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Indigenous Women’s Resistance and Healing from Colonial Violence:

A Study of literature and Art

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to flip the story of colonization from the perspective of the colonizers, and instead, make room to discuss the power and strength that Indigenous women hold to resist and exist despite the genocidal nature of settler-colonization. This is specifically done through the information given by literature written by Indigenous authors and artwork created by Indigenous peoples. Through these depictions of women, both fictionally and non-fictionally, we see the numerous ways that Indigenous women heal, build community, and resist colonial powers. Throughout the reading and analysis of about fifteen unique texts, there were some particular themes that occurred repeatedly displaying patterns in the healing methods utilized by Indigenous women. Some of the most prominent methods found were, healing through connections to family, community, land, and the universe, and cathartic fictional depictions of violence. Through analysis it was observed that much healing comes from living beings, the earth and the people that surround us. There is much more to this information than just the methods that Indigenous women utilize to heal. We all have our own position with the danger that faces Indigenous women. As the culmination of this project, I urge readers to assess their own position and what they can do individually to make this country safer and decolonize their lives. There are numerous resources for this available online and within this report, but the first step is always reflection on the multiple colonial systems that we all take part in.
Introduction

The gravity of Indian women’s situations, and the weight of our bodies, are too much.

Terese Marie Mailhot, 30

Research Question

The aim of this analysis is to start conversation, encourage critical thinking, and shift the narrative of Indigenous people’s “plight”1 from a story of suffering to one of resilience and power. Subsequently, the goal of this is to stir people to act and better understand ways that they can empower Indigenous people and honor accurate history. Throughout the years, a copious amount of research has been done to describe the ways in which we (most western nations) live in a settler-colonial society and how this affects those who were always Indigenous to this land. This conversation focuses the discussion of the violent and aggressive past and present of colonized America, as well as creating an all-consuming and powerful memorial to the continued patterns of healing that Indigenous women enact and demonstrate throughout their life. By beginning with the violence and ending with the healing, we shift the settler colonial narrative that normally erases native women and peoples.

Therefore, the goal of this is to exclusively honor and support Indigenous women and bring the forefront of the conversation the multitude of strategies they utilize to heal and resist colonial forces. This information is being collected through the lens of artistic creation; including primarily literature of different forms, but also interviews, documentaries, podcasts, art, and

1 This is referencing to Vine Deloria’s Custer Died for Your Sins, where he discusses the prescribed “plight” placed on indigenous peoples by colonizers. This has lasting effects in research conducted and is the focus of much research done by colonizers on indigenous peoples.
other media. Through this information that native women have chosen to share\(^2\), we can see a strength and power through the collective survivance\(^3\) to colonialism.

Resistance to colonialism takes multiple different forms, not just those discussed and found within this research. While this will in no way be a comprehensive list, represent all native women, or separate methods of healing based upon tribal traditions (see footnote 2) this research valuably places power and voice within Indigenous women. While statistics, data, and other objective research will be displayed and discussed in our findings, as this is necessary to understand the vast trauma and violence that native women are healing from, this will not be the focus. I intentionally choose to, instead, focus on the women themselves, and what they share with us.

The Journey of Research

When completing work that discusses populations that we do not belong to and are not a part of, it is important to give voices from this community the most agency that we can, so we can properly hear and sit with the knowledges that they are giving us. Vine Deloria Jr. precisely discussed the multitude of improper methods used by anthropologists and other researchers to discuss Indigenous populations. Deloria changed the course of my research perspective, as I did not want to be an “anthropologist who is only out… to verify what he has suspected all along” (Deloria 1970, 80). Through reading the chapter this quote came from, focusing on the role of

\(^2\) It is important to not publish, share or otherwise compromise many of the sacred elements of different indigenous religions or ceremonies, as outsiders are not welcomed to know this information. Through the utilization of only published information written by indigenous women, we can ensure that this knowledge is not sacred and appropriate to be used.

\(^3\) A reference to both “survival” and “resistance” to colonial powers
anthropologists, I reconsidered my original methodology and implemented more sources, and more *types* of sources to make my research more accurate and responsible.

One of the big changes that I made was a persistent effort to include sources from authors of non-traditional texts. While there is always value in the experience of reading the words that someone put into the universe, for a project of this nature there is also an intense need to listen to what the author has to say about these words and how this should shape our understanding of what we are reading. This provides more context for texts and consequently gives authors more agency in our reading and understanding of their text⁴. In addition, it also serves to honor other modes of communication honored in Indigenous cultures, such as the power of oral communication, depiction, and storytelling. This form will replicate some of that in an effort to include information accurately and respectfully.

It is important to complicate the Western understanding and connotations of “research”. Linda Tuhiwai Smith also brings up how “research” is a dirty word in many Indigenous communities because of how common it was for white researchers to go into Indigenous communities and improperly depict what they “observed.” There is a tension between Indigenous people and researchers, which is why for this research as a white person, my model involves listening to what Indigenous people have chosen to put into the world and not forcing myself on any community to conduct this analysis. It is pertinent to keep this in mind through the reading of this material as well, as we are discussing the lives, deaths, passions, traumas, loves and losses of people.

Through this transition, I had already found multiple aspects of my research that would have been incorrect. An important example to discuss is how memoirs and books create a
stagnant reality that may have shifted; you can only know and understand if this reality is still true to the author by interacting with current vocalizations regarding the work and his/her current life. When beginning my research, I had selected *My Body is a Book of Rules* as a primary and only text referring to Elissa Washutta, except perhaps some news articles or academic sources that provided information about her schooling and life. When I began this transition, I found that not only did she have a more recent book that came out a few *days* before, called *White Magic*, but she is also vocal about her distance from the version of her that wrote that text. She feels that the text she created in *My Body is a Book of Rules* was represented of her trying to fit into an improper diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder. Without this transition I would have used inaccurate information and I would also, more importantly, not be properly representing Indigenous women through this conversation. I learned so much more about the authors as people and beings through diversifying my research.

Through this diversification I have also opted to include some research outside of just literature and venture into studying some other forms of art that have been brought up in the literature that I have studied. Additionally, the arts of painting and sculpture specifically have come up multiple times throughout the different texts that I have read, so in an effort to better contextualize this and understand the place these elements have, I have included some works created by native people and museums that *properly*\(^5\) display these elements. This element of my research was also not originally planned but was seen as evidently important to the bigger message and meaning that I worked on creating here, after listening to the Indigenous texts and stories that I worked with.

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\(^5\) There has been a struggle to properly honor Indigenous art for centuries due to colonial violence. Many pieces that were displayed in museums were stolen and mistreated, and then falsified as to their origins. The museums that I will be discussing will be Indigenous run and sponsored in order to ensure the art that I am discussing is authentic and properly honored.
These changes were imperative to the authenticity and accuracy of this presentation. Almost everything we read and interact with in this country, from history to pleasure reading is written from the perspective of colonization and forced assimilation. It is of great importance, then, that this information be told from the perspective of Indigenous women and the time is taken to listen to their voices and amplify them. There are numerous and plenty texts that focus on colonial violence, but rarely do we make the space to talk about the strength, resilience, and power of Indigenous women.

**Background Knowledge**

“The image of the Indians everywhere are reminders. Americans aren’t quite ready to forget. We want to remember. We are still trying to make sense of a strange, complicated, and powerful history” – Museum of the American Indian, Pocahontas exhibit

**Early colonization**

For the first time in this study, I reach the connection to the circular nature created of, female Indigenous⁶ life and this violence. The violence faced by Indigenous women is seen here through the patterns created from the very beginning of colonialism where material and possession were trademark attributes of settlement. Colonial men needed to possess female bodies to possess the land, resulting in a circle of violence to continue for hundreds of years. This is evident from the physical possession of bodies and land, to the language that is used in descriptions of land acquisition such as “penetration”.

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⁶ Throughout this text you may notice a multitude of terminology to distinguish Indigenous people. These different words are, themselves, products of settler-colonialism and a colonial society. Refer to Appendix A for more information on the meaning of these words; taken from a 2013 report by the Humans Rights Watch.
Today, almost 500 years since the colonizers began this violence, many Indigenous women use their intense connection to the land, that continues to terrify colonizers, to heal from the very violence created against them. This connection is strengthened through reciprocitv, relationality, thankfulness, honor, and value. Women interact with and honor our mother in numerous ways that give both more strength. Through the earth, women make dream catchers, baskets, dishes, houses, and more, all of which serve to help sustain life and continue the circle. Not coincidentally do all of these things also have a multitude of circles within their own structure and creation. The circular life of women gives birth to more circles of life, used and honored for many years.

Even though there has been persistent effort from colonial forces to “kill the Indian, save the man”, Indigenous women have prevailed and resisted these forces, continuing life and deep relationships with land. These women enact rematriation⁷, and the circle continues. In many instances we see a restoration to practices that were pre-colonial after groups go through periods of healing. This is true for the Algonquin tribe, where during first contact of colonization, women, who were previously the voters and held sacred tribal power, were striped of all voting rights, and essentially disenfranchised from a community that used to honor and respect these women. After countless social movements and great effort, women were granted the right to vote again⁸. Robyn Borgeious describes this phenomenon effectively by “settler colonialism requires

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⁷ It is interesting to note here that the word processing device that I am using does not recognize “rematriation” as a word, showing the engrained language acceptance of the patriarchy. Due to this I wanted to provide a definition—“Rematriation is a powerful word Indigenous women of Turtle Island use to describe how they are restoring balance to the world...it means ‘Returning the Sacred to the Mother’ (rematriation.com)

⁸ Voting rights in the United States have a complicated history rooted in oppression. Women gained the right to vote in 1922, but Indigenous people had to wait until 1924 to gain citizenship and in some states were barred until well into the 1950’s
violence against Indigenous women and girls to secure domination over Indigenous peoples” (2018, 70).

Pocahontas exemplifies the pattern of controlling Indigenous women and using their bodies as political symbols and currency. Pocahontas was forced into a marriage with John Rolfe, where she had a son Thomas Pessiromeneh Rolfe. Throughout her life, she recorded no record of herself and only sat for one portrait while in England. Between 1610-1613 she brought food to starving colonists many times and was kidnapped, forced to Christianize, and marry. Similar to the patterns displayed with the Alquonquin tribe, Pocahontas was forced into a relationship with a white man; this relationship was used for political gain and capital. She was also extremely young when married (Museum of the American Indian, 2021).

This violence is still perpetuated through the popular depictions of Pocahontas and the manner that her story is told. We see many different variations of Pocahontas tales, but they all fictionally depict her as an “Indian Princess” and that she was “saved from savagism that was native religions.” One of the largest fabrications was the portrait below (Photo of Pocahontas saving John Rolfe), where she is depicted saving him from death. At the time of this portrait’s depiction, Pocahontas would be 11 years old, and was almost certainly not in the middle of a love triangle of this nature. Pocahontas was a pawn in a larger political scheme, continuously mistreated, and forced to separate herself from what may have been the most important relationships of her life. She exemplifies the patterns that were established and enforced upon native communities for hundreds of years.

In addition, the glorification and improper testimonial of her story tokenizes having “a small amount” of native blood from an “Indian princess” great grandmother.

_Decolonizing Methodologies_ brings up how important this is in understanding the obsession of
Americans with mistreating native people, as many non-native people claim to be. Because Pocahontas specifically left a son behind, there is a lot of conjecture about decedents. This led to the 1/16th rule to be passed in Virginia, that gave powerful white colonists more power to claim any lineage that they desired. This meant that anyone who had 1/16 or less of Indigenous blood could be counted a white, which was a powerful ability. This strategically gave certain Virginians power to assert that they were descended from Pocahontas and John Rolfe and still be considered white and have the privileges of being white. This was called the “Pocahontas exception” (Museum of the American Indian). In addition, Virginia made rulings over the years deleted an “Indigenous” option from the census all together forcing people to make other selections such as “mulatto” or “colored.” This is another mechanism used to displace Indigenous people and strip people of their indigeneity.

To this day Indigenous women feel the lasting impacts of these policies and actions and are continued victims of violence and murder at the hands of a colonized society. Refer to figure 2 to see modern day depictions of Pocahontas and the story of her life.

**Western Canadian Hubs of Violence**

Perhaps one of the most well-known hubs of continued colonial violence against women is the shocking number of women to go missing along the Highway of Tears, Route 16. This particular highway is a focal point in conversation for Amnesty International report released urging the Canadian government to take action and stop the violence. This highway is an isolated stretch of 725⁹ kilometers from around Prince George to Prince Rupert. Most women have gone missing from here. Indigenous women in Canada are 6 times more likely than non-Indigenous

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⁹ This is the equivalent to about 450.5 Miles, which is a little more than ¼ the distance of the California coastline.
women to be killed through intentional acts of violence. All of this information displays how aggressive the violence Indigenous women in Canada face is (Mcdiarmid 2019).

The Downtown East Side (DTES) is a specific section of Vancouver that is also at the forefront of the conversation around murdered and missing Indigenous women. This is a specific section of Vancouver that is the epitome of over-policed and under-protected. In this area women are known to be forced into prostitution. It is where hotels charge women to use their rooms and then insist, through intimidation, fear and violence, that these women only buy drugs from the hotel. Many women narrate that they would rather live on the street than be tied to the hotels and live in the horrid conditions that the rooms are in. Women in this area are continually taken advantage of and unfairly treated, continuing the cycle of violence. This area would benefit greatly from social service programs and government assistance but instead, the women from this area are neglected and not cared for, which is representative of the value the community prescribes to women (Kelly 2021).

The DTES precisely displays a lot of the systemic issues that face Indigenous women. Many of the families of women who were residing here—Dawn Crey, Elsie Sebastian, and Janet Henry—discuss how their loved one would phone home often to check in and let everyone know that they were okay. These calls range in frequency but most of them were multiple times a week. The missing phone calls were what alerted these families that there was something wrong, and when this information is brought to the police, every time it is negated and families told loved ones are on a binge, with a significant other, or “sleeping it off.” The lack of mobilization

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10 These are just a few of the women who have gone missing from this area. There are many more women who are missing from this area, both documented cases and undocumented cases. These cases were a few where the families have spoken out, shared information, and brought the case to the public. These are chosen to be discussed because of this.
of police forces when high risk victims are reported missing adds to the alarming violence seen between Indigenous women and the colonial society.

Robert Pickton is the culmination of the physical areas to single individual responsible for incomprehensible violence. Pickton, while only convicted of the murder of 6 women is suspected in cases for over 33 women whose DNA was found on his farm. Pickton utilized the socialized prejudice against the DTES and picked up female prostitutes, brought them back to his farm, tortured and killed them. The majority of the killings took place from 1997-2002, where once he was even brought in as a suspect on a case but was released due to the “nature” of the victim being a prostitute that he claimed robbed him. There is no definitive answer for how many women Pickton has killed, but it is estimated to be around 49 (Kelly & Urquhart-White).

Pickton was also believed to function utilizing the Highway of Tears and local hitchhikers on this road. Through different initiatives enacted by the Canadian government, such as project EPANA, there have been at least three active serial killers identified. This is a shocking discovery, that is rarely talked about together, due to the public’s lack of concern or belief in a serial killer’s operation during the time of killings. These three killers are Robert Pickton, Bobby Jack Fowler, and John Martin Crawford.\(^\text{11}\) Most sources discuss only one of these men. The most discussed is Pickton as he harmed the most women and operated for the longest time, but rarely do they talk about all three in conjunction, which is important to consider. While all the men were caught in different years, they were also all committing crimes in the late 80’s- early 90’s (Morbid Podcast, Finding Cleo Podcast, CNN News). While the

\(^{11}\) All of these men have been convicted of crimes and are currently in prison or have died in prison. This is not speculation; all 3 men went through the court process and were found guilty.
public did not care enough to believe or investigate the possibility of a serial killer during this time, three were operating at once.\textsuperscript{12}

Almost all the cases that are brought up in the Amnesty International report that urged the Canadian government to mobilize resources to end this violence occurred in one of these three areas. This report calls for the Canadian government to make training and resources available for the RCMP and other police so that this issue can become a priority. While it is true that certain officers like Gary Kerr put lifelong dedication into solving cases of MMIW, this is not the case for all officers. In addition, older officers such as Kerr did not have structure in casework, so many officers still have their notebooks with potentially vital information in their basements and attics (Walker 2016). This has not reached national attention, or policy change due to the attitude that sex workers are “throw-aways” of society and not valued the same as other lives.

Almost 10 years after Amnesty International released a report urging the government to train officers and make changes, the Humans Rights Watch released a second report about the abuse officers of the law enact upon Indigenous women, which exacerbates the distrust displayed in many missing persons cases. The report details “use of tasers, excessive use of force against girls, cross-gender searches, condition of city cells, and sexual and physical abuse”. In the beginning summary of findings, it is noted that “for many indigenous women and girls interviewed for this report, abuse and other Indignities visited on them by the police have come to define their relationship with law enforcement” (2013, 8). The wide issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women includes officers both not completing their job and also enacting violence themselves.

As a result of these released reports the Canadian government has started initiatives like EPANA to locate and find information on the missing women. There were many obstacles like those described above, but there were also issues with the structure of the investigations. The first is the criteria for a missing person to be placed on this list. This was restrictive and meant that only 18 women were placed on the list to be investigated by RCMP again. Refer to figure 4 to see a released image of the missing women who were part of this investigation.

The examples given above focus on Canadian investigations and situations, however this is far from just a Canadian issue. This is an epidemic in the United States as well, but there has been a significantly smaller response and initiative made to solve cases and fix the dangers facing Indigenous Women. While there is movement and activism occurring in the States to push the government to do more, there is still a lot of change that needs to occur.

Residential Schools and Intergenerational Trauma

Throughout the United States and Canada there were numerous boarding schools that Indigenous children were ripped away from their families and forced to attend. These schools were designed to extinguish Indigenous culture and languages while simultaneously treat these children in a barbaric manner. In addition, certain schools like the Goodfish Lake First Nation Day school that was implemented was used for consensual vaccine testing for polio, where of 28 attendees, only 7 were alive in 2000, showing clear disregard for the lives of indigenous people (Methot 2019, 41-42). In addition, many students had their names replaced with numbers, further dehumanizing them. The treatment of children in residential schools was appalling and, in many instances, deadly. The Kamloops Indian Residential School had 51 deaths on its record. That number was blatantly incorrect as 215 students were found in a mass grave in late May of 2021 (CBS news, 2021). We are still discovering some of the atrocities that took place and were
hidden by the government, and shortly after 2 more sites were located moving the total to 505 students\textsuperscript{13,14}.

The effects of this persistent and aggressive violence that was felt for generations of Indigenous people has resulted in what can be referred to as inter-generational violence. The forced removal of children and the mistreatment of them, has made it so that “Indigenous peoples have unable to recover from the chronic trauma of colonialism these recurring memories and unresolved emotions have morphed into social narratives” that further damage populations and connections between families (Methot 2019, 45). This further causes Indigenous people to mimic the trauma enacted upon them at a young age unintentionally which many times comes in the form of abuse to children, spouses, themselves, and loved ones; this phenomenon is what fuels intergenerational violence, as since no generation can heal, the cycle of violence continues even if the institution no longer exists (in this case residential schools). This can lead individuals to also enact violence onto themselves, as mentioned above, where after experiencing trauma, your brain encourages you to reenact it by putting yourself in other dangerous situations.

While many governments had tried to make payouts for students who endured the residential schools, this does not fix the issue or bring proper reparations. In order to receive this funding, in many instances, you had to prove you were mistreated and recount the abuse you suffered. This is both painful and triggering, especially for those who have been unable to heal effectively. In addition, this does not fix the systemic issues that exist from residential schools,\textsuperscript{13,14}

\textsuperscript{13} With the current events happening, it I important to listen to native activists and communities in addition to traditional news outlets. This information needs to be told from the indigenous perspective and we all need to listen to Indigenous community members. Some twitter pages to follow that give accurate information and perspectives-- @turtleislandNa1, @AmericanIndian8, @nhaabowekwe

\textsuperscript{14} It is also important to bring up the different information surrounding these findings. Different sources have listed numbers up to 5,000 missing children. This information is still actively developing and will most likely change again soon.
grant native peoples the land that they own and was taken, or work to create cultural programs for children to go to in an effort to reverse the erasure that these institutions caused. Governments once again are putting band-aids on broken bones.

Joy Harjo addresses the long-term effects of intergenerational trauma in her memoir. She describes that “My father would get angry. He was angry because his mother dies of tuberculosis when he was a baby, because his father beat him, because he was treated like an Indian man in lands that were stolen away along with everything else” (Harjo 2019, 44). This section shows the lasting and compounding effects of intergenerational violence and how they affect people continuously, even after a certain event may “seem” over. This compounded violence makes it more difficult to move into a healthy life, as Harjo’s father detailed, above the weight that this can bear.

**The Healing**

*If I can release that anger, I take the first step toward becoming myself and living my own story.*

*I may be marked by my life experiences, but they do not define me. In that moment, I recast myself from the silent victim to grateful survivor.*

*Legacy, Suzanne Methot, 214*

Now that I have discussed some of the real issues and violence that Indigenous women face as a community (at disproportionate rates), we now shift focus to talk exclusively about the manners in which many Indigenous women participate in healing. This information has come from a range of sources, each of which will be identified as modalities are explained. Although the works represent both real and fictional accounts, the modes of healing established below are seen across the board. It is important to note once again that this is not an exhaustive or comprehensive list; it is just some of the ways observed frequently within this research.
While each of these healing methods are discussed in their own sections, the actual methods and combinations are not as neat and clean cut as this. Many examples show multiple types of healing, and many women engage in multiple methods. The process of healing and life is a circle, where we return to some methods, adopt new ones, and continue our path. This section of the paper specifically is written to embody the circular nature of healing and many Native American views about life, so we understand the connected manner of the topics we discuss.

For this discussion, and the entirety of this research, our discussion will focus and center on circularity. For many Indigenous communities, the circle is a sacred shape that is believed to display never ending life, storied journeys, important patterns, and many other elements in Indigenous communities. To honor the value of this figure and its continued occurrence in my research and the communities I am working with, I tried to structure my writing in this manner. It is built into our colonial knowledge to want to separate things into binaries (fiction versus nonfiction, male versus female, violence versus peace). Instead, I have tried to model this information circularly, where we discuss things together in patterns that realign with one another and show the cycle of colonial violence, healing, and the simultaneous existence of the two.

Another important anti-colonial aspect of this healing that will not be discussed is religion. Religious practices from tribe to tribe is greatly different and sacred to members. These religions or spirituality are often extremely private and not for outsiders to have knowledge of. Some of the fictional texts that are discussed bring up some elements of religious healing and ceremony (which is distinct and different from other traditions we will discuss) but I do not feel right publicizing, dissecting, and discussing these in this manner. Whether these reflect real religious healing methods, I do not aim to discover or discuss. I think it is only respectful and
responsible to acknowledge the importance of religious healing to Indigenous women but honor the sacredness and privateness of this process.

**Generational efforts to heal**

Visiting the fictional realm created by Indigenous women, intergenerational trauma and its effects are displayed often and in unique ways that show women’s efforts toward healing. The concept of many texts is actually the connection between multiple generations of women or family members and how they each navigate life, *Crooked Hallelujah* and *The Seed Keeper* being two examples that follow multiple generations of native people (Cherokee and a fictional Dahkota). Through texts of this nature, we can see how trauma lives through generations and exists in different realms.

In *Crooked Hallelujah* we see Lula (2\textsuperscript{nd} generation) cause trauma on Justine (3\textsuperscript{rd} generation) due to the aggressive religious devotion that she possessed. This causes Justine to compensate for her daughter Reney (4\textsuperscript{th} generation) in the opposite way but, the residual effects of her mother’s religious addiction and her own trauma, create a different type of trauma for Reney herself. Through this novel, we see four generations of healing take place together and the effort of each woman to make a better life than the one they were originally given. Women are often seen as the life givers in Indigenous societies and each of these women display this through their effort to bring new life to their children in a positive way.

Lula tries to heal from the trauma of her husband leaving her by devoting herself to God. She does this as a path to salvation and prays constantly for everyone in her life, to guarantee salvation. Through her connection to God, she believes that she can strengthen herself and heal herself. Her method of healing, in turn causes some of the trauma that Justine feels when she is
growing up—she feels suffocated by the Church and the beliefs her mother forces her to participate in. Intentionality does not always equal outcome and while this ended up being a large source of shame and anxiety in Justine, her mother meant it to be a healing agent.

Justine is assaulted when she is 15 years old, after sneaking out to meet a man who is her senior by several years. Justine internalized this assault and guilt, as she broke the rules of her mother and God by sneaking out, wearing bell bottoms and not being a “good” child. The direct trauma she experienced was intensified through these other factors. As the book follows a non-linear timeline, we do not get much of the immediate aftermath, but years later we see Justine raising Reney in the opposite manner that she was raised, wearing makeup, shorter skirts, and imposing less strict rules.

*Betty*, by Tiffany McDaniels, is another impactful example of an effort to heal intergenerational trauma and stop the cycle that can begin with this prolonged exposure to violence. Through the writing of *Betty*, Tiffany McDaniel must experience and grow through much of the trauma that clouds her family life. She conducts difficult interviews with family members to get information on their experiences and how this has affected them. She is honest with the fact that this writing is difficult to complete and hearing all of this was not easy, but she explains that it is important to know this information and try to understand what this means. Through this text, Tiffany honors the stories of the women in her family and also makes an effort to stop the violence that has occurred intergenerationally.

Another effect of intergenerational trauma is the tendency for those who experience this trauma at a young age to reenact the trauma that they experienced themselves through unconscious means, this was discussed earlier in our contextualization of intergenerational trauma. This prohibits the process of healing and continues the personal and intergenerational
effects of the trauma experienced. A precise example of this in the fictional work is in *Five Little Indians* Masie prostitutes herself out to man on the streets but will not be intimate with her boyfriend. While being intimate with him, she explicitly recounts how “these were father’s words. They took the rhythm of his thrusts. And I couldn’t breathe without this. I didn’t exist without this” (Good 2021, 63). Masie feels the need to reenact what happened to her in an effort to understand. She is stuck in a pattern of self-abuse and harm because she cannot heal from the trauma and violence that occurred to her as a child.

There are a number of ways that art can depict intergenerational effects of colonial violence, but there is one manner in specific that I want to discuss. While we will discuss specific examples of totem pole uses to heal later in this essay, it is important to note their significance in an intergenerational exemplification. Totem poles are typically used to tell stories and shows dynamics between those who are living within a group. This is an important form of art to show relationships and rights to land, song, dance, and culture. It is important to consider the intergenerational trauma that could have been experienced as part of the journey to the creation of these poles. Each one tells a story of a family and a group, but many times these Indigenous people are mistreated and abused at the hands of colonizers creating lasting effects and cycles as described above. These totem poles are resistance to the bad and instead a journey to tell the happiness and strength of Indigenous groups.

The Healing of Physical Writing

Many of the authors that informed this analysis wrote fictional pieces about Native people that were based off of some experience that they had; such as interactions with weather, land, family, colonial society or a number of other life experiences. This was discovered through a less
static reading of the novels produced, and instead interacting with the author through interviews and research, which provided a more complete look into the creation process and craft inspirations. Throughout many interviews on podcast shows like *Between the Covers* and *Forked Up*, we hear authors like Kelli Jo Ford, Tommy Orange, Tiffany McDaniel and Brandon Hobson depict part of their lives that are connection to their fictional characters.

The grouping of Ford, Orange, and Hobson is specific, as these three writers utilize many of the same structures and elements of fiction. All of these authors use multiple perspectives, changing by chapter to tell a complex narrative that is woven together using character connections. Through multiple characters’ perspectives, the authors all mention that they inserted parts of themselves and those they love in these people, making space in fiction for truth to still be spoken. This will be revisited to discuss explicit connections later, as they relate to the resiliency of women from violence. The changing narratives themselves show multiple avenues for healing, resiliency, and advancement, as well as the different treatment that men and women experience generationally, going back to the topic of intergenerational violence.

I will later discuss the actions of the character Betty; regarding her writing down family member’s truth and burying it as a form of land connection, but we also must address it as an instance of writing to heal. Through this action, Betty makes sure that these stories are told, even if just to nature, while simultaneously releases herself from the pressure of being the sole holder of these truths. This is displayed as a very cathartic experience; even though experiencing extreme stress through these events, we see Betty grow and heal. We also see Betty grow and heal herself through her work of poetry. Similarly, we see Fraya heal herself and attempt to heal herself, through her writing of music. Many of the women in this family use words to try to heal from the trauma and violence that they are experiencing.
It is important to discuss the non-fiction elements of *Betty*, as these parallel the fictional elements of the text. In an ironic and allegorical manner, McDaniel uses her creation of this book in order to heal herself after hearing the “family secret” at age 17. McDaniel immediately began writing this book. This brings us into the discussion of the questionable truth of this book itself, which includes the warning “this is a work of fiction” and is termed a “novel”. McDaniels details that all of the people in the book are based on her true family and much of what is depicted actually did happen. Her fictionalization only occurred to bridge stories and make the novel more readable. She acquired this information through interviews which we will discuss again (Ink Heist). Tiffany, similar to her mother Betty in the text, heals from the trauma of knowledge through the writing process of this book.

Writing as a form of healing is the entire premise of Louise Erdrich’s *Future Home of the Living God* where the mother, Cedar uses this small black notebook with a photo of the ultrasound of her future child as a method of getting through the tumultuous and dangerous time period that she is living. This entire book, dated like a diary entry, helps Cedar to think multiple plans of escape through and talk about her identity, future, past, and present. This book is a tool that she directly states impacts her immensely and is immensely calming. During a time of great peril, she says “most important, I still keep this notebook, your letter, securely hidden. I don’t know what I would do if I couldn’t write to you” (Erdrich 2017, 212). This notebook, and subsequently this writing is not only healing but also a savior.

All of these authors we discuss, especially those who write fiction or memoirs, exemplify a common trait of Native American Literature, which is the emphasis on healing aspects of artistic creation, which “can be used to find a voice, to survive loss, and to name experience for the sake of self and for others” (Lundquist 2004, 209). There are many connections between
these authors who have similar mentors (Sherman Alexie\textsuperscript{15} being a large inspiration discussed) and work with similar publishing companies to produce work. This creates its own community in some ways. The Tin House publishing company is also known for uplifting and publishing from Native American Authors in addition there are also Birch Books the store and Greenfield Press.

Writing for the sake of others is what Michelle Good describes in many interviews about her book \textit{Five Little Indians}. While the five characters are fictional, she describes that Lucy in particular is based off of someone that her mother knew and went to residential school with. Good’s mother watched Lucy hemorrhage to death outside due to tuberculosis and Good wanted to place her memory within this book. Good describes this book as being inside of her for a long time, and these five children; Howie, Lucy, Masie, Clara, and Kenny, have been with her for a long time and she had to share them with the world. She created this book to honor her mother and also these people who have been with her for years (Powers, 2021).

In the text that Good produces, we hear clearly and explicitly the story of Lily and the anger that Clara feels about this death. Clara has a moment of honestly and vulnerability and “told her about the Indian School and how Lily had hemorrhaged to the brink of death in front of her. How Sister Mary had let her die, alone and helpless” (Good 2021, 198). Lily’s story is now living in the print of these pages forever. Her story is no longer lost.

It is also important to note two specific authors who waited until they were later in their life to write and release their novels. Both Michelle Good and Angeline Boulley both waited until they were in their latter part of their life to release what became bestselling novels. In interviews with both women, they discuss how they waited until they lived more and learned more before they began to write and think about publication. This aligns with many Indigenous

\textsuperscript{15} It is important to note that since this, Alexie has been alleged to be sexually inappropriate for woman that he has mentored. Many women began coming forward in 2018 to share their stories.
knowledges where elders in communities are seen as revered and honored figures who are to be
listened to, possess important information, and learned from. These texts were made to display
Indigenous peoples to others in a medium where Indigenous characters are not normally afforded
the space to exist. Boulley specifically says that she wanted to write a “native Nancy Drew”
which was the inspiration for her text. These texts were hits instantly and display many lessons
and information that seems like the elders are handing down to future generations.

It is important to note here that other forms of art creation also have healing qualities and
are discussed in many of the texts. In Bone Black, through the creation of pottery, Wren heals
from the loss of her sister and other trauma that she has endured within her life. Her pottery
studio has always been a place where she can go to sort out her emotions and find her inner
peace. Throughout her memoirs, Waschutta discusses many different forms of art (including
witchcraft) that she engaged with in order to try to heal herself after her journey of suffering.
Betty describes her stage and acting (in addition to writing) as a way that she engages with the
process of being free and healing. Art in many different forms is a modality of healing.

Resisting Toxic Shame

Many Indigenous women are forced to heal from the toxic shame that has been passed
down and engrained into their being through the structures of colonialism. There are many
examples of this, such as the “squaw” ascription that many women identify with through the
pervasive messages of colonialism. In Legacy Suzanne Methot describes toxic shame as “a
pervasive feeling of being fundamentally flawed and inadequate as a human… handed down
through generations and is connected to the effects that residential schools, racism,
discrimination, chronic trauma” (2019, 141).
Toxic shame has an important position in this analysis of healing, as it is the culmination of the repetitive violence of colonialism that causes such deep and persistent issues with healing. We see examples of this in many of the memoir texts. *Heart Berries* is a really powerful explicit example of this struggle, as Mailhot focuses on her self-identity as a squaw and how this prohibits men (particularly Casey) from loving her. She recounts that “Men objectify me, to such a degree they forget I eat. You feed your dog more kindly than you feed me. That’s men” (Mailhot 2018, 25). Her self-perception of worth is only further damaged by the way that men treat her. She feels this is an affirmation of her lack of worth.

Through almost every work (both fiction and nonfiction) there is reference to a woman being called or labeling themselves as a “squaw”. This pervasive stereotype, hate speech, and thought patterns are harmful to all of the women. This is both an internal and external example of toxic shame. Through our body of research, we see a repetitive and circular mention of the “squaw” allegorically representing the pervasive stereotype of the squaw woman. “Indians are Squaws. Indians are stupid. Squaws are sluts. These ideas are fabric of everyday life… I know them as I know my own name” (Methot, 2019, 32). While these two examples are from nonfiction accounts, the same ideas are possessed in a multitude of fictional texts.

Through these texts we observe women become motivated to unlearn these stereotypes and redefine themselves. Many of them do this through the process of writing or through other methods of resistance that we will discuss. The presence of this stereotype serves to encourage women later in life to redefine what they thought they knew.

Within art, many times women resist toxic shame through creating powerful art that is meant to resist prescribed notions that they disagree with. A large-scale example of this is the exhibit curated by Reyna Hernandez, where she collected works from various Indigenous women
and titles the exhibit “Bring her Home: Sacred Womxn of Resistance”. This exhibit is filled with work that was created by contemporary Indigenous women and meant to resist erasure and promote awareness of the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women. In a press release, Hernandez, details that “There is so much to learn from people who are often silenced, and I wanted to create space for these perspectives to be heard and seen” (Jones).

Another example of this is the artist Nayana Lafond, who creates art of women with hands over their mouths. Using primarily acrylic paint and cloth she uses life as her inspiration to create images that are impactful and leave viewers thinking. She has two main forms of art that focus on COVID and MMIW. Through her website you can view a gallery of images of indigenous women with red handprints over their mouths, signifying their forced silence. This art is powerful, and created intentionally to stir action and resistance.

Women and Land

A multitude of prevalent writers (Suzanne Methot, Vine Deloria, Terese Mailhot, Elissa Washutta) in Indigenous communities discuss the multitude of parallels drawn between Indigenous women and land. The rape and displacement of land is tied to the beginning of the violence that is seen being activated against Indigenous women. It is important to consider the beginning of colonialism and how this is still felt today. Women are the givers of life and many of the traditional roles given to women are influenced by this. This was a threat to colonizers as when more life is given, more people are born that have claim to their homelands. Through control of the female indigenous body, colonizers were able to sever ties to land and eliminate birthright to Turtle Island. Many scholars tie this to continued violence faced by Indigenous women, as their bodies are a threat to continued colonization. Many women are protestors and
defenders of the land in their activism. Winona Laduke is a powerful women activist who has been arrested for her protests regarding Pipeline 3\textsuperscript{16}.

The other beginning of the systemic violence (which is more nuanced than the outright egregious actions of the colonizers) was through marriage. Colonizers created laws that forced women to cease land rights to their husbands, which, after women were forced into marriages with white men, made another avenue for colonizers to acquire land unethically. This can be seen in its systemic manner through the Algonquian tribe became part of the pluralist legal system and the trustee that “rendered Shinnecock people aliens in their own land” and stripped women of personhood (Leonard, 1996, 106). Women in this tribe were stripped of voting rights for hundreds of years, and after years of protesting and advocating for the reinstatement of their rights, this was granted in 1993.

As we can see, women’s bodies are tied to the land in numerous ways; this has led to similar violent and heinous treatment at the hands of the colonizers. Similar to how colonizers restricted social order, (like in the Algonquian tribe discussed above), they also continuously restructured land boundaries and practices. The autonomy of land and women were being simultaneously diminished in a systematic and intentional manner. The Three Sisters planting original practice of growth and reciprocal relationships with the earth are extensive examples of this stripping away of rights. Before colonization, for hundreds of years, multiple Indigenous communities throughout all of Turtle Island used the three sister’s method of growth, which involves planting corn, beans, and squash, in this order, while utilizing red herring as a natural

\textsuperscript{16} For more information on her, written from her own perspective visit: https://www.echopress.com/opinion/columns/7298931-LaDuke-Maldives-should-look-to-North-Dakota-for-new-country
fertilizer (Robin Wall Kimmerer, 2016). Through allotment acts and land restriction native people were forced to plant in colonial style farms for years.

European colonizers could not see the purpose, value, or merit in this planting method (even though they stole and benefitted from the harvest of native peoples) and would only plant in symmetrical, lined gardens that stripped soil of nutrients and damaged land. The three sisters provide shade, sun, nutrients, and water in proper amounts for all the people planted at the top of the mound. Through sustainable farming practices and careful consideration for the land, Indigenous people would move and burn land appropriately to start the process of circular life again. The Three Sisters are planted and live on a mound of soil (a circle) and flourish, colonizers take plants and force inhabitable linear structure upon them.

In many instances, native communities compare the circle and mound of the three sisters garden to that of a pregnant woman’s stomach. The birth of the plants and the food that will feed a community is compared to the birth of children that will continue the growth and future of the community. The women are inextricably tied to the land and their bodies are represented throughout the land to show the powerful connection to life giving and birth that women have.

In addition, art and mapmaking have also been tied to women’s bodies, specifically that of Pocahontas. As we previously discussed, she has been depicted as an avenue between the colonizers and the Indigenous people. In a few original art exhibitions, she is actually seen to be part of the land. Refer to figure 3 to view an example of this work. This shows the vast connection that colonizers made between Pocahontas, women, and land. Women in many cases were also the figures that tended to the land and cared for it.

In fictional texts like Betty, we still see this great connection with the land. The women off this text, the three daughters Fraya, Betty and Flossie, all have experience with their father in
the garden. During this time their father always uses different parts of their body’s (a hand, arm, foot) to measure spaces between the land. All of the daughters participate with this, and their father makes a point to make sure that the girls know how valued and honored they are as part of the earth. This intense connection is honored and valued within Indigenous communities.

**Connection to Land**

Where community engagement and commitment are not available in this capacity, women find other ways to engage with the community in a method of healing and resilience. Washutta displays this powerfully by mixing her colonial and Indigenous desires, both due to her fascination with Kurt Cobain, and her desire to be closer and in better relationship with her people, the Cowlitz tribe. Our circle of research once again is brought to both Washutta and land. Through Washutta’s journey toward healing, she tries various forms of what she describes as “magic”, which our circle will return to, but she builds up her sense of agency, value and knowledge through berry picking and other land activities with her aunties. She uses this time to connect with herself and separate from both the men she found herself with and the diagnoses that she was prescribed.

The land is also used in many texts and real lives to communicate with Indigenous women and bring about messages and healing. In *Bone Black*, Wren is never alone throughout the catharsis of killing, the coyote is always with her, watching. Many Indigenous women talk of a strong connection to land as a way of freedom and healing. Wren continuously brings up the coyote and makes him offerings throughout the text, which shows in many ways that approval of the land for the cleansing that she is enacting. In many ways she uses the resources provided by the land as a method to enact her own healing. Which is exemplified through the clay from the
earth that she uses in order to make the pottery that she glazes with the bone black ash created by the men she has killed.

Betty exemplifies this in a unique and powerful way through Betty’s direct connection between land and healing. As a young child Betty learns and receives a lot of traumatic information about her family and what they have all gone through, specifically the women. The weight of this information is hard for anyone to receive, let alone a child and she needs to find a manner to cope. When she learns about any event Betty runs to “a faraway place” and then writes. She writes down the entire truth of what has happened. Betty tries to ignore this information, but she can’t; “I ended up writing Flossie’s truth instead” (McDaniel 2021, 280). She does this repeatedly with every violation her female family member experiences.

There is some apparent symbolism in this, that Betty (who is sworn to secrecy in every instance of violation) is burying these stories into the ground. While she is burying these stories through the dirt, she is also carving holes in herself to make room to bury these stories inside herself. There is developed symbolism within these two parallels, as Betty is using the physical act of digging and burying the paper simultaneously buries this truth inside of herself, to protect and honor her family. This is specifically brought up in many interviews with McDaniels and she does address the intentionality of this depiction. Nature is a physical modality to heal and through these actions, young Betty, is connecting to the nature and trying to heal herself.

Connection to the land is simultaneously a method of resilience and healing as well as a way to resist the original colonial forces that implemented such violence. Throughout the *Future Home of the Living God* we see a unique but still profound connection to land as a method of healing. There are not as many explicit continuous connections through life, but instead we see a great focus of Cedar’s connection to the land through her first captivity and break free which
helps her to remain sane during this difficult and isolated time. Looking out her window in the first place she is detained, she talks of the birds and how “they open their mouths to sing a song that I already know. The song must be in me” (Eldrich 2017, 250). This is then a big struggle when she is caught and hospitalized because she is in the city and separated from this connection.

Throughout *The Seed Keeper* we see a profound connection to land, particularly the seeds that Rosie comes across throughout different stages of her life. This is a large focus for and the connection between her and the earth is channeled through this connection. Rosie talks of the seeds from John, where “we spent the morning together, the seeds and me, and by noon, I felt we were well on our way to becoming acquainted”, and then when she discusses her relationship with her family seeds, she says that “the seeds reconnect me with my grandmothers, and even my mother” (Wilson 2021, 122). Throughout her journey of life, no matter how from home she physically is, Rosie always feels a connection to the earth that is unbreakable. These seeds have a connection to ancestors and this connection is felt deeply.

This connection she feels serves as a calming and therapeutic part of her life, but it also gives her the strength to continue and move on throughout her life. Rosie is fairly explicit about the power and connection that she draws from the land and how this contributes to her resilience and power. When walking through her own garden and the plants and seeds that she has worked so hard to cultivate and protect she explains that “corn makes me strong. Every day she whispers her greeting in a flutter of green leaves” showing the reciprocity and connection felt between the two (Wilson 2021, 96).

Quite literally all “Firekeeper’s Daughter” is about land connections, how they can be used, and who can use them. We get information about harvesting after loss, offerings of
Semma, and patterns of land treatment. I wanted to focus on the other manner that land connection is depicted in this text, because there is a powerful connection between science and tradition made, that makes Daunis the valuable resource for the FBI. Through her knowledge, she knows both of the traditional knowledge and the science, which gives her the ability to think differently and acquire important information. Daunis makes the distinction that the “little people” are real and not halogens, meaning other mushrooms must have been added as the kids really did see the Little People. She also was able to use her scientific training from her uncle to systemically catalog and research the mushrooms.

Throughout the text, there are also many references to Daunis herself becoming connected to the land in her actions in explicit manners. During Lily’s funeral Daunis is a pillar of strength for many, herself included. She describes “Her body shakes. I embrace her, absorbing her sorrow. I am her oak tree” (116). Daunis shows herself as a community resource and support through her comparison to the oak. Trees provide multiple different forms of important protections and values, and she embodies these same elements.

The connection that women feel to land is also a connection that Angeline Boulley discusses in her process for writing. Her writing journey was lengthy and took about a decade. In an interview for the podcast Mother of Reinvention she talks about many of the failures that occurred on her journey to debuting as a New York Times best seller. While being originally rejected from the mentorship program that led to her publication, she went on a specific native writer retreat to a lake in northern Minnesota. She describes this journey as transformative and the writing she produced here as being influential to her final draft. Through being surrounded by community of authors who understood her, and the nature that they traveled to, she became a better writer and crafted a more envisioned version of her novel. These two elements helped fuel
her final novel and give her the support she needed through the different elements of creating a novel (2021).

Within connection to the land there is also a strong connection to the more-than-human relatives that roam the land and are the natural inhabitants of the land. This is very powerfully depicted through the artwork that is created by many Indigenous women. Figure 8 depicts a photo of a woman who unionizes herself with the image of a bull. This artistic choice to show such a strong and deep connection shows the woman’s strength and her ability to connect with the nature around her. through this art she resists structural colonialism and instead embraces what makes her whole and connected to herself.

Connection to the universe

In a similar manner of land connection, we see many Indigenous women using the stars and universe to heal from violence and as a point of grounding. Many Indigenous women look to the universe for guidance and, also, as a family member. Almost everything has life in many Indigenous belief systems, and the universe is no different. She is seen as a method of understanding and survival for many people.

We will once again begin discussing Elissa Washutta’s connection to the universe, which is primarily enacted though astrology. Through her healing journey, she tries multiple different ways to get connected to spirits and she focuses on astrology as a byproduct of this. Through tangible connections, she tries to draw power from the planets and the solar system to heal herself and find what she wants. Her novel, White Magic, circles mainly on her love interest with this man named Carl. She tries to harness this energy to figure out if this relationship is useful, why she keeps returning, and how to move on. Through this novel she tries other modes as well, such as some “witchcraft” methods and, also, different prayer methods and manifestations.
While she is honest that a lot of the methods, she tried did not work for her, they were all part of her healing journey. The first method you try of anything is most likely not to work, so this is not surprising.

This connection to the universe is showed in a unique way within the character Rosie and her father from *The Seed Keeper*. Within this text, Rosie is connected to her father through the universe, as ever since she was a child, he told her “‘Rosie, if you know the stars and the plants, you will never be lost or alone.’” This message shows the healing qualities of the stars and the power to combat loneliness. This is then referred too throughout many moments of trouble that Rosie experiences. She always goes back and pulls upon her father’s word showing connection to land, the universe, and family.

Throughout many texts and stories, there is a strong connection the universe, the earth and the world through dance and song. This powerful belief that there is a reciprocity and connection between the world, dance, and people is explained powerful by Daunis. She describes that “as I dance, I pray… for all the girls and women pushed into the abyss of expendability and invisibility… I am not dancing in step with the drumbeat. / it’s the opposite. / The drumbeats are coming from inside my heart” (488). This shows the deep connection between prayer, the world, music, movement, women, and community. Daunis is connected to everything through this, she emits her power through this dance.

The men and women who create art are typically attached to this art, but this connection is not always honored outside of this singular relationship. In addition to how many native peoples feel deep connections to the earth, land, and animals, native peoples “generally understand artworks as living, breathing objects imbued with spirit” (Thackara). This understanding of artwork as a living entity shows a tender and caring relationship being fostered
between Indigenous communities and art, which connects them to all bigger things within the universe.

**Mental health Diagnosis**

While we have described different forms of violence facing Indigenous communities in a brief overview, the main takeaway from these displays, is the prevalence and persistence of violence. Through boarding schools, serial killers, intergenerational trauma, rape, land theft, domestic violence, alcoholism, suicide, child abuse, and food insecurity, there is limited safe havens for Indigenous peoples. This causes an understandable and rooted distrust of the government, colonial society, and most other outside resources (the church being a precise example). It is important to consider the mental health struggles that are prevalent with this type of pervasive violence.

Often when trauma and violence are involved, the mental health adaptations discussed are Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression, as well as some less discussed disorders—Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) for example. While none of these are incorrect, it is important to discuss and consider the differences between the struggles that face Indigenous populations from other dominant populations; and how this could contribute to different unique mental health struggles that require their own separate consideration. It is also important to consider that the definitions and terminology being discussed is from a colonized medical perspective, which contains biases and fallacies. Western medicine has difficulty being accurate and effective in considering these differences but is making steps to be more effective in treatment and diagnosis.

As a step in the direction of being more conscious of colonist bias and lack of representation in the medical field, there has been new consideration for key differences of
“triggers” and “trauma” that face Indigenous populations and cause some of the mental health struggles displayed at higher and disproportionate rates. The main distinction named in Legacy: Trauma, Story, and Indigenous Healing by Suzzane Methot is the use and understanding of Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD). This distinction refers to the type of violence that Indigenous populations face and how it is not dissectible into a singular event or institution; and instead, it is persistent throughout all of life and not an isolated incident (Methot 2019). This is a very important distinction to consider when discussing the healing process and resilience of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous women, as the type of healing needed for this trauma is unique and not well understood or considered in colonial models of therapy.

Through different narratives told by Indigenous women, it is also easy to see a distrust in the colonial medical system, due to patterns of mistreatment. Elissa Washutta, who is an active voice for Indigenous women’s rights and the violence facing this population, was improperly diagnosed and treated for a decade by multiple mental health professionals across the country, from New Jersey to Washington. Although we should be wary of using singular Indigenous narratives as representative for all Indigenous communities—as each tribe and community has unique beliefs, ceremonies, traditions, and ways of life—it is easy to see how widespread improper care is from this one example.

Washutta was improperly diagnosed with bipolar disorder and medicated heavily for years, when she was actually suffering from PTSD and depression (this is where the argument could be made that Washutta suffers from CPTSD as many colonial forces have traumatized her). Through two of her key essay collections White Magic and My Body is a Book of Rules, readers can drastically see changes in her, although her writing style remains similar. White Magic is a pivotal piece of literature in the display of Indigenous women’s resistance and
resilience, as Washutta displays to the world a path of healing that is unique, not perfect, and displays both Indigenous healing methods and colonial supports. Washutta leans into different methods of healing until she finds out what works for her.

Washuta’s misdiagnosis\(^{17}\) could be discussed in numerous different manners, all with their own unique aim to postulate the reason this happened. It is important to continue the discussion of the fallacies of Western medicine that go deeper than just misdiagnosis. Western mental health lacks understanding and respect for spirituality (especially when referring to religions and belief systems) as well as connections to the greater universe. Washutta mentions this through her diary entries by saying that “When the therapist asks me whether I see, hear, or feel things that aren’t really there, I don’t want to answer”, alluding to the fear of being misunderstand and labeled by the western medical field, which proved to be a valid concern (Washutta 2021, 154). Washutta further discusses this fear and its foundation in an interview conducted for the *Between the Covers* podcast, really clarifying for the audience the profound limitations of mental health treatment and how this in some ways can make it more difficult for Indigenous women to receive care and heal from their trauma.

Terese Mailhot also uses a combination of Indigenous forces and colonial institutions to help overcome some of her mental health struggles. Similar to Washutta, Mailhot found that writing was a therapeutic force within her own being; so, when she voluntary goes to an inpatient program to try to heal, she made the deal that although she would be checking in, she still had to have the ability to write whenever she desired, which was not the case for most other patients. We consistently see native women navigating a colonized world and utilizing their strength to

\(^{17}\) Misdiagnosis is obviously not intentional, and I do not want to put blame on the doctor who saw Washutta for many years during this time frame (which is why I am not naming him). It is important to recognize that this is a systemic issue and disproportionately affects minority communities.
heal and remain true to their identity, however they see themselves. Mailhot shares in her text, letters that she wrote to Casey while in the hospital and many other stories and revelations, displaying the journey of her healing.

Both Washutta and Mailhot stray away from use of linear timelines\textsuperscript{18} to display their journey and resilience. This has displayed itself as a prevalent writing form; in both the nonfiction and fiction texts that were analyzed there are many examples of a shifting and circular form of time. This non-linear timeline really displays the continued process of healing and the persistent effort of Indigenous women to heal from colonial violence. This shows a more accurate depiction of many mental health struggles as they are often circular and difficult to completely move past. It is also different from many of white memoirs focusing on mental health and trauma, as the colonial structure for these texts tends to focus on a pivot point landing to “success” in the battle with mental health. There is a very common and not unique depiction of the journey with mental health that coincides delicately with a typical story arc that 1st graders learn. Texts like \textit{Group, Untamed}, and \textit{Notes on a Silencing}\textsuperscript{19} all fall into this mode of narration. While these are all excellent texts, Indigenous women tend to be more honest about the effects of trauma and specifically the effects of continued trauma and mistreatment.

\textbf{Strength in Community Resistance}

It is important to recognize that throughout research, a number of key women were present in a multitude of different publications, displaying how active and persistent these

\textsuperscript{18} This is common for many Indigenous texts, as the colonial system never ends or begins, once again emphasizing the circularity of this cycle. Many texts are written from multiple perspectives and different time segments to display themes and messages over a strict linear storyline.

\textsuperscript{19} While all of these texts are powerful narratives of struggle and triumph of mental health, they do not leave room for the continued struggle that is more common with serious mental health issues. These books tend to display a section of life that was focused on healing and how this part is now “over”. By using non-linear forms of time, mental health is more properly represented.
women are. This intense community involvement and relationship is often another way that Indigenous women can be seen healing. Many women find closure and a sense of identity through honoring and working toward justice for their missing and murdered Indigenous sisters. A key example of women whom this is true for is the daughters of Elsie Jones Sebastian who write articles, publish writing, participate and run community walks and appear in documentaries. These women work collaboratively to keep the memory of their mother alive and work towards healing themselves without closure. The endless who work to keep memories of others alive, create a community within themselves.

There are organizations of Indigenous women who band together and create walks, programs, and community events that are aimed to raise awareness and facilitate joint healing. An example of this is the Valentine’s Day march that takes place in Vancouver’s Down Town East Side (DTES). This march brings together families and friends of MMIW, specifically those around the Highway of Tears, Route 16, every year for a day of traditional ceremony, walking, conversation and support. Another largely influential organized effort created through this is by Gladys Radek and was called “Walk4Life” where “the plan was to walk across the country collecting the names of those who’d disappeared or been murdered and gather signatures on a petition calling for a national inquiry” (McDiarmid 2020, 218-219). The walk was thousands of miles and a group of about 20 or so women completed it stopping at pivotal places; the first being the Pickton farm20.

The Valentine’s Day march is a strong example of the role of collective resistance; where we see Indigenous women from multiple communities joining together to remember, reinforce,

20 There are numerous more events and organizations made to honor women and to bring together community. The ones highlighted here are just the ones that came up repeatedly in different forms of research and were referenced most often. Countless communities have their own connections and events.
protect, and represent murdered and missing Indigenous women, specifically those missing from the DTES. Through grass roots organizations, supportive families, concerned friends, male and female elders, and multiple communities, this march takes place every year. Through the circle of this research’s life, we see many elements of healing come together as a whole, as well as multiple community members come together that provide frameworks of lived healing as well as research and knowledge to the communities committed to fighting against the violence the missing and murdered Indigenous women face.

It is impossible to talk about Vancouver, Willie Pickton, the DTES or rates of violence against Indigenous prostitutes without also discussing the Valentine’s Day march, as the outraged community response. Women like Elsie Jones Sebastian are honored during this march, even though there is not closure in her current case. Her daughters write that “my own experience as the daughter of a missing woman, differs from the perspective of the ever-growing list of ‘experts’ on this issue” and also appear in the documentary *Finding Dawn* at this march speaking out against violence (Livingston & Hunt 2018, 46). A connection to community is an extremely powerful tool for Indigenous women and families to begin healing; as, through this connection, people can learn from elders, connect with others who have similar experiences, and be in an environment where their voice is heard and matters. The daughters of Elsie Sebastian distinguish through marches, essays, interviews, commission testimonies and more the importance of listening to the people directly affected by these losses.

In the realm of fiction, *Bone Black* provides a very unique perspective on the outcomes of not having a community connection to turn to. As we have previously discussed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have not been receptive or active in the violence that is faced
by Indigenous women\textsuperscript{21}. Cases like Alberta Williams, Dawn Crey, or Ramona Wilson are a few of the countless examples where the RCMP did not thoroughly do their job, leaving women missing for years. While this text may be a work of fiction, these ideas are not fictional.

The tale in \textit{Bone Black} is eerily similar to that of the Alberta Williams case, where Wren was with her sister at a bar all night and then her sister went missing. This is very close to the real-life case of Alberta where her sister was there one minute and gone the next, and nobody exactly knows where she went. This reminds us of the patterns discussed earlier, that many fictional writers in Indigenous communities use realistic scenes and events that will help their readers heal and learn strength. Uses of truth as the basis for fiction makes space for unique resistance and depiction of alternative endings.

\textit{Bone Black} provides a mentally struggling but passionate and profound protagonist that takes justice into her own hands. Upon running into a man that has hurt her deeply through sexual trauma, Wren thinks that “She knows hate is a strong word filled with nothing but darkness, but that is where this man’s memory resides” starting the spiral of a true vigilante (Goldeneagle 2020, 92). This all occurs after Raven’s disappearance, which, Wren has had minimal motivation. But through her vigilante activities, she finds a new passion for restoring and healing the world by ridding it of the presence of such men.

It is difficult to dislike Wren, even though she is murdering multiple people and on the cusp of becoming a serial killer, as what she ends up doing is a result of being repeatedly failed by the system that is supposed to protect her. This text, while I would not argue provides a pathway to healing for Indigenous women, it is a pathway to conversation. Wren says multiple

\textsuperscript{21} See Amnesty International’s \textit{Stolen Sisters report} (2004) for more information on the response of the RCMP and other local police to missing women, see Human Rights Watch \textit{Those Who Take Us Away} (2013) for more information on the violence that police perpetrate themselves.
times that, if people respond to the disappearances that she causes like they did to that of my sister, nothing will happen. Wren continuously points out that the police do not do their job when it comes to Indigenous women, which the progression of the Highway of Tears is a perfect example.

The police fail women in Bone Black and in current day Canadian (an American) life, so this text really serves to show the severity of the situation along with the anger and grief that Indigenous women are expected to carry in this world. Violence is perpetuated constantly, and real women like Wren, are forced to deal with their own trauma and the responsibility of advocating for those not with us anymore. Really, how “crazy” is it that a women would want to seek revenge against terrible people who hurt others? We have plenty of white examples of this; thank you Dexter. Violence against native women is permitted by society and arguably law enforcement as well, while the healing of these issues is tightly monitored and scrutinized by outsiders.

As was previously discussed, connection to elders is a specific part of community that can be very valuable to healing, as elders are seen to hold the knowledge and path to a good life through the Indigenous teachings and knowledge they have acquired through their life. Daunis uses the teaching of the elders to gain information, but also to survive, which is the first stage of healing. When in an impossible situation with Levi on the ferry she looks to one elder for help, who then coordinates with multiple others to help her escape. She reflects shortly after that “I remember that our elders are our greatest resources” (453). Daunis not only utilizes elders for the later work of healing, but right from the beginning she is explicit about the asset that is present in her community.

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22 Refer to the section called “Western Canadian Hubs of Violence” for more information on the Highway of Tears and the lack of political, police, and community response.
As we have discussed previously, the line between fiction and nonfiction is blended greatly and tends to be closely related. There are strong connections to community resistance as a form of healing in the communities of turtle island and Canada. Before we discuss these instances, we must first discuss the gate keeping that occurs from these communities which also prohibits some of these members from healing.

The biggest restrictive aspect of community healing is access to healing ceremonies and tribal memberships. Not only are Indigenous peoples forced to quantify their Indigeneity to the world, but they are also required to do this to acquire membership within their tribe. This prevents many Indigenous people from the ability to access some of the healing rituals and community connections that could be helpful toward healing. Tribes understandably have strict rules for tribal affiliation to prevent improper memberships and more colonial destruction. It is important to note this, as community healing from the tribe is not accessible to all Indigenous peoples.

The strength in community connection is also really important to discuss in terms of the art created by Indigenous peoples, as it is often times also mistreated and abused. Museums have been notorious for stealing and displaying native art with honoring the pieces themselves or the people who created them. In recent years there has been a push to have native peoples, specifically groups of native peoples not just on “trophy” native voice, on boards to approve exhibits and art displayed by museums. This is to ensure that native people are being honored and will not be uncomfortable visiting the museum. Through community efforts this has gained traction and is being used in multiple areas with multiple different type of exhibits.

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23 Every tribe has different processes and rules for acquiring membership status and for attending healing ceremonies, religious events, and other important events. While there is a lot of variances in each tribe, for many you have to prove your Indigeneity with that specific tribe to a certain amount. This can be difficult because people may belong to many tribes and not have enough “blood” to belong to any of them.
In some manners exhibits curated by and approved by indigenous peoples are their own sense of community and connection. The work being displayed together creates a community image and message in ways that may not be possible without the art. Art has the ability to travel and be accessed and witnessed by many different people both virtually and in person formats. Through these collections a new form of community resistance is created that can be shown and appreciated by so many people. These exhibits can be used to make statements, show connection, simply entertain and so much more. All forms of art are powerful and should be considered in this healing.

Family Connection

This type of healing is widespread throughout texts; fiction, nonfiction, interviews with authors, documentaries, historical accounts, and religious/moral stories. A reoccurring theme is how the increased and profound connection to family members can help women overcome obstacles and persist onward. This becomes complicated in instances when family members are the ones harming indigenous women; this will be addressed later. For this section we will focus on positive familial relationships.

In Hobson’s *The Removed*, there are multiple instances where family is described as the healing agent for women who are carrying trauma with them (and arguably, in this novel, men as well). There are multiple types of traumas experienced in this text, but for the role of familial connection as healing, we will be focusing on the trauma experienced by one of the women in the text, Maria, the mother figure. Sonia’s healing process and trauma will be discussed in the *Cathartic Fictional Violence* section, as she has a unique set of healing and violence experienced.
Maria is simultaneously dealing with the trauma of losing her son to police violence 15 years ago, the effect of slowly watching her husband’s mind decay due to Alzheimer’s and losing one of her sons to drug addiction. The text takes place over only 6 days near the anniversary of Ray Ray’s death, which serves as a bonfire gathering for the entire family to remember Ray Ray and connection to one another. Maria’s grief is displayed through the connection both her and Ernest (her husband) feel to Wyatt, a temporary foster son that strikingly resembles Ray Ray, both in looks and temperament. Maria channels much of her love to Ray Ray with her care and attention to Wyatt and his brief but important residence with them. Maria is honest about this connection she feels as almost immediately she declares “I won’t deny he reminded me of Ray Ray, even from the beginning” (Hobson 2021, 66). Maria and Ernest feel more connected to their family and their dead son through their relationship with Wyatt.

Throughout the entire text, Maria spends much of her time holding her family together and implementing aid to her family for the problems she is aware of. She makes efforts to heal herself through worrying about those around her and caring for her family. Maria makes the conscious choice to focus her energy into healing her family members, which ironically heals her as well. She pools her energy into Ernest’s Alzheimer’s, Edgar’s addiction, and all of their persistent, collective grief about the death of Ray Ray. Maria (quote about her role as a healer within this passage).

This strong connection of healing through family connection can also be seen clearly in Kelli Jo Ford’s *Crooked Hallelujah*, where the backbone of the story is the connection between four generations of Cherokee women. Each of these women have experienced their own forms of violence and healed in their own way, but for the purpose of this discussion, Justine heals in such a profound and prolific way relating to her family. The trauma experienced before the arrival of
her daughter Reney, is barely discussed after her birth due to the strong connection that is felt between the two generations of women. Reney describes that “My father was not a wound or even a scar… my mom was my sun and my moon. I was her all, too, and that was us” depicting the deep and spiritual connection between the two women (Ford 2021, 93).

Justine was sexually assaulted, and she went through many common feelings after such trauma; self-blame, denial, depression in the immediate aftermath; but, after the birth of her daughter, her world shifted, and she devoted all of the love that she had to Reney (Choppin 1970). Together, they experience more trauma and live together in indecision, but through all of this they heal each other and work through the tough situations and men that they encounter and commit themselves to. Together they both also make efforts to end the effects of intergenerational violence that they experienced, which was discussed in the section on intergenerational violence.

In Bone Black, we see another form of intense familial connection as a mode to healing. This connection is seen really clearly with the connection between Wren and Raven: the twins who are the center of the novel. Wren has experienced multiple different forms of tragedy and trauma from sexual assaults at a young age, to the loss of a child, to the loss of her sister. Throughout these tragedies, Raven is the one who is there for Wren and helps her heal and move forward. Wren repeatedly details that the only person who knows these things about her is Raven. During the tragic miscarriage, Wren told only told Raven who gave her the strong advice on telling Lord to “give it time. I want you to be at peace with yourself before going to pieces again” (Goldeneagle 2020, 53). This intense connection was Wren’s modality of healing from trauma and when this itself becomes a traumatic experience; it leaves Wren reeling for months.
This could be tied to the extreme response that Wren has to this combined trauma which will be discussed in *Cathartic Fictional Violence*.

In another memoir, we see Harjo discuss the power of story in relation to family. In her memoir *Crazy Brave*, Harjo tell us that “The family oil story has a spirit, and it wants my attention” (Harjo 2019, 12). Through the beginning of her text, we are in the North section, and she is beginning her journey of healing and life. The story of her family and the art she describes calling her and demanding attention. This shows the strong connection and call from family that can be felt and how this can be a source of light even in darker times.

**Audience resistance to honoring stories of Indigenous women**

There is often resistance described in many novels that depict violent female reactions to the violence that they endured. Very hypocritical, but very prevalent to this type of discourse. Many readers (white readers especially) identify more with the (typically) white male perpetrators and are upset with women for punishing these men they relate with. Lucinda Rassmusen talks about this phenomenon specifically with the text *A Red Girls Reasoning*, but this can be seen through many other texts and social phenomenon. Rassmusen points out that this phenomenon “exposes the extent to which white male privilege has been naturalized within settler society to afford perpetrators of violence against indigenous women more leniency than the wronged women themselves” (2021, 167). Unpacking this concept is important to consider when reading and engaging with gendered indigenous violence.

In *Bone Black* for example, many of the reviews and thoughts recorded online through communities such as “Good reads” talk of horror, false understandings of people (Wren), shocking violence, questionable definitions of a protagonist and more; all of this is largely missing the point of justice brought up by the author and Wren herself. When discussing and
analyzing indigenous texts and messages it is important to consider where our own bias lie. When discussing *Bone Black* many people focus on Wren’s “violent justice” and not on the violence that led her to this.

We do not see this same resistance when the hero (instead of the villain) is a white man. When discussing most hit sensational Young Adult novels, *Divergent, The Hunger Games, Harry Potter*, our hero is always the white person fighting against those who we are told are unjust. This is a very similar situation of *Bone Black*, where we know the only people that Wren kills are criminals and abusers. There is a different level of resistance seen by audiences when the hero is not a white person, which is what is seen with online reviews of this text.

We cannot properly talk about healing and its process and properties if we are not truly honoring the violence perpetrated against women. While *Bone Black* is a work of fiction, none of the violence in this text perpetrated against women is. This real violence needs to be considered and honored in an attempt to display the powerful and important ways that indigenous women engage in the healing process. There are many examples of this fictional violent retaliation that we will discuss later.

**Cathartic Fictional Violence**

A theme found in numerous novels about native women experiencing violence is a reciprocal display of physical dominance displayed by these same women. In the context of real violence, it is difficult to get any sort of justice for native women due to states governments lack of prioritization of this issue, laws regarding reservation and state land, and lack of resources to understand pressing charges and the legal system available (which is again flawed and limited). This reality is pushed back against in fiction depicting similar forms of violence, and women in
the texts are given more autonomy over the justice and repercussions for the assaults on their being.

The entire plot of *Bone Black* is a contextualization of this idea of women enacting violence as justice for those who mistreat other native women, in the presence of a lack of actual justice being delivered to these men. Wren takes matters into her own hands to not only distribute justice, but to also ensure that the violent patterns these men have begun (refer to intergenerational violence to understand the long-term effects of assault, residential schools, and MMIW) do not continue. Wren uses the knowledge she has already to complete this crusade of justice that she enacts.

Wren’s effort to heal are encircled by her murdering of men within the community that have done egregious wrong to women; men freed from the court system, priests never brought to justice, and even potentially the man who killed her sister. While her husband, Lord, is out of town, Wren lures and kills these men; in most instances, she does this through a humane injection. While the final murder before her decision to stop was considerably more violent, her main goal through this text was to simply rid the world of these men and the hurt they caused, especially in the fictional and literal context where consequences are rarely engaged for men who harm indigenous women. While there is not the space or time to negotiate the morality of these decisions, we must consider the coping and healing that comes from ensuring a safer world was created through the deletion of these men, as harsh as it sounds.

All the men that Wren killed were personally tied to her community or family and ruined lives; changed people in irreparable ways and burdened the community. In so many instances the justice system fails and lets people go without consequences for what he has done; the system systemically fails people; this isn’t an accident. This fictional space allows Wren to rage,
reprimand, and resolve the danger that these men pose through their existence. Wren fights
against the intergenerational violence that was created by her grandmother’s sister’s assault by
(priest) and eventually gets to display her knowledge that her sister did not wander off through
her location of the truck that was mysteriously parked the night that she disappeared. There has
to be some catharsis in this process. While obviously not condoning murder, when a system fails
you and all you have is yourself for protection, Wren strategically makes the world safer. Again,
the morality of this decision has less space in this argument than the healing nature of this
knowledge that Wren has.

It is important to contextualize that, while the actions of Wren are fictional, the
circumstances that she must engage with are based in truth. In a strikingly similar manner to the
real case of Alberta Wilson. In the same manner as Raven, Alberta was last seen by her sister in
a bar/restaurant and, after disappeared the police told the families that the missing person most
likely went off with a love affair or got too drunk and will be back soon. The serious similarity of
these situations is due to common dismissal of the disappearance of indigenous women and the
common lack of effort put in by multiple different police forces in Northern America. Through
Wren’s crusade she draws kinship between the countless indigenous women who have been
made a victim of men due to colonialism.

To return to Hobson’s The Removed, Sonja displays a more urban example of reciprocal
violence as simultaneous anger and protection. Sonja intentionally seeks out Vin, whom the
reader learns substantially later is the son of the man who killed Ray Ray. Both he and Sonja are
a generation affected by this violence in different ways, one being the oppressor and one being
oppressed. It is hard to discern if Sonja had hopes that Vin would be better than his father, but
we all quickly find out that he isn’t. The collision of these people shows the effects of being raised in different circumstances and through different privilege.

After their relationship progresses, Vin shows up to her house, uninvited and drunk, becoming violent almost immediately. Sonja escapes into the bathroom without her phone. She stays put until she finds him asleep on her couch, sleeping soundly after hitting her and terrifying her. She makes the decision to lock him in the basement for fear that he will wake up. In the morning, there is this moment of confusion that she experiences where she wonders whose safety is more important, and who has a right to use violence. She is trying to protect herself from his violence by utilizing hers but she will most likely be punished by the police unless she lets him go. Again, a fictional text brings up the function of colonial law and how this affects the world. Both through the acquittal of the cop who killed Ray Ray and the lack of protections Sonja felt she would receive against the violence of Vin.

Despite all the complications that were listed above, we are once again displayed with a female character who takes protection into her own hands. Neither Wren nor Sonja aims to hurt for no reason, they are both violent acts for protection. While this is not exactly a utopian depiction of the world, their actions do make the world safer, and to the readers knowledge, neither woman are caught or reprimanded for their civic actions. Creating fictional space for women not only to heal (as we have seen previously) but also to fight back is invaluable. Sonja makes the reader aware that she was “not someone he could slap in the face. He needed to understand this” (Hobson, 2021, 230). These fictional women are fierce, strong, and courageous. While this could not be considered a guide to healing as some of the other fictional texts that we have discussed can be, it gives people the space for a female indigenous superhero who stops violence. This is necessary.
Another interesting example of this cathartic fictional rebellion of women is Betty and the shotgun. What originally starts as Fraya going around with a shotgun shooting ends up being Betty with a shotgun pointed at Leyland. This is the moment when Betty metaphorically and literally has unburied all of those stories and all of that paper. She tells Leyland the truth and forces him to confront it. She then makes sure that he does not come back to the house and knows that he is not welcome here. It is much easier for audiences to side with Betty in this depiction of violence, as she is threatening him and asserting her dominance. She refuses to show him weakness and when “he grabbed me by the throat, … I only stared him down” (McDaniel, 2020, 450). Betty switches the power dynamic of the family and theoretically cleanses her family of sin through the ostracization of Leyland.

In *Firekeeper’s Daughter* we see a fictional representation of ceremony that is meant as a form or rematriation against men for violence that they have committed against women. This is called a blanket ceremony. In the beginning of the text, Daunis is described as desperately wanting to go to the blanket ceremony in order to be a part of the equalization. We are told that “a blanket party is when a guy does something bad to a woman and her female cousins take him into the woods, rolled in a blanket, and beat the moowin out of him” (Boulley, 34, 2021). This ceremony, once again, could blend the lines between fiction and nonfiction, but ceremony and religion are private. But once again, we see a connection between the women of the text taking charge and having the chance and opportunity to make right the wrongs of men. Daunis’ aunt does explain how bleak and emotionally taxing these ceremonies are, but at the same time they are necessary.

**Conclusion**
There is no conclusion to this research or to this issue, again these patterns of violence are circular. These women are always healing themselves, each other, and their communities. We can use this time to reiterate what was discussed, uncovered, and organized above, or we talk about our own action, our own understanding. Where each one of us positioned within this issue is unique, but it is everyone’s responsibility to learn, grow, and advocate for those who may not be able to. The final section of this paper is aimed to be resources for all of us to help educate ourselves and begin to stop the patterns of colonial violence.

The first organization that I wanted to use this space to engage with is called Native Friends and can be located at Nativefriends.com. This organization and site are founded and run by Emily Washines, a member of the Yakama Nation with Cree and Skokomish heritage as well. She welcomes both native and non-native people to utilize the resource she created and learn from it, to advocate for native issues and become more informed. The site features information about culture, language, and history mainly. There are options to be an email subscriber and plenty of resources to learn about different forms of indigenous cultures. This is a resource that is attainable for those with all levels of current knowledge and provides useful graphics for children and new language learners.

The next resource I want to discuss is a news source, that really helps to decolonize the news that we are receiving and consider things from different perspectives. The news site, Indiancountrytoday.com, delivers news on a wide range of topics, everything from COVID-19 to sports, but includes decolonized information and important stories about indigenous issues, that can often be left out of other newspapers. This news source is accessible to all and would be a valuable addition to the list of your morning scroll over coffee. For tribal nations there are also TV channels and video components that are aired. In addition, as an ethical practice they disclose
where all their money comes from as a nonprofit organization, so the mystery of those backing a news organization and “sway” of your news outlet, is completely transparent. While this resource is primarily advertised for native communities, it can be helpful for our society to decolonize our news media.

For another resource focusing generally on indigenous issues, I would recommend visiting lastrealindians.com. This is an independent media forum where a group of academics write about current issues facing indigenous populations. In addition to their news stories, they also have a campaign and fundraiser section where people can sign petitions and donate for pressing issues facing native American communities. This website provides valuable information and gives people the opportunity to support and help important causes both monetarily and non-monetarily.

I now want to shift away from general websites toward information sources that are focused on the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women. Nativewomenswilderness.com is a website that is designed to support, engage with and be creative with other indigenous women. The site focuses on nature but also many of the issues that are facing indigenous populations. They have a specific page and information on the crisis of murdered and missing indigenous women. This is a great resource to get information and to learn and honor indigenous women. All the women who run this page are indigenous and provide valuable information and resources for others to learn from and engage with, many of these can be useful in our own pursuits of knowledge to better understand the settler colonial society we live in.

Another really important resource to bring up is mmiwusa.org. This is a website and resource that is designed to help support and advocate for families who are impacted by the current issue. While this itself is a great resource, there are also other functions that this
organization does that are helpful. They have a hotline and email address set up to get information on current searches and help families look for answers. Lastly, they also raise money for different organizations that are trying to end the pattern of murdered and missing indigenous women. They have multiple avenues for viewers to contact them with information and learn or donate to creating solutions for the issues.

There are also some key events that have occurred lately and are important to consider. The main step towards healing the I want to discuss is the Lummi tribe constructing and traveling across the country with a 25-foot totem pole. The final destination for this is the nation’s capital. This is specifically important to bring up with this conversation, as at the goal of this totem pole and is bring awareness to protect sacred waters and land. At the bottom there is a depiction of a woman, which once again, as we discussed displays the deep connection between women and land that exits. This is explicitly the case because the figures at the bottom of the pole are typically the most powerful and sacred (opposite of what popular culture has constructed over colonization). This pole traveled across the country and eventually ended in Washington D.C. to tell an important story (Kaur, 2020). Refer to figure 6 and 7 for photos of this totem pole.

Again, there is no conclusion, this issue does not have an easy solution, but it is necessary that we work together to end this violence and advocate for indigenous women. This begins with knowledge and these resources are a few that you can use to acquire more knowledge on this issue. Through collective movement we can become more informed and demand more from our law enforcement agencies and government to enacts protections for these women. For the last time, the line between nonfiction and fiction is so heavily grayed in literature, that while this is a study of varied literature sources, all of these issues are real and pressing ones that indigenous women face.
Citations


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Appendix A

This is a list of terminology and definitions that the Human Rights Watch provided within the released report. This is beneficial to understanding some of the different terminology that is used, and make sure we are speaking and writing correctly.

Aboriginal: The term "Aboriginal" is appropriate when referring to matters that affect First Nations (Indian) and Métis peoples. The word is most appropriately used as an adjective (e.g., Aboriginal person).

Aboriginal Peoples: Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982 recognizes three groups of Aboriginal peoples -- Indians, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Band: As defined by the Indian Act, a Band is a body of Indians for whose common use and benefit lands have been set aside or monies held by the Government of Canada or declared by the Governor in Council to be a Band. Today, many Bands prefer to be known as First Nations.

First Nation(s): A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian". Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. The term has also been adopted to replace the word "Band" in the naming of communities.
**Indian:** The term "Indian" is narrowly defined by the Indian Act. Indian peoples are one of three groups of people recognized as one of Canada's Aboriginal peoples in the Constitution Act, 1982. There are three legal definitions that apply to Indians in Canada: Status Indians, Non-status Indians and Treaty Indians.

**Inuit:** An Aboriginal people in northern Canada, who live above the tree line in the Northwest Territories, and in Nunavut, Northern Quebec and Labrador. 10 The word means "people" in the Inuit language - Inuktitut. The singular of Inuit is Inuk.

**Métis:** The term refers to Aboriginal people of mixed First Nation and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis people, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree.

**Native:** A term used to refer generally to Aboriginal peoples. The term "Aboriginal person" is preferred to "native."

**Non-status Indian:** An Indian person who is not registered as an Indian under the Indian Act. This may be because his or her ancestors were never registered, or because he or she lost Indian status under former provisions of the Indian Act. Bill C-31 in 1985 has restored Indian status to those who lost it through marriage.
**Status Indian (Registered Indian):** Refers to an Indian person who is registered (or entitled to
be registered) under the Indian Act. The Act sets out the requirements for determining who is a
status Indian.

**Reserve:** Land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of an Indian group
or Band. Legal title rests with the Crown in right of Canada.

**Treaty Indian:** A person affiliated with a First Nation that has signed, or whose ancestors
signed, a treaty with the Crown and who now receives land rights and entitlements as prescribed
in a treaty.
Appendix B

Photos that are referred to within the text.

Figure 1 - Pocahontas "saving" John from death. Artist: Constantino Brumidi, Location: Capitol Rotunda
Figure 2- Depictions of Pocahontas from colonized popular culture. Location: Museum of the American Indian, Washington D.C.

Figure 3- Map of Jamestown during 1603 with Pocahontas as a background. From the Museum of the American Indian. Created for the 1907 celebration of Jamestown.
Figure 5 - The 18 women who went missing and were made a part of the case load of EPANA. Source: CBC News https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/rcmp-say-mmiw-highway-of-tears-missing-and-murdered-women-cases-may-never-be-solved-1.3805609

Figure 6 & 7 - Left a photo of a family looking at the completed totem pole on its journey. Right, a close up of the women that I at the bottom of the pole. Source: https://www.cnn.com/2021/07/11/us/totem-pole-journey-lummi-nation-trnd/index.html
Figure 8- Art work created by Aly McKnight titled “Let Me Rest” created in 2020.