup>269</sup> The main character is based on George Armstrong Custer, a United States Army cavalry commander.<sup>270</sup> Custer spearheaded the US government's genocidal Indian policy.<sup>271</sup> He fought in the Indian Wars and participated in the genocide of thousands of Indigenous peoples in America and was made into a hero when he was killed at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.<sup>272</sup>

The game is not even about military strategy, but instead about the domination and dehumanization of Indigenous women. This game requires that the player navigate the naked Custer and his erect penis through a field (where arrows come towards the general) towards a Native American woman (named *Revenge*) who is bound by rope to a post on the other side of your screen.<sup>273</sup> The promotional literature that came with the game states "When he gets there he 'evens up an old score,'" and he does this by raping the woman.<sup>274</sup> Shaw aptly critiques this game when she states: "This game is also part of the game industry's long-standing tradition of commercializing women's bodies for a heterosexual, male gaze. It is a celebration of colonial violence and sexual violence, genocide and misogyny." <sup>275</sup>

Rockstar Games popular series *Red Dead* (*Revolver* 2004, *Redemption* 2010 and *Redemption 2* 2018) are more current examples of the portrayal Indigenous people in a negative, stereotypical way. These games all take place in the 'Wild West' during colonial expansion in North America. They are based on colonial narratives of frontier and domination. Sara Humphreys notes that "hierarchy of national identities – which is informed by racial, gendered and economic status and comprised the cultural field of the United States [and Canada] – can remain entrenched thanks, in part, to the articulation of frontier ideologies in *Red Dead Redemption*."<sup>276</sup> She describes tropes of 'the noble savage' and 'primitivism' are strung throughout

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<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> Shaw, Adrienne. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015; Plunkett, Luke. "Rape, Racism & Repetition: This Is Probably the Worst Game Ever Made." Kotaku. June 20, 2013. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://kotaku.com/rape-racism-repetition-this-is-probably-the-worst-g-5847507>.

<sup>269</sup> Shaw, Adrienne. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015: 20.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>271</sup> Plunkett, Luke. "Rape, Racism & Repetition: This Is Probably the Worst Game Ever Made." Kotaku. June 20, 2013. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://kotaku.com/rape-racism-repetition-this-is-probably-the-worst-g-5847507>.

<sup>272</sup> Shaw, Adrienne. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015; Plunkett, Luke. "Rape, Racism & Repetition: This Is Probably the Worst Game Ever Made." Kotaku. June 20, 2013. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://kotaku.com/rape-racism-repetition-this-is-probably-the-worst-g-5847507>.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> Shaw, Adrienne. *Gaming at the Edge: Sexuality and Gender at the Margins of Gamer Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015: 21.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*: 22.

<sup>276</sup> Humphreys, Sara. "Rejuvenating "Eternal Inequality" on the Digital Frontiers of *Red Dead Redemption*." *Western American Literature* 47, no. 2 (2012): 200-15.

the game's narrative.<sup>277</sup> Additionally, Red Dead Redemption 2 continues this narrative with “mournful flutes of native suffering”, “a man riding with a hog-tied woman in the back of his horse”, and a suffragette being “punched, lassoed, killed by an alligator and stamped on by a player” as a part of the overall story.<sup>278</sup>

Custer's Revenge and the Red Dead series are only two examples of many troubling representations of colonialism in popular culture and video games. Custer's Revenge is considered to be pornographic and for adults only. While this may be the case, this does not excuse the sexual and colonial violence it portrays. Moreover, Rockstar Games are well known for satirizing American culture. But the lack of historical context surrounding structural discrimination against Indigenous peoples makes this satirical portrayal problematic.<sup>279</sup> The games normalize ‘uncivilized’ and Indigenous peoples as tantamount which maintains the systemic discrimination of Indigenous peoples in society at large. Both games contribute to the normative framework that privileges young white heterosexual masculinity and subjugates and represses anything else, including Indigenous peoples and more specifically, Indigenous women.

## Conclusion

As previously stated, society perpetuates narratives of whiteness, (toxic) masculinity, and heteronormativity as the norms or standards of human behaviour. These narratives are maintained through popular culture, media representations and more specifically, video games. Representations of Indigenous peoples reproduce dehumanizing tropes that have been around since the beginning of colonization. Games create narratives that describe Indigenous peoples as ‘savages’ ‘uncivilized’ and ‘hyper-sexualized’. Indigenous peoples are seen as disposable and this is a contributing factor in the gender-based violence that Indigenous women experience today.

## Database

### OVERVIEW

Various attempts at recording and cataloging instances of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people. Each database has unique methodologies and use different identifiers as to what and how information is tracked. It is impossible to assess the number of missing and murdered from the Métis Nation as they are often misidentified as “other Aboriginal” or “non-Aboriginal.” The review of existing databases points to the need for a distinct data collection method for tracking missing and murdered Métis women and girls and LGBTQ2S+ people.

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<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>278</sup> Martin, Gareth Damian. "The Cynical Politics of Red Dead Redemption 2's Symbolic Violence." Frieze. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://frieze.com/article/cynical-politics-red-dead-redemption-2s-symbolic-violence>.

<sup>279</sup> Gray, Kishonna L. *Race, Gender, and Deviance in Xbox Live: Theoretical Perspectives from the Virtual Margins*. London: Routledge, 2016.

## EXISTING DATABASES

### Sisters In Spirit Database

#### Overview

Sisters in Spirit (“SIS”) was the first government-funded database featuring cases of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. The SIS was a research, education, and policy initiative that was developed by Indigenous women for Indigenous women. This database was funded through the Status of Women Canada (“SWC”) until 2010 at which time, the government discontinued its funding. The first phase of this project involved conducting ongoing research that gathered statistical information on violence against Indigenous women.<sup>280</sup>

As a result of this research, Native Women’s Association of Canada (“NWAC”) created a report called “Voices of Our Sisters in Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities” 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, which was published in March 2009. This report discussed in detail the database outlined above.

In addition to this report, NWAC has also organized vigils and compiled a list of life stories which contribute to a deeper and more personal understanding of the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. These stories are housed on their website under the “Sisters In Spirit” tab and under “Life Stories”.<sup>281</sup>

#### Content

The SIS database contained more than 200 variables and there were more than 582 women and girls detected in Canada who were entered into the database. Throughout the entire project, the families were at the forefront, ensuring that their experiences and recommendations were documented during the process.<sup>282</sup> The database contains a great deal of secondary research information which includes newspaper articles, other news sources, reported court decisions, as well as RCMP, provincial, and municipal law enforcement websites.<sup>283</sup> It also included information such as reports from family or community members and information from key informants (i.e. police officers).<sup>284</sup>

It was noted that the database likely does not reflect the actual number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people in Canada as the cases collected were public and they were reported, acknowledged, and publicized by the police or media.<sup>285</sup> Cases that weren’t public were not reflected in the database.

The database contained four main themes for which information was recorded: (1) demographic information; (2) life experiences information; (3) incident information; and (4) suspect and trial

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<sup>280</sup> “Sisters In Spirit.” Native Women’s Association of Canada. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.nwac.ca/home/policy-areas/violence-prevention-and-safety/sisters-in-spirit/>.

<sup>281</sup> “Sisters In Spirit – Life Stories.” Native Women’s Association of Canada. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.nwac.ca/home/policy-areas/violence-prevention-and-safety/sisters-in-spirit/life-stories/>.

<sup>282</sup> *Sisters In Spirit Website*, supra note 1.

<sup>283</sup> “Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit.” Native Women’s Association of Canada. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NWAC\\_Voices-of-Our-Sisters-In-Spirit\\_2nd-Edition\\_March-2009.pdf](https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NWAC_Voices-of-Our-Sisters-In-Spirit_2nd-Edition_March-2009.pdf)

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

information (where applicable).<sup>286</sup> This information was further broken down into the following identifiers: the nature of the case; age; Nation; family size; year of incident; province of incident; and clearance (by police) status.<sup>287</sup> It was stated in the report that these identifiers appeared to be useful in cross-referencing stories to the database.

## Maryanne Pearce Database

### Overview

In her dissertation, “An Awkward Silence: Missing and Murdered Vulnerable Woman and the Canadian Justice System”, Maryanne Pearce identified 824 Indigenous women who had gone missing or been murdered.<sup>288</sup> Through her work, Pearce was able to identify key risk factors for women experiencing lethal violence which included: street prostitution, addiction and insecure housing.<sup>289</sup>

### Content

Pearce noted that ethnicity was a factor in understanding the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women, and therefore she recorded this information wherever available.<sup>290</sup> One set of statistics was obtained through means of affidavits provided by women who were involved in sex work in Vancouver in the Downtown Eastside.<sup>291</sup> Throughout her work, she recognized several statistical gaps such as the lack of current research on missing and murdered women, as well as a complete lack of analysis of such data.<sup>292</sup>

The goal of Pearce’s dissertation was to examine the statistics that make women particularly vulnerable to going missing or being murdered.<sup>293</sup> Although her research began with the full intention of focusing primarily on Indigenous women, it shifted to include sex workers who were non-Indigenous once she understood that there were themes and similarities coming to light regarding vulnerable women.<sup>294</sup>

The database created contained women and girls who had gone missing or been murdered, sex workers who had gone missing or been murdered (all genders), all unidentified remains of women and girls in Canada, and those whose sex or gender was not known.<sup>295</sup> Pearce obtained information from a number of police and government websites including the RCMP and municipal police forces in Canada. Websites of various organizations who had previously collected information on missing and murdered women were also utilized.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> *Ibid*: 88.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>288</sup> Pearce, Maryanne. *An Awkward Silence: Missing and Murdered Vulnerable Women and the Canadian Justice System*. Master's thesis, Common Law Section Faculty of Law University of Ottawa, 2013: ii.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*: 4.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*: 9.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid*: 10.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*: 11.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*: 13-14.

Pearce included many variables in her database such as: name; aliases; age; year missing/murdered; status; information date; companion(s); abductor(s); year of death; found; year found alive; year found dead; year body identified; ethnicity; last location; reward; whether the cases were specific to the Highway of Tears, Downtown Eastside, or another project; gender; sex work (and type); children (and if separated from mother); hitchhiking; addiction; foster care; mental illness; criminal history; physical disability or illness; special needs; homeless; pregnant; runaway; relationship to others in the database; and file number (where applicable).<sup>297</sup>

## **It Starts With Us – No More Silence Database**

### **Overview**

No More Silence has begun to create a community-led database which intends to document violent deaths of Indigenous women.<sup>298</sup> No More Silence has worked with volunteers within the community in order to build their own structures without the assistance or dependence on government or institutional funding.<sup>299</sup> The intention of this database is to honour the women by providing family members a sense of control and a platform to document their family members experience.<sup>300</sup>

### **Content**

This database has been built with the database created by Maryanne Pearce as a starting point.<sup>301</sup> The website noted that this work will begin with a research methodology that will be based on Ontario-specific data.<sup>302</sup> This database has begun with 69 women's names being entered from Ontario Nations who have suffered violent deaths since 1960.<sup>303</sup>

The No More Silence database will include Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and Trans people who have gone missing or have been murdered as a result of violence.<sup>304</sup> The website notes this may include murder, manslaughter, accidental deaths, suicide, deaths seen as suspicious by the families, and those that have gone unsolved.<sup>305</sup>

In conjunction with this database, the organization maintains core values and beliefs throughout their work. These values include: ceremony; support, rejection of shame and stigma; decolonizing gender and sexuality; changing the story; sovereignty; alternatives to the state; community collaboration; and

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<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*: 15-18.

<sup>298</sup> "Honouring the Lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirits." It Starts With Us. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://itstartswithus-mmiw.com/>.

<sup>299</sup> "Why?" It Starts With Us. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://itstartswithus-mmiw.com/why-community-led/>.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> "About." It Starts With Us. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://itstartswithus-mmiw.com/about/>.

<sup>302</sup> "Honouring the Lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirits." It Starts With Us. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://itstartswithus-mmiw.com/>.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> "Why?" It Starts With Us. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://itstartswithus-mmiw.com/why-community-led/>.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

humility and compassion.<sup>306</sup> Part of their hope is this process will allow a voice for advocates and families to bring forward information but also honour the individuals who have been taken too soon.<sup>307</sup>

## CBC News Database

### Overview

CBC News (“CBC”) has their own database which exists through their website.<sup>308</sup> This section of their website is titled “Missing and Murdered” and consists of 308 Indigenous women and girls’ profiles outlining the cases of these individuals who have either gone missing or been murdered across Canada. This unique database was created as part of CBC’s investigation into missing and murdered Indigenous women which has been ongoing.<sup>309</sup>

Of these profiles, CBC has investigated a total of 34 women and girls who have been murdered or who have disappeared and that police have deemed there to have been no foul play.<sup>310</sup> In each of these particular cases, the families of these women have rejected police findings and believe there was foul play.

### Content

This database is unique in the sense that they have filters you can select for the cases they have documented. These filters include an individual’s age and whether they were missing or murdered. You can also filter by decade in their interactive chart or simply type in the name of the person you are looking for.<sup>311</sup> This database is displayed by featuring small profiles side by side. It is worth mentioning that there are labels on some of them to identify if an individual’s case is unresolved or solved.<sup>312</sup> The profiles of women and girls contain their names, ages, locations, and whether they were missing or murdered.<sup>313</sup> Many of the profiles also include a photograph of the individual.<sup>314</sup> Furthermore, if you click on the individual’s profile, you are provided with a short summary of the relevant facts of their case. There is also an option to “Read Her Full Story” at the bottom of the summary which brings you to a page specifically for that person and goes into as much detail as possible based off of the information that CBC was able to recover.<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> "Honouring the Lives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Trans and Two-Spirits." It Starts With Us. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://itstartswithus-mmiiw.com/>.

<sup>307</sup> “Why?” It Starts With Us. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://itstartswithus-mmiiw.com/why-community-led/>.

<sup>308</sup> "Missing and Murdered." CBCnews. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/>.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

## Annita Lucchesi Database (USA)

### Overview

The final database is one created by Annita Lucchesi, who is an Indigenous woman from the United States and is of Southern Cheyenne descent.<sup>316</sup> Her database is particularly noteworthy because it is international in nature and has been broad in its contents. Lucchesi's dissertation is intended to address how cartography can be used in the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in the United States and Canada.<sup>317</sup>

Lucchesi employs the use of an atlas of thematic maps that will examine the issue of MMIWG from various perspectives.<sup>318</sup> These maps will not solely look at incident locations but will provide a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of violence and how it shapes geographies that Indigenous peoples navigate.<sup>319</sup> Examples of some of her maps can be found here: <https://www.annitalucchesi.com/maps>.

### Content

Her mapping and database technique appear to be broad in nature and focused on telling the stories of many Indigenous women. Through the course of recording data for her database, she has used many statistics including: police records; missing persons websites; news articles; historical archives; social media; personal recounts; statistics and stories. Further broken-down identifiers that were collected included: Nation; age; year of incident; whether missing or murdered; found; solved, etc.<sup>320</sup> Despite these factors, the most intriguing is that the data is being collected on an international basis between the United States and Canada.

## A MÉTIS DATABASE

Upon gaining a broader background and understanding of a few pre-existing databases, it is evident that there is not one that caters to the specific needs of Métis women alone. There is a clear desire for a Métis specific database not only for the purpose of researching and statistics in pursuit of prevention, but also for the families who are affected by this epidemic. The following information contains some considerations for what to include in a Métis-specific database, how it should be built, and any other relevant considerations. Below are some potential features; however, this list is not exhaustive.

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<sup>316</sup> "A Process of Healing: Woman Creates Extensive MMIWG Database | CBC News." CBCnews. September 16, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/mmiwg-database-annita-lucchesi-1.4825023>.

<sup>317</sup> Lucchesi, Annita. "RESEARCH." Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.annitalucchesi.com/research>.

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>320</sup> Lucchesi, Annita. "RESEARCH." Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.annitalucchesi.com/research>; "A Process of Healing: Woman Creates Extensive MMIWG Database | CBC News." CBCnews. September 16, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/mmiwg-database-annita-lucchesi-1.4825023>.

## **Content**

### ***Variables***

In a Métis-specific database, there are factors that should be included based off of database precedents outlined above. These include variables such as:

- the individual's name (or alias);
- how they identified (i.e. woman, LGBTQ2S+, etc.);
- birthdate/birthplace;
- place of residence;
- life experience information (i.e. sex work, child welfare, addiction, Sixties Scoop, residential school, homeless, mental health, pregnant, etc.);
- relationship to others within the database;
- citizenship with which government (MNBC, MNA, MNS, MMF or MNO);
- age at the time they were missing or murdered;
- date they went missing or were murdered;
- location they went missing or were murdered;
- name of the individual convicted/trial information;
- status of case from police (and file number/information);
- whether they were missing or murdered (or if it was deemed suicide, accidental death, suspicious, etc.); and
- if they were missing, if they were found (where & when).

In addition to the information outlined above, if there was the capacity to do so in whatever database is created, it may be desired to feature a photograph of the individual provided by family or friends in the event they would like to honour them in this way. It may also be a consideration to facilitate families to provide some information and background as to the life of the individual missing or murdered.

### ***Sources & Scope***

It is important to consider the sources being used to create and build a Métis database. This includes whether the information is obtained through stories from families or friends, newspaper articles, RCMP and police websites and records, social media, court documents/decisions, or by pulling information from existing databases.

Furthermore, it would be important to define the process to verify that individuals who are placed in the database do in fact belong to the Métis Nation. The criteria for the database will have mechanisms in place to ensure they are being followed and upheld.

The scope of the database contents must be defined. The database must be Canada-wide; however, a consideration may be that it should include Métis women who have gone missing or been murdered whom are living outside of Canada.

### ***Capacity***

In creating a Métis database, it is imperative to consider the issue of capacity and funding. The examples of databases ranged for how they were maintained. NWAC's database was previously funded through the

Status of Women; however, their funding was cut. Due to this consideration, it would be important to secure long-term funding or funding from other sources that will be ongoing and concrete. In the alternative, at minimum it would be of utmost importance to ensure there is a contract for a set number of years with the opportunity to renew should and seek out government funding.

There are also databases being funded by community, such as the one created by No More Silence. This way of obtaining funds may not be consistent and would likely not be enough to sustain a national Métis database. Ultimately, ensuring there is appropriate financing for the life of the database is paramount. This will ensure there is no loss of access to the database and will allow for an employee to be paid to maintain it.

### ***Housing & Maintenance***

Housing of databases is an integral step in its creation and maintenance which wasn't entirely touched upon in the database examples above. A Métis database should be maintained continuously for it to be most effective. This would require ensuring there were individuals committed to its upkeep on an ongoing basis.

There are many options when it comes to housing, such as personal record-keeping or some sort of digital database. It would be advisable to seek assistance from an outside source that is familiar with this process in order to better determine a location. It is important to note, however, that in the creation of a Métis-specific database of missing and murdered Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people, this content should likely be housed in Canada under the control of Métis women.

Access to the content of the database must also be considered in its design. Questions may be: Would it be housed on a public website? Should it be password protected and only permit community members to access it? These are all questions that would need to be further discussed and contemplated as there are issues such as privacy need to be considered.

### ***Purpose & Partnerships***

A final consideration, and possibly even the most important consideration, would be determining the purpose of a Métis specific database. Unlike some other efforts to collect information on MMIWG, it is important to ensure the information being collected is not simply thrown into a spreadsheet never to be looked at again. The content collected must be meaningful and useful in combating violence against Métis women and girls.

There may be many intended purposes for a Métis database, such as the facilitated sharing of information with police across jurisdictions as well as RCMP. Should it be decided to partner with law enforcement, the database could act as a resource for them to understand risk factors for violence against Métis women, and could potentially bring new information to light for use in their investigative processes. Furthermore, this information could assist police in creating relevant policies to address the issue of Métis women and girls being murdered or going missing as it would address their unique intersectionality, which is often overlooked. However, for this partnership to be truly meaningful, there needs to be an expressed commitment by police to endeavour to also take part in the collection of relevant data for Métis.

This database may also be used to help Métis families and communities in the healing and honouring process. This information could be used to create partnerships within our Métis communities and

governing members across Canada to honour our Métis women. Through these partnerships, awareness would be brought to the issue of missing and murdered Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people who are so often forgotten or left out of other MMIWG spaces. Through community partnerships, measures could be made to educate women and girls across the country in hopes of decreasing the likelihood of further violence against Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people.

Moving forward, there could be a consideration to create an ongoing partnership in the creation of a database for Métis between the governing members of the Métis National Council, the RCMP, provincial police, and Statistics Canada. Involving the governing members may assist with communications within the provinces and with their provincial police. Involving Statistics Canada may also be of benefit as it is a possibility to gain further information and larger groupings of aggregated data to utilise in any analysis. These partnerships could allow for the effective sharing of information and could serve as a function to ensure the individuals being placed in the database are Métis.

## Calls for Miskotahâ

Miskotahâ is the Michif word for *change*. These recommendations will bring change to the lives of Métis women, girls, LGBTQ2S+ people and their families.

### Identity, Data Collection and Research

1. Action is required of federal and provincial governments to amend legislation, develop and implement additional policies to ensure that Métis people are identified, so that adequate information is gathered, and appropriate services can be delivered. The Métis Nation's definition of Métis must be included in the policy. It states:

***“Métis” means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Aboriginal peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.”***

2. Action is required by the federal government to identify Métis women and girls when developing a national plan to collect and publish distinctions-based data on the criminal victimization of Indigenous women and girls. This must include data related to murdered and missing Métis women and girls, victimization of Métis women and domestic violence.

Action is required to develop a LFMO Centre for Excellence - Métis Women and Girls to support and develop Métis women's health and healing programs, conduct research, train and advocate for Métis women in partnership with the Government of Canada and post-secondary learning institutions. The Centre will build leadership skills and build capacity in Métis communities to conduct research.

3. Action is required by the federal and provincial governments to prepare and publish annual reports on the social and economic factors of Métis women and children, identified in the joint strategy.
4. Action is required to develop a distinctions-based mechanism to identify First Nations, Métis and Inuit within the criminal justice system, rather than identifying everyone as Indigenous.

5. Action is required by all levels of government to invest in community-engaged research to identify the needs of Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people.

#### **Intergovernmental Affairs**

6. Action is required to address and reduce the racism and stereotyping Métis women and girls experience when accessing services. The federal government must fund a comprehensive “Métis culture and historical awareness” program for Métis women to educate and support all public servants, including but not limited to police, early responders, medical and health services, social workers, income assistance, community and family support services, transition workers and others working with Métis people to better understand the unique circumstances of Métis women and girls. Without this type of training, services providers will not be equipped to identify Métis people and in turn, adequately collect and analyse data and deliver appropriate services. LFMO makes the following recommendations:
  - a. The federal government funds LFMO to develop a comprehensive “Métis culture and historical awareness” training program;
  - b. LFMO will deliver the training, funded by the government of Canada, with federal and provincial government departments scheduling and facilitating the training;
  - c. That this training is mandatory for all public servants, government contractors and government funded organization. Those receiving the training will be responsible for its coordination.
  - d. This training must include detailed information on Métis history, contemporary realities, kinship, historical and contemporary trauma and other concepts specific to service provision and will include Elders, Knowledge Keepers and guest speakers.
  - a. Training programs must be evaluated on an on-going basis by Métis communities, Elders and Knowledge Keepers to ensure that training efforts are making a difference to Métis families accessing frontline services.
7. All levels of government, including Métis institutions of governance, will commit to using the findings in the Métis Specific-Gender Based Analysis Plus tool to inform their decisions on governance, programs and services.
8. Action is required on the parts of the federal and provincial governments, in collaboration with LFMO, to develop a joint strategy to eliminate the social and economic barriers that create disparities between Métis women and other women in Canada. This should include, but not be limited to, the reduction of poverty and disparities in health indicators, education, employment and housing. There should be established collaborative mechanisms and processes to ensure meaningful input from Métis women.

9. Action is required by federal and provincial governments to acknowledge that Métis people suffered physical and sexual abuse and intergenerational trauma from the loss of culture, identity and meaningful parenting from federal and provincial government educational policies, including but not limited to, Indian Residential Schools and Day Schools and the Sixties Scoop. Federal and provincial governments must also:
  - a. Acknowledge that Métis students attended residential schools and day schools but due to federal policies on how Métis students were admitted and funded, Métis students often were not registered on school class lists;
  - b. Work in collaboration with the Métis Nation to resolve, compensate and apologize to Métis survivors of residential and day schools;
  - c. Ensure health and healing services are available to Métis survivors and their family suffering from intergenerational trauma.
10. There must be equal representation of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, especially women, across all levels of Canadian government including political structures, policies and programs and judiciary branches.
11. That Métis governments ensure that Métis women are equally represented in all levels of government – executive, legislative and judiciary branches in addition to locally, regionally and nationally.
12. That Métis governments ensure representation of women in the Métis government public service.
13. That Métis governments ensure equal access and opportunity to programs and services offered by Métis governments for Métis women.
14. That Métis governments include a funded Department for the Status of Women with each governing member to address the needs of Métis women.
15. Métis women recommend that the federal government, in collaboration with the Métis Nation, ensure that processes are developed to address the exclusion of Métis from the Comprehensive Land Claims and Inherent Right Policies, or any distinctions-based approach that may be developed to take their place.

#### **Consultation and Engagement**

16. LFMO and its designates require full and equal participation in any and all implementation efforts. LFMO must be included and have a voice in the implementation of any recommendations regarding these and any and all MMIWG recommendations. The LFMO representative and designates must have a determining say, rather than act as voice or one vote of a majority, when dealing with matters that directly impact Métis women and girls. If deemed necessary by the LFMO representative, they must be given opportunities and time to meaningfully consult and conduct a Gender-Based Analysis as part of ongoing meaningful consultation with Métis communities and Métis women's

leadership, including Elders and Knowledge keepers, provincial women's reps and grassroots Métis women, girls and LGBTQ2S+ people.

17. That Métis governments, in collaboration with federal and provincial governments, develop a Duty to Consult mechanism that ensures the inclusion of Métis women; further, that Métis governments develop, in collaboration with Métis women, their own Duty to Consult policies and practices. This will ensure an intersectional lens is completed in the establishment of Métis government constitutions.

## **Services**

18. Action is required of the federal and provincial governments to provide sustainable funding for existing and emerging Métis services that are sustainable, supportive and based on the distinct needs of rural and urban Métis communities and Métis women;
19. Action is required by the provincial and federal governments to fund and ensure that Métis women who are victims of violence receive proper support and resources, such as counselling, healing, advocacy services that are culturally competent, culturally safe and trauma-informed. These victim supports must be extended to the entire kinship network of the victim. If requested, the support from Métis Elders, Knowledge Keepers or others throughout all court proceedings shall be available.
20. There is a need for Métis advocates to help facilitate navigation for Métis people, their families and kinship networks through various systems including, but not limited to, healthcare, criminal justice, policing, employment and education, housing, child and family welfare, etc.
21. There is a need for the development of family and community programming that focuses on bringing Métis communities and families together to share, learn about and reinforce Métis culture and a positive sense of Métis identity.
22. Action is required from all levels of government to create adequately funded and accessible Métis-specific victim programs and services with appropriate evaluation mechanisms, so that that Métis specific data is included in evaluation mechanisms and reports.
23. Action is required of the federal and provincial governments to ensure that holistic, culturally-based wraparound programs, services and opportunities acknowledge and address conditions that situate Métis women and children as vulnerable, such as but not limited to poverty, housing, employment and education, access to child care etc.
24. There is a need for Métis-specific public education directed towards Métis women and girls from birth onwards that informs them of their rights and assists them in understanding boundaries to prevent abuse from occurring.
25. Stable, consistent, and robust funding must be committed to the creation of culturally-specific housing shelters for Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people in both larger and smaller cities, that provides a safe space for people fleeing domestic violence and to

serve as a stop-gap measure to the high rates of housing insecurity as experienced by Métis women and their children, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people.

26. The development of safe, affordable and sustainable Métis housing with a dedicated inventory of safe houses for Métis women, with a focus on offering Métis families the necessary support for successful tenancies so that they can move upward through the housing continuum.
27. The development and implementation of policies that ensure the provision of adequate income support for Métis families.

### Child Welfare

28. That provincial and delegated child welfare agencies specifically identify Métis children and families, in order to provide appropriate Métis cultural services and to collect and analyse data specific to Métis children and families.
29. That the federal, provincial, territorial and Métis governments commit to reducing the number of Métis children who are in family care due to government intervention by:
  - a. Monitoring and assessing neglect investigations of Métis children;
  - b. Providing adequate resources for preventative programs to enable Métis communities and Métis child-welfare organizations to keep Métis families together and ensure that Métis children are in culturally appropriate environments;
30. Action is required to ensure that all child-welfare decision-makers are trained and understand thoroughly the impacts of colonization on Métis peoples, with particular attention to the discrimination perpetuated by the government through legislation, policies and practices, including the residential school system, day schools, the Sixties Scoop, as they impacted Métis children and families.<sup>321</sup>
31. Action is required of the provincial and territorial governments to prepare and publish annual reports on the number of Métis children who are in care, as well as the reasons for apprehension, the total spending on preventive and care services by child-welfare agencies and the effectiveness of various interventions.<sup>322</sup>

Action is required by provincial and territorial governments to ensure that their respective province's Office of the Child and Youth Advocate includes statistics and other information on Métis children and families in their legislative reports and other publications.

32. Each province must have a child advocate who reports directly to Parliament or its respective legislative assembly, not to a Minister or Caucus, and provides an annual public report to the House of Commons or its respective legislative assembly.

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<sup>321</sup> *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Canada: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Website, 2015. Call to Action, 1.

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid*, based on *Call to Action*, 2.

33. Action is required of all levels of government to fully implement Jordan's Principle and expand these principles beyond on-reserve children to include Métis youth and children. This includes amending any interjurisdictional agreements to include Métis children.<sup>323</sup>
34. Action is required by federal and provincial governments to ensure Métis content is included in efforts to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Indigenous peoples.
35. Action is required by provincial child welfare agencies to honour Métis family structures and kinship relations so that Métis children remain connected to their families, culture and communities. This requires:
  - a. Extended family members are sought and then supported, to the same degree and equally funded as foster parents, whether the child is considered under kinship care, foster care or guardianship agreements;
  - b. Provincial governments fund for legal aid services for extended family members to receive legal advice to understand their rights and responsibilities in caring for a child under kinship care, foster care or guardianship agreements;
  - c. Provincial and federal governments ensure that all family tax benefits are provided to extended family members without reduction to the funding provided by child welfare agencies.
36. Kinship relationships must be supported. Placement of Métis children with Métis kinships and families must be prioritized as the best interest of the child. Métis family structures must be honoured.
37. Child benefits must be directed to families in kinship care at the same level as provided to mainstream foster families.

#### Jurisdiction

38. Action is required to ensure that Métis women and children are not denied services or fall through the gaps while the federal and provincial governments work out inter-jurisdictional issues relating to Métis people. Interjurisdictional cooperation is essential and imminent, in light of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision that the federal government has the jurisdictional responsibility to Métis people. LFMO requires the following actions to ensure inter-governmental cooperation so that Métis women and children are safe, not denied services and not further marginalized by inter-jurisdictional disagreements:
  - a. Federal and provincial governments agree to enter into an agreement that ensures intergovernmental cooperation so that Métis women are safe and are no longer denied services or further marginalized;

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<sup>323</sup> *Ibid*, based on *Call to Action*, 3.

- b. Federal and provincial governments commit to the timely and smooth transition of programs and services and will enter into written protocols;
- c. Provincial and federal governments, led by the federal government, prioritize the identification of any and all government programs and services to Métis people and enter tripartite discussions and reach agreements about the funding and delivery of services for Métis women and children.

### **Criminal Justice**

- 39. Police services must develop a best practices protocol for law enforcement's response to missing person reports of Métis people, including steps that police should take upon receiving a missing person's report for any Métis person.
- 40. Action is required to support victims and family members when dealing with the media. Métis victims are often stereotyped and devalued in media accounts and action is required to ensure these myths about Métis women cease. The federal and provincial governments must financially support the development of educational notes for media and government communications branches. These notes must also be redistributed in the event of a case involving a Métis woman or girl.
- 41. Action is required by federal, provincial and territorial governments to commit to eliminating the overrepresentation of Métis people in custody over the next decade, and that annual reports or other reporting mechanisms include specific reporting on Métis people in conflict with the criminal justice system and to ensure that Métis women are properly identified as Métis people in all aspects of the criminal justice system, including but not limited to police services, community corrections, prisons and parole.
- 42. Action is required to ensure that there is training and funding available for Gladue writers on how to write a Gladue Report that includes, but is not limited to, ensuring issues related to the historic impacts of colonization on Métis offenders.
- 43. Action is required to ensure that Métis people have access to and information on the availability of Gladue reports. Gladue reports have often been only available to First Nations and its imperative to ensure equitable Métis access.
- 44. Action is required of the federal, provincial and territorial governments to work with Métis communities and Métis organizations to provide culturally relevant services to Métis inmates on issues such as substance abuse, family and domestic violence, and overcoming the experiences of physical and sexual abuse, as well as, historic trauma experienced by generations of Métis people.
- 45. Resources need to be made available to Métis families and kinship networks of victims of violence, including but not limited to assistance with funerals, on-going counselling and trauma-informed supports.

### **Implementation Committee**

46. Action is required to develop an Implementation Committee to review the Calls for Justice in this report; the Calls to Action in the Truth and Reconciliation and the Métis MMIWG Final Report, Reclaiming Power and Place. When referring to Aboriginal or Indigenous peoples, there must be action to ensure that it is always inclusive of Métis people in a distinctions-based and respectful process.
47. Action is required to implement the Calls to Miskotahâ in this report. An Implementation Committee should work in cooperation with the LFMO Advisory Group to develop a workplan, to identify the institution or department that would carry out the responsibility of each recommendation and to establish measurable benchmarks, such as due dates and progress reports.
48. Action is required to support the LFMO Advisory Group on implementing the Calls to Miskotahâ and to develop an action plan that will include Elders and Knowledge Keepers, provincial women's representatives and others with knowledge of issues related to Métis women and girls.
49. That all members of the Implementation Committee successfully complete Métis distinctions trauma-informed training prior to commencing meetings or engagements. The Committee must commit to learning about Métis people before engaging in decision-making and it should not be LFMO's responsibility to teach committee members individually.

### **Health and Wellness**

50. Action is required, as a high priority, to ensure that Métis peoples have access to services to diagnose, treat and provide support for FASD.
51. Action is required for the development of Métis FASD preventive programs that can be delivered in a culturally competent and safe manner.
52. Action is required of the federal and provincial governments to acknowledge that the current state of Métis health in Canada is a result of previous Canadian government policies and that federal and provincial governments agree to work with LFMO to develop and implement a healthcare Bill of Rights for Métis women. This should include, but not be limited to, issues relating to informed consent, forced sterilization, disabilities, equality in access to health and healing, mental health, addictions, and trauma-informed processes.
53. Action is required of the federal and provincial governments to recognize, respect and address the distinct health needs of Métis women and girls and to ensure there is equal access to services related to Métis health and healing, including but not limited to disability services, treatment for trauma, mental health services, addictions and supportive recovery programs.
54. Action is required by federal and provincial governments to develop and fund a Métis Health Benefits program to ensure Métis women and children have access to a range of benefits not

covered by hospital and medical care insurance. This program would cover prescription drugs, dental services, vision care, medical supplies and equipment as well as ambulance services.

55. Action is required that the federal government, in consultation with LFMO, establishes measurable goals to identify and close the gaps in healthcare outcomes between Métis women and other women in Canada and to publish annual reports and assess long-term trends.
56. Action is required to support Métis women as they look to restore their identity, culture, traditions and practices while accessing health services. This requires financial support to develop and deliver Métis women's programs that are strengths-based, trauma-informed, culturally-safe and grounded in Métis values and worldviews.
57. Action is required of federal and provincial healthcare systems to recognize the value of Métis healing practices and to use them in the treatment of Métis patients in collaboration with Métis healers and Elders where requested by Métis patients.
58. Action is required of medical and nursing schools in Canada to incorporate Métis health needs, history, culture and rights in their Aboriginal peoples training, as set out in the TRC Calls to Action.
59. Action is required to recognize and support the role of Métis Elders and Knowledge Keepers in healing Métis women and children. Funding and other supports must be available to support capacity building of Métis Elders and Knowledge Keepers for peer support, ongoing training on Métis trauma-informed processes and issues facing contemporary Métis women and girls.

#### **Prevention and Awareness**

60. Action is required by the LFMO, federal and provincial governments to cooperate in the development of a media campaign to dispel common misconceptions about Métis people, especially as they relate to Métis women and girls. This media campaign will focus on historic discrimination, racism and other conditions that have worked to make Métis women and children vulnerable but will employ a strengths-based narrative touching on Métis identity, strengths, pride and worldviews.
61. Funding must be directed towards public education campaigns about Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people to highlight our distinct experiences with racism, sexism, and colonization.
62. The development of community-based reconciliation activities aimed at reducing racism and promoting safe, vibrant communities.

## Conclusion

As stated earlier, LFMO included a variety of subject matter experts in the compilation of this report. These experts each wrote a portion of this report on the issues facing Métis women, girls and gender diverse people from their own field or area of expertise. Through the use of a Métis-specific GBA+ lens and a mixed-methods approach, which focuses on the lived experiences of Métis women, girls and gender diverse people, this report was born.

It is impossible to understand the current MMIWG crisis without understanding the roots of colonial violence that Métis women, girls and gender diverse people have experienced both historically and currently. Métis women were the centre of their communities before Catholic Missionaries and the Government of Canada imposed strict patriarchal gender norms. Before these changes, Métis women were the centre of their communities as their kinship ties formed the foundation of communities. There were no distinct gender roles in Métis communities; individuals would contribute to their community based on their own unique skills. Women were considered the familial core of Métis families and were responsible for raising children, passing on language and teaching their communities about spiritual and cultural knowledge. Additionally, women historically were often trappers and voyagers and while not directly involved in politics, had political influence through their strong kinship ties.

The imposition of patriarchal gender norms has completely changed the lives of Métis women. As stated in “Historical Context” chapter, the gradual introduction of the Catholic church, and later the Canadian government would, by the end of the twentieth century, ensure that a social structure that emphasized balance and equality and in which Métis women were respected and valued was aggressively transformed along Anglo-British-Canadian systems of inequality – by racism, gendered divisions, and sexism wherein Métis women were socially, economically, politically, and culturally positioned as inferior to Métis men. Proponents of expanding Canada through the Red River and into the Prairies, connecting to the Pacific Coast colonies, held these same attitudes toward Métis people and viewed Métis as undesirable to the project of Canadian nation-building. In addition to facing sexism, racism, and violence from non-Métis people, Métis women, girls, and LGBTQ2S+ people increasingly came to face sexism and violence within their own families and communities. Métis women, as bearers of Métis languages, values, and cultural and environmental knowledge, experienced distinct forms of violence. The resultant abuse, poverty, ill-health, and systemic inequality have set the conditions for which we continue to struggle with today. These are, to be clear, the roots of violence against Métis women and girls.

These experiences have created a collective experience of trauma that is felt by the Métis Nation, particularly Métis women and girls. This report and research approach use a balance of knowledge of Métis women’s historic and contemporary traumas and losses with recognition of Métis women’s strengths and resilience. A trauma-informed lens understands the unique histories of Métis women and their communities. It is centred on being non-judgemental and strengths-based and honours difference, choice and compassion. It also draws from Métis-specific values, such as kinship ties, faith and spirituality, food and respect for life that includes land and water in trauma-informed care. These approaches have led to positive impacts and experiences by Métis women who have entered programs using this lens.

This research highlights the stories of families impacted by the colonial violence that surrounds the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls crisis. As noted by grassroots Métis women, many

Métis families felt they have been silenced when it comes to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. This report seeks to share many of the stories that have not yet been heard. These stories are shared from a strengths-based and trauma-informed approach, meaning there are no details around a specific MMIWG case that may be triggering or traumatizing to Métis families. Additionally, the stories focused on experiences related to child and family services, victim services, family grieving processes, the justice and police systems, mental health, addictions and cultural identity. Stories are presented in narrative format to honour the Métis tradition of storytelling as a central part of traditional and community knowledge.

Using a mixed-methods approach, it is important to complete a statistical analysis, looking at demographic information, self-identification, family dynamics, housing, health, education, employment, the child welfare system and the justice system. What was identified within this chapter is that there is limited applicability of current statistics due to the lack of recognition and understanding of Métis identity but also because there is no common definition of Métis shared between the Métis Nation and the federal government.

The federal government has taken some steps to recognize the Métis Nation. One example of this is the launch of the Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework in 2018. A chapter in this report highlights the engagement on this topic. This chapter focused on the role that re-empowerment plays in defining and rebuilding Indigenous Nations, as well as the rich history of Métis women in building the Métis Nation and various barriers that are impeding Métis women and girls' re-empowerment.

The chapter following focuses on the serious issues and barriers faced by Métis women, girls and gender diverse people in today's Canadian justice system that have contributed to the MMIWG crisis. Some of the barriers faced by Métis women in the system include: lack of identity data, limited understanding of the circumstances of Métis women and girls, as well as how police respond to Métis women and their families. This has led to the mistreatment of Métis women and girls and a lack of support for victims and their families, making experiences of MMIWG even more painful.

The lack of understanding of Métis identity and the misrepresentation of Indigenous women as a whole have been reflected in their stereotypical media portrayals, which has led to their continued dehumanization and mistreatment by Canadian society, particularly by service providers. Gender-based violence against Métis women does not exist in a vacuum; it is a reaction that is the result of colonization, toxic masculinity and the imposition of patriarchal values and norms. Popular culture, including television shows, movies and video games, have situated Métis women and girls as uncivilized, hypersexualized and disposable.

Sexism and racism also impact Métis women's ability to access programs and services. When accessing these services, Métis women, girls and gender diverse people have continually faced racism that is distinct from the racism experienced by First Nations and Inuit women, girls and gender diverse people. Again, this racism is often due to a lack of information about Métis women's experiences and because Métis women are rarely invited to sit at tables to express their own concerns and experiences. LFMO will continue to elevate the voices of Métis women and push for a seat at the table.

Though a number of databases exist to track the MMIWG crisis, there is currently no database that speaks to distinct Métis experiences. Often Métis women are misidentified as "Aboriginal" and even "non-Aboriginal". The creation of a Métis-specific database could be used among governing members of the Métis National Council, the RCMP, provincial and municipal police and Statistics Canada. This would

allow governments to understand the unique risk factors for violence against Métis women, allowing them to bring forward unique policies and solutions to address the issue and to better facilitate the healing and honouring processes of Métis families.

The purpose of this research has always been to effect meaningful change for Métis women by dismantling barriers and creating long-term systemic changes that impact the lives of Métis women. Through this research process LFMO has created its own Calls for Miskotahâ, which is the Michif word for *change*, that are specific to Métis women, girls and gender diverse people and reflect their unique histories and realities. Calls have focused on the lack of data specific to Métis women and girls, intergovernmental affairs, engagement, services, child welfare, jurisdiction, criminal justice, health, prevention and awareness.

These Calls for Miskotahâ will take time to implement. In order to create real and meaningful change in the lives of our women, girls and gender diverse people, we must dismantle the systemic racism, sexism and colonialism that exist in Canadian society. This work will be hard but must be led by Métis communities, with support from governments, organizations and all Canadians. The intention of the Calls for Miskotahâ is to create a safer, brighter future for our communities, especially our youth.

## Definitions/Key Terms

**Aboriginal/ Indigenous** – refers to “Indigenous peoples” and is a collective term for the original peoples of Canada. Often, “Aboriginal peoples” is used interchangeably. Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (more commonly referred to as *First Nations*), Inuit and Métis.

**Anti-racism** – refers to strategies, theories, actions, and practices that challenge and counter racism, inequalities, prejudices and discrimination.

**Âpihtawikosisân** – refers to the name the Cree have given to the Métis, and literally translated it means “half-son.”<sup>324</sup>

**Child Apprehension** – refers to when a provincial government agent or delegated authority believes that a child needs protection and that there are no other means of protecting the child, followed by the agent taking steps to remove the child from their caregiver(s) and placing the child in a foster home or group home. In the case of Indigenous children, most children are apprehended for living in poverty that has been created by systemic and colonial discrimination of Indigenous peoples.

**Cisgender** – refers to a term used to describe people for whom their gender identity and assigned sex match, and who fit the societal expectations surrounding their birth-assigned sex. It is the opposite of transgender.<sup>325</sup>

**Colonizers** – refers to agents of a colonial government.

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<sup>324</sup> Vowel, Chelsea. “About.” âpihtawikosisân. May 31, 2019. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://apihtawikosisan.com/about-2/>.

<sup>325</sup> “CCGSD Queer Vocabulary.” The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CCGSD-Vocabulary.pdf>

**Confidentiality** – refers to the safeguards used to protect the privacy of research participants and their information from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification, loss, and theft.<sup>326</sup>

**Contemporary Trauma** – refers to the emotional harm of an individual or generation caused by a contemporary traumatic experience or event.

**Culturally-Relevant/Métis Specific** – refers to applying a Métis lens to create distinctions-based policies and programs that meet the unique needs of Métis families.

**Dehumanization** – refers to the process of depriving a person or group of positive human qualities.

**Distinctions-Based** – refers to The Government of Canada recognition of First Nations, the Métis Nation, and Inuit as the Indigenous peoples of Canada, consisting of distinct, rights-bearing communities with their own histories. They recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach does not respect the distinct of rights and the unique interests, priorities and circumstances of each of the Indigenous peoples of Canada.

**Emergency Shelters** – refers to shelters for women and children experiencing homelessness or fleeing violence. This also includes transitional and second stage housing.

**Ethnogenesis** – refers to the process by which a group of people becomes ethnically distinct.

**Feminist/Intersectional Lens** – refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination.<sup>327</sup>

**Gladue Reports/Principles** – refers to an approach to sentencing and bail hearings allows judges to consider sentencing alternatives to incarceration when appropriate. These reports/principles allow a judge to consider the colonial history of Indigenous people when they encounter the criminal justice system. This initiative is aimed at reducing the number of incarcerated Indigenous people.

**Half-Breed** – refers to a term, now considered derogatory, historically used to describe anyone in the North American context, who is of half First Nations and half European descent. The term "Half-Breed" was used almost exclusively by the Canadian federal government throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries when referring to Métis people.

**Harm-reduction** – refers to a set of practical strategies and ideas aimed at reducing negative consequences associated with drug and/or alcohol use.

**Heteronormativity** – refers to the belief that heterosexuality, predicated on the gender binary, is the norm or default sexual orientation. It assumes that sexual and marital relations are most (or only) fitting between people of opposite sex.

**Historic Trauma** – refers to the cumulative emotional harm of an individual or generation caused by a traumatic experience or event.

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<sup>326</sup> "Guidelines on Anonymity and Confidentiality in Research." Ryerson University. November 2017. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/research/documents/ethics/guidelines-on-anonymity-and-confidentiality-in-research.pdf>

<sup>327</sup> Hawk, Taylor. "What is 'Intersectional Feminism'?" Denison. July 26, 2016. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://denison.edu/academics/womens-gender-studies/feature/67969>.

**Holistic** – refers to all aspects of life are interconnected, are not considered in isolation but as a part of the whole. The world is believed to be an integral whole. Indigenous knowledge incorporates all aspects of life - spirituality, history, cultural practices, social interactions, language, healing.<sup>328</sup>

**Homophobia** – refers to hatred of homosexuality exhibited in ways such as prejudice, discrimination, or violence. Anyone who is not “straight” or heterosexual (or is assumed not to be) can be the target of homophobia.<sup>329</sup>

**Indian Day Schools/Day Schools** – refers to federally run schools, with the purpose of separating Aboriginal children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture—the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society. Similar to residential schools, only children were allowed to go home to their families at the end of the day.

**Intergenerational Trauma** – refers to the transmission of historical and contemporary trauma from one generation to the next.

**Kinship** – refers to attachments, kinship, and family tell us who we are and where we come from. They give us a sense of dignity, a sense of belonging, right from birth. In Indigenous cultures, family units go beyond the traditional nuclear family living together in one house. Families are extensive networks of strong, connective kinship; they are often entire communities.<sup>330</sup>

**Lateral Violence** – refers to abusing other people in ways similar to personal past experiences of abuse. In the context of the Métis Nation, abuse is learned from historically traumatic experiences of discrimination and the on-going colonial violence Métis people experience in Canada.

**Masculinity** – qualities or attributes regarded as characteristic of men. *Toxic masculinity* refers to certain norms of masculine behaviour that are associated with harm to society at large and to men themselves.

**Métis** – refers to the Métis National Council definition of “Métis”:

*“‘Métis’ means a person who self-identifies as Métis, is distinct from other Indigenous peoples, is of historic Métis Nation Ancestry and who is accepted by the Métis Nation.*

*In 2003, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed that Métis are a rights-bearing Indigenous people. Its judgement in R. v. Powley set out the components of a Métis definition for the purpose of claiming Indigenous rights under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. These are:*

- *Self-identification as a member of a Métis community.*
- *Ancestral connection to the historic Métis community whose practices ground the right in question*
- *Acceptance by the modern community with continuity to the historic Métis community.”*<sup>331</sup>

<sup>328</sup> Joseph, Bob. "What Does Indigenous Knowledge Mean? A Compilation of Attributes." Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. April 06, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-does-indigenous-knowledge-mean>.

<sup>329</sup> “CCGSD Queer Vocabulary.” The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CCGSD-Vocabulary.pdf>

<sup>330</sup> Talaga, Tanya. “The Power of Indigenous Kinship.” The Walrus. December 21, 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <https://thewalrus.ca/the-power-of-indigenous-kinship/>

<sup>331</sup> “Métis Nation Citizenship.” Métis National Council. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://www.Métisnation.ca/index.php/who-are-the-Métis/citizenship>.

**Métis Elders/Traditional Knowledge Keepers** – refers to individuals who are the foundation from which Métis traditions, customs, laws, and spirituality are taught. They are the keepers of Indigenous knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation since time immemorial. It is an Elder's duty to preserve this knowledge for their communities and their nation. These individuals work towards achieving balance and harmony within their communities through the practice and preservation of Indigenous knowledge and culture.<sup>332</sup>

**Métis Nation** – refers to the creation of the fur trade in North America during the 18<sup>th</sup> century was accompanied by a growing number of mixed-race offspring from the relationships between Indigenous women and European men. As this population established distinct communities separate from those of Indigenous peoples and Europeans and married among themselves, a new and distinct population emerged – *the Métis people* – with their own unique culture, traditions, language (Michif), way of life, collective consciousness and nationhood.

**Métis National Council** – refers to the national representative body of the Métis Nation. It receives its mandate and direction from the democratically elected leadership of the Métis Nation's governments from Ontario westward. Specifically, the MNC reflects and moves forward on the desires and aspirations of these Métis governments at the national and international level.

**Métis Nation Homeland** (or homeland) – refers to five provinces within Canada: Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.

**Michif** – refers to a language spoken by Métis peoples that is derived from a combination of Cree and French languages.

**Miskotahâ** – refers to a Michif word meaning *change*.

**Mission Schools** – refers to a religious school originally developed and run by Christian missionaries. They were commonly used for the purposes of Westernization of Indigenous people in the early history of Canada. These may be day schools or residential schools.

**National Inquiry/the Inquiry** – refers to Canada's *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.

**Nation-to-Nation/Government-to-Government/Crown-Inuit Relations** – refers a new approach to working with Indigenous peoples under the Trudeau government. The Government of Canada is committed to achieving reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through a renewed, nation-to-nation, government-to-government, and Inuit-Crown relationship based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership as the foundation for transformative change.

**Pan-Indigenous** – refers to a one-size-fits-all approach to creating and implementing Indigenous policies and programs. Generally speaking, it refers to the treatment of Indigenous peoples as a homogeneous group without acknowledging the distinct groups or nations of Indigenous peoples.

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<sup>332</sup> The Wîcihitowin Conference Committee. "Authentic Engagement of First Nations and Métis Traditional Knowledge Keepers." 2017. Accessed June 05, 2019. [https://uakn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Wicihitowin\\_AuthenticEngagementBooklet\\_V8.pdf](https://uakn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Wicihitowin_AuthenticEngagementBooklet_V8.pdf).

**Patriarchy** – refers to a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.

**Racism** – refers to the belief that all members of each race possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or races. Racism is typically directed at and against communities that are considered to be non-white.

**Residential Schools** – refers to schools created for the purpose of separating Aboriginal children from their families, in order to minimize and weaken family ties and cultural linkages, and to indoctrinate children into a new culture—the culture of the legally dominant Euro-Christian Canadian society, led by Canada’s first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.<sup>333</sup>

**Sauvage/Le Chien** – refers to now derogatory terms, formerly used to describe Métis children in the Residential School System. Both are of French origins, meaning *savage* or *dog*, respectively.

**Self-Determination** – refers to the recognition of Indigenous peoples as inherent rights holders under section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Self-determination includes the inherent right of self-government for the Métis Nation. For the federal government, this responsibility includes changes in the operating practices and processes of the federal government to be Indigenous-led. For the Métis Nation, this responsibility includes how to define and govern ourselves as nations and governments and what are the parameters of our relationships with other orders of government.

**Settler Colonialism** – refers to a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of Indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty.

**Sexism/ Sex Discrimination** – refers to prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex.

**Sixties Scoop** – refers to the taking of Indigenous children from their families and communities for placement in foster homes or adoption. Despite the reference to one decade, the Sixties Scoop began in the late 1950s and persisted into the 1980s. Approximately 20,000 Indigenous children were taken from their families and fostered or adopted out to primarily white middle-class families in Canada, the United States and Europe as part of the Sixties Scoop.

**Systemic Discrimination/Systemic Racism** – refers to patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that are part of the structures of an organization, and which create or perpetuate disadvantage for racialized persons.

**Transphobia** – refers to the hatred of any perceived transgression of gender norms exhibited in ways such as prejudice, discrimination, or violence. Anyone who is not cisgender (or is assumed not to be) can be a victim of transphobia.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>333</sup> *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Canada: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Website, 2015.

<sup>334</sup> “CCGSD Queer Vocabulary.” The Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity. 2018. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://ccgsd-ccdgs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CCGSD-Vocabulary.pdf>

**Trauma-Informed** – refers to a strengths-based approach with an awareness of the prevalence of trauma. Trauma-informed work demonstrates an understanding of the impact of trauma on physical, emotional, and mental health as well as on behaviors and engagement with services/materials. Additionally, trauma-informed work understands that people can be triggered or retraumatized and minimizes the risk of triggering or retraumatizing in services/materials.

**Wahkohtowin** – refers to a Cree word which signifies the interconnected nature of relationships, communities, and the natural world. Michif, being derived from Cree and French languages, also understands *Wahkohtowin* in the same way.

**Whiteness** – refers to a social construct applied to human beings rather than veritable truths that have universal validity. White culture, norms, and values become normative natural. They become the standard against which all other cultures, groups, and individuals are measured and usually found to be inferior.<sup>335</sup>

## Glossary of Acronyms

**AHF** – Aboriginal Healing Foundation  
**AHSOR** – Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve  
**AHSUNC** – Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities  
**AIM** – Adopt Indian-Métis Program  
**APS** – Aboriginal Peoples Survey  
**CBC** – Canadian Broadcasting Corporation  
**CFS** – Child and Family Services  
**CMAs** – Canada's Metropolitan Areas  
**DIA** – Department of Indian Affairs  
**ELCC** – Early Learning and Childcare  
**FASD** – Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder  
**FNICCI** – First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative  
**GBA+** – Métis Specific Gender Based Analysis Plus  
**GBV** – Gender-Based Violence  
**GSS** – General Social Survey  
**ICVS** – International Crime Victims Survey  
**LFMO/WMN** – Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak/Women of the Métis Nation  
**LGBTQ2S+** – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirited, Plus (other marginalized sexualities/gender identities)  
**MCFD** – Ministry of Children and Families  
**MMIWG** – Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls  
**MNC** – Métis National Council  
**NAWS** – National Aboriginal Women's Summit  
**NHS** – National Household Survey  
**NIOs** – National Indigenous Organizations  
**NMS** – No More Silence  
**NWAC** – Native Women's Association of Canada  
**NWMP** – North West Mounted Police

<sup>335</sup> Tator, Carol, Frances Henry, Charles Smith, and Maureen Brown. *Racial Profiling in Canada: Challenging the Myth of 'a Few Bad Apples'*. University of Toronto Press, 2006. Accessed June 05, 2019. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3138/9781442678972>.

**PIAAC** – Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies  
**PTSD** – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder  
**RCAP** – The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples  
**RCMP** – Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
**RDC** – Statistics Canada’s Research Data Centre  
**RIRF** – Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework  
**RREF** – Red River Expeditionary Force  
**SCC** – Supreme Court of Canada  
**SIS** – Sisters in Spirit Database  
**SWC** – Status of Women Canada (now the department for Women and Gender Equality or **WAGE**)  
**TRC** – Truth and Reconciliation Commission  
**UCR** – Uniform Crime Reporting Survey  
**UCR-2** – Uniform Crime Incident-Based Survey  
**UNDRIP** – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples  
**UNICEF** – United Nations Children's Fund (or United Nations Children's Emergency Fund)  
**VAWS** – Canadian Survey on Violence Against Women





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