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Cost of Doing Nothing: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

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Introduction

For many years, government policy with regard to Indigenous people¹ has been more reactive than preventive, and policy with regard to missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls (MMIWG) is no exception. The costs of doing nothing to prevent many Indigenous women and girls from going missing and being murdered are profound and have many dimensions.

As the result of the tragedy of MMIWG, government agencies bear the costs of administering police investigations and the costs of the judicial system and court proceedings. In the business sector, companies bear losses of reduced productivity and earnings created by absenteeism. From an economic perspective, Day, McKenna, and Bowlus concluded that “violence against women prevents an economy from attaining its full economic potential” (2005:7).

More importantly, apart from direct economic impact, there is a whole population of co-victims — families, relatives and friends of the MMIWG — who are left dealing with their grief with very few government supports available. It has been acknowledged that the impacts of criminal victimization “hit particularly hard” on the poor, young, powerless and socially isolated individuals (The Impact of Victimization

2005). Almost all of the Indigenous women and their families fall under one or more of these categories. The effects are daunting because the experiences of having a loved one murdered or missing make their relatives and friends even more powerless and socially isolated. Day by day the families of MMIWG have to live through endless struggles — deal with various official agencies, write constantly to inquire about the investigation, anticipate news but rarely hear any, feel hopeless and guilty for not being able to act and achieve justice.

Therefore, the violence against Indigenous women resulting in murder and disappearances not only drains resources from government, businesses, community groups and individuals, it also leaves a deep imprint on the emotional and social worlds of a great number of people left behind.

Consequently, it is important to give the affected population a voice to express their concerns and share their experiences. Moreover, in this study we aim to show that not providing opportunities for the Indigenous women to succeed in life and not helping Indigenous families to obtain justice in the case of a horrendous wrongdoing such as murder is not only a human

rights issue, but also a problem with economic consequences. At the same time, we recognise that due to the nature and complexity of the research topic, we cannot “sum up” the experiences of the families and communities in a number. Therefore, we have combined both the qualitative analysis of families’ experiences and given a numerical representation of the cost of doing nothing, wherever applicable. The distinct feature of the present work is its specific focus — the Indigenous peoples in Canada.²

As for the structure of the present paper, in our analysis, first of all, we will synthesize previous research relating to costs of violent victimization, particularly homicide and missing persons cases. We will also analyze the statistics on the numbers of MMIWG in Manitoba and Canada, and review the existing databases. Later, we will provide an assessment of the experiences and impacts that the issue of MMIWG has left on families including the financial costs borne by family members of MMIWG that have been greatly overlooked. The common patterns with other studies, including studies from UK and Australia, will also be discussed. And finally,

we will attempt to construct a preliminary estimate of the cost of doing nothing attributed to the MMIWG in Manitoba.³

To date we have listened to the testimonies of a number of family members of MMIWG at the focus groups and individual meetings organized as part of the Families First Initiative⁴ in both South and North Manitoba. This allowed us to explore the issue from the perspective of those with first-hand experience of a missing or murdered relative. The Families First Initiative has also held focus groups with Elders, grandmothers and other Indigenous knowledge holders. To keep them in the centre of the discussion their views will be quoted throughout the paper highlighting the importance of their opinions on the issue and the ways to approach it.⁵ This is especially relevant in light of the independent national inquiry into MMIWG announced by the Government of Canada (Government of Canada 2015).

It is the intention of this paper to stimulate some debate around the issue, reveal its scale, as well as shed light on families’ experiences and identify necessary supports for them.

Root Causes and Vulnerabilities

It is important to understand the contributing factors to the violence against Indigenous women in order to proceed with the discussion of the issue of MMIWG. Poverty, colonialism and sexism are most often cited as the key root causes of the violence against Indigenous women in Canada (Byrne & Abbott 2011; Native Women's Association of Canada [NWAC], n.d.). Colonialism has all but destroyed the cultures of the First Peoples of Canada and has excluded them economically. Residential schools removed Indigenous children from their families from 1895 to 1996 and "created a generation of Aboriginal women who never learned how to be parents" (Byrne & Abbott 2011: 8). In the residential schools Indigenous children were often brought up in an environment of abuse and violence. The violence, which prevailed in their adult life in the form of domestic abuse and murder, can be regarded as the "external manifestation of self-loathing" (Ibid.) developed as the result of earlier experiences brought by residential schools and the history of mistreatment on the part of colonizers. This is the so-called "legacy impact" which transformed traditional gender roles and family structure across generations (Aboriginal Women and Family Violence 2008:10). It created violence

in Indigenous communities, which was further aggravated by the lack of employment opportunities and by substance abuse.

The culture taken away from the Indigenous population, the patriarchal system forced upon their way of life, the racism encountered in their everyday lives and the loss of self-respect have all been highlighted extensively by the participants of the focus groups conducted as a part of the present research.

"I go to the bank the other morning. A young man standing there. He turns around and he looks at me and says 'Do you know of another place where I can cash my cheque?' No, I said and I looked at him badly bruised, black eyes, swollen. I said, what happened to you? 'I got jumped last night. But I deserve it.' I said nobody really deserves to be treated like this."

Participant in sharing circle

The root causes have directly contributed to the current vulnerable situations that many Indigenous women and girls have found themselves in. According to Byrne and Abbott (2011), those vulnerabilities are poverty, homelessness, problematic substance use and participation in the

sex trade.⁶ These factors are interrelated. For example, poverty and the lack of full-time employment opportunities force women into the sex trade to earn fast money. Unemployment among men also increases the rates of violence (Brownridge 2008).

It is worth mentioning that the vulnerabilities are not only created by the current system but also reinforced by it. The distrust of the government systems, including the justice and child welfare systems, often stops Indigenous women from seeking help in the cases of domestic violence. The reluctance to report regular abuse incidences makes them subsequently more prone to become the victims of further violence and even homicide in the future.

“We are still under attack today as many years ago, people do not use the gun, people use legislation. We need to do something about our justice system. It is not providing the justice that we want.”

Elder

“I try so hard to remain calm and not get angry. I do. Because deep down inside of my heart I know we are not equal. We are not considered equal in the eyes of the law.”

Sister of a missing woman

In addition to Indigenous women’s lack of trust in the court system, domestic violence often goes unreported for a number of other reasons. First, women may fear that their children will be taken away from the family into care, so lack of reporting can also be viewed as a way around the child welfare system.

“Not that long ago I was contacted by this young girl. She wasn’t with her partner anymore... Her dad went to work and I guess he left the door unlocked, and then he came in and she was sleeping with her son and he kicked her in the face. And she took off to the neighbours, and the neighbours phoned the police and everything

like that.... And that same day, Child and Family Services showed up at her door threatening to apprehend her son if she continued in this violent relationship... I called CFS and said like what the hell are you doing, like she wasn’t even with him, he went in that house and violated her, and I said, you have the audacity after she was traumatized to go in and threaten to take her child? Do you ever think that she is going to call you guys again if she experiences another violent episode? I said I highly doubt it.”

Sister of a murdered woman

Second, women might also be unaware about the services available to them or have limited or no access to services due to the remoteness of the communities they are living in. Third, women who are economically dependent on their husbands may be unwilling to report domestic abuse to prevent financial hardships during the time their husband is serving his sentence.⁷

Often family violence results in children being apprehended because of child protection concerns. This subsequently increases the vulnerability of young Indigenous girls. The reports of missing children in care have always been high. However the number of missing children reports from foster and group homes and directly from Child and Family Services has jumped from 1,904 in 2008 to more than 3,669 in 2014 (Kusch, 2015), an increase of 92 percent in 6 years. An overwhelming majority of children in foster care are Indigenous. As of March 31, 2014, 87 percent of children in care in Manitoba were either of Inuit, Métis, non-status or status First Nations descent (Manitoba Family Services 2014). The total number of children in care has exceeded 10,000 (Ibid).

“Our people are sick mentally, they are broken spiritually, so what do they do? They run away.”

Elder

“I worry that there’s other kids out there that do not have good relationship with their parents

and who are not getting that proper guidance.
And those are the ones that are going missing.”

Sister of a missing woman

Clearly, the environment of violence cultivated throughout many years through residential schools and economic exclusion is now responsible for the high number of missing and murdered Indigenous women across the province and all over Canada.

“Take away the brainwashing that has been instilled in us to become truly who we are.

We need to go back there. Those are the fundamentals of the problem that we have today.”

Participant in sharing circle

Overall, this results in Indigenous women having almost three times the odds of becoming a victim of a violent crime (Brennan 2011:7). It also reinforces that the high number of missing and murdered Indigenous women should not be considered uniquely as a criminal matter. It has broader social roots and consequences.

Cost of Violence Against Women: Review of Literature

In this section we will provide an overview of the existing studies on the costs of violence against women, in particular the economic costs of homicide and missing persons and review the common methodologies employed in their assessments. Previous comprehensive studies on the cost of violence against women in the economy reveal staggering numbers.

Earlier Canadian studies show that violence against women can cost as much as \$CA4.2 billion a year (Greaves, Hankivsky, & Kingston-Riechers 1995). To arrive at this number, researchers looked at the state, personal and third party costs, where the state costs formed the largest portion of the total estimate (87.5 percent). The selected economic costs were estimated for sexual assault/rape, women abuse in intimate partnerships, and incest/child sexual assault. In another study, Day (1995) showed that the costs associated with women's health only as the result of visible physical and sexual violence amounted to \$CA1.5 billion, a modest estimate that does not attempt to quantify the costs associated with emotional, verbal, psychological and similar kinds of abuse. The author acknowledged that the result was just "the tip of the iceberg" (Day 1995:1). On the provincial level, Kerr and McLean (1996) estimated

some costs of violence against women in British Columbia. After summarizing a variety of costs such as health costs, criminal justice costs for police, courts and corrections, social service costs for welfare, housing and child care, they found that it cost the province \$CA385 million annually to treat negative consequences of violence against women.

The studies discussed above combine a number of violent crimes in their assessment, but none of them took into account the costs created as the result of female homicides or women going missing. Nonetheless, there exist several studies that look more specifically into these areas. By studying a sample of 654 convicted homicide offenders, DeLisi et al. (2010) found that an average murder in USA posed costs exceeding \$US17.25 million, which included victim costs of crime (tangible costs and intangible costs based on a willingness-to-pay method), criminal justice system costs (annualized costs of investigation, legal defense, incarceration, parole and probation), offender productivity costs (lost earnings due to incarceration). A separate study of the victim costs incurred as the result of the homicide conducted by Louise Casey, a Commissioner for Victims and Witnesses within the Ministry of

Justice of UK revealed that a single family bears on average £37,000 in costs related to funeral, legal costs, costs related to the criminal investigation and trial, domestic costs and counseling, or £113,000 if loss of earnings is included. For the sample of 39 bereaved families, the total costs equalled £1.3 million or £4 million if loss of earnings is included (Casey 2011). Over half of the respondents in the UK study said that the costs were still ongoing, therefore the result remained a preliminary incomplete estimate.

A recent comprehensive Canadian study attempted to assess the economic impact of criminal victimization across a wide variety of sectors. In Hoddenbagh, Zhanng, and McDonald (2014) the costs were estimated for the assault, criminal harassment, homicide, robbery, sexual assault and other sexual offenses for both male and female victims. In connection to the impact of homicide, the authors were able to find that the total national costs associated with the murder of Canadian women equalled \$CA675 million in 2009. Breakdown of costs by the ethnicity of the victims was not provided so we cannot conclude what portion of the costs was attributable to the murders of Indigenous women. Third party costs and justice system costs as the share of the total estimate constituted 2 percent and 5 percent respectively. The rest (93 percent) were victim costs that were divided between medical costs and intangibles (0.08 percent and 99.92 percent respectively). We can see that the intangibles formed the greatest share of the total estimate of the economic impact of homicide involving women. If the intangibles are deducted, the costs reduce to around \$CA47.1 million (reduction by 93 percent). Therefore, the inclusion of intangibles can drastically change our perception of costs of violence against women and show greater impact of the problem in monetary terms.

The intangibles associated with the loss of life in Hoddenbagh et al. (2014) were calculated through the willingness-to-pay method. This method measures the willingness of people to

pay extra for their safety to prevent injuries and death. An example of such risk-reducing spending can be the amount people are ready to spend on seatbelts to prevent road injuries. Therefore, the value of life saved from a road injury can be estimated via a proxy which is a sum of how much people have spent on seatbelts across the population (see Day et al. 2005:32). Another often-employed approach is a human capital approach where the future lifetime earnings are used as a proxy for the value of human life. This method, however, relies too heavily on earnings to approximate the value of life thus ignoring many important intangible aspects such as love, caring and creativity (Day et al. 2005). We also cannot assume that people with higher incomes have more valuable lives, an assumption that is inherent in the human capital approach. As for the willingness-to-pay method, the different levels of disposable income in different countries make the estimates very culture-dependent (Ibid.). The resulting estimates of intangible costs are often very controversial. Day et al. (2005) analyzed the vast amount of literature on economic costs of violence against women and supported this idea by stating that “the only way to measure pain and suffering is with proxy measures which in fact has nothing to do with pain or suffering. Since the proxies measure the value of life in economic terms, the question of whether or not they actually indicate the value of pain and suffering is a guess at best” (Day 2003:33). Moreover victims may object to the monetization of their pain and suffering from a moral perspective. However, the strong argument for the inclusion of the intangibles in the analysis is to demonstrate the magnitude of the problem, its devastating impact on society and to further validate victims’ emotions and experiences that may be undervalued otherwise.

Although the costs of people going missing are also significant, this has not been covered extensively. The issue of missing persons was studied in the UK with the establishment of the

Centre for the Study of Missing Persons at the University of Portsmouth. Shalev Greene and Pakes (2012) carefully analyzed the time spent on investigating missing person cases. The authors found £2,416 to be the realistic average cost of conducting missing person investigations. Another study conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology revealed that it cost the Australian society on average \$AU2,360 per missing person case in search costs and associated immediate loss of earnings, health and legal costs. Multiplying this by the number of missing persons cases a year — 30,000, gives an estimate of over \$AU70 million per year (Henderson, Henderson, & Kiernan 2000). Unlike previous studies, this research took into consideration families and friends of the missing persons and the costs that they incur. The inclusion of the long-term impact on families and friends, like the cost of lost lifetime earnings from missed education by missing persons, adds another \$AU19 million.

There have been various attempts to quantify the cost of violence in our society. Studies differ

in scope and focus; however, they identify areas of impact and offer methodologies for data collection and calculation. It is worth pointing out that the results vary, predominantly because of the categories of costs identified in the studies and the data that the researchers were able to collect. Nevertheless, the underlying method is the same. All of the studies make use of accounting techniques and sum up the costs across a wide variety of areas that have been impacted. However, it is important to mention that to date there has not been a study that attempted to quantify the costs associated with missing or murdered Indigenous women.

Due to complications with data collection and the various assumptions that the researchers have to make to be able to arrive at a particular number, it is advised in Day et al. (2005) to generally treat the numbers relating to the costs of violence against women with caution. Nevertheless, although imprecise, they give an idea of the enormous scope of the problem and advocate for an early intervention and prevention to diminish these costs.

Statistics on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

There have been a number of attempts to compile the latest data on the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, both nationwide and in Manitoba.

National

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) has gathered data on 582 cases of MMIWG across Canada from 1944 to 2010 in the Sisters in Spirit (SIS) database. They, however, admitted that many more cases were not documented in their database and work should be expanded to capture the overlooked cases (NWAC 2010b). After this study, the largest effort to collect national data on MMIWG was undertaken by Ph.D. candidate Maryanne Pearce in her work "An Awkward Silence: Missing And Murdered Vulnerable Women And The Canadian Justice System" published in 2013. She found that the total number of MMIWG in Canada approximated 824, which included both solved and unsolved cases from 1946 to 2013 and exceeded NWAC figure by almost 50 percent.

The national police statistics released in 2014 by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) disclosed even higher numbers. For the short-

er time period (from 1980 to 2012) covered by the RCMP, it was found that there were 1,122 homicides involving Indigenous women and unresolved missing investigations where foul play was suspected. This study presented an important contribution as it has supplemented publicly available data with information drawn from across all police jurisdictions in Canada (RCMP 2014). The recently released update to the RCMP (2014) report has added 38 cases of MMIWG for the years 2013 and 2014 to make up the total estimate of 1160 MMIWG in Canada (RCMP 2015). While the RCMP publication specifically selected a time frame of 22 years for their research, other studies have intended to collect as much publicly available information as possible. In the database of Maryanne Pearce, there were a few cases dating to 1950s but the majority (80.2 percent) were from 1980 to the present. While the studies discussed above take account of both solved and unsolved cases, there were attempts to compile data exclusively on the unsolved cases. Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has started their own database of unsolved cases that currently lists 282 unsolved cases of MMIWG in Canada (See Table 1).

TABLE 1 Databases on MMIWG

National						
Study / Database	Solved & Unsolved / Unsolved	Period	Missing (foul play suspected) ⁸	Murdered	Total	
NWAC (2010a)	Solved & Unsolved	1944–2010			582 ⁹	
Pearce (2013)	Solved & Unsolved	1946–2013			824	
RCMP (2014)	Solved & Unsolved	1980–2012	105	1017	1122	
RCMP (2015)	Solved & Unsolved	1980–2014	111	1049	1160	
CBC ⁹	Unsolved	1950–2016 (ongoing)	113	169	282	
Manitoba						
Study / Database	Solved & Unsolved / Unsolved	Period	Missing (foul play suspected)	Murdered	Total	
NWAC (2010b)	Solved & Unsolved				79 ¹¹	
Pearce (2013)	Solved & Unsolved	1946–2013	28	83	111	
RCMP (2014)	Solved & Unsolved	1980–2012	12	196	208	
Winnipeg Free Press	Unsolved	1950–2014	22	36	58	
CBC	Unsolved	1950–2016 (ongoing)	17	38	55	
Canada's Missing website ¹²	Unsolved		16			

Manitoba

As for the provincial statistics, the SIS database has identified 79 cases of MMIWG across the province of Manitoba, which accounts for 14 percent of all cases in NWAC database and is the third highest number of cases in Canada after British Columbia and Alberta (NWAC 2010b). Maryanne Pearce (2013) in her research, however, was able to collect information on more cases. She found 111 cases of MMIWG in Manitoba. As for the unsolved cases, the research project led by CBC as of summer 2016 has compiled profiles for 55 unsolved cases of MMIWG in Manitoba. Moreover, the Winnipeg Free Press investigation has identified 58 families who are still searching for answers and seeking justice. Both the Winnipeg Free Press and the CBC relied on the comprehensive list of MMIWG developed by Maryanne Pearce as the starting point to conduct their own more detailed investigations (Welch, 2014; CBC News 2015, April 8). Canada's missing persons website lists 20 missing women of Indigenous ethnic origin among which 4 persons went missing under

non-suspicious circumstances. Furthermore, the RCMP reported 196 female homicides and 12 unsolved missing cases in Manitoba over the period 1980–2012, which points to even larger numbers of murdered and missing women than previously documented. It has always been difficult to collect precise data on the number of MMIWG through official statistics. There are a lot of cases where the ethnicity is reported as unknown. Brennan (2011:9) points out that, for example, from 2005 to 2009 the Homicide Survey has recorded 726 homicides where a victim was a woman aged 15 or older. Among those there were 54 homicides of Indigenous women and 292 of non-Indigenous women, however in more than 50 percent of homicides, Indigenous identity was unknown.

The information on databases documenting cases of MMIWG nationally and across the province is summarized in the table below.

Based on the information retrieved from the publicly available databases as well as various online sources, media releases and news, we have created our own compilation of cases with

the focus on Manitoba. We have identified 143 solved and unsolved cases of MMIWG and tried to collect profiles on every case. Our findings report a slightly higher estimate than the number presented in the database of Maryanne Pearce.

However, we should state the caveat that the database we were able to create contains a certain amount of error and imprecision for a number of reasons. First of all, a large share of solved homicide cases has not been documented as a result of poor media coverage of these cases and the lack of data forthcoming from the RCMP and the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) on this specific point. Moreover, in a number of instances, the death may not be ruled as suspicious whereas the family members strongly believe otherwise. The lack of thorough investigations may also diminish the number of women reported to have been murdered. The report released by the RCMP provided an estimate of both solved and unsolved homicides involving Indigenous women to be 196. From this we can conclude that there are many more homicides that have not been analysed as a part of our database. Second, we acknowledge the inaccuracies, misinterpretations and stereotyping that may exist in the messages of the media. This is particularly relevant in media classifying MMIWG as 'sex workers'. It should be further recognized that the incomplete nature of the data can influence most of the parameters discussed below. Nevertheless, although tentative, this report's list can provide useful insights about the characteristics of MMIWG in Manitoba and the vulnerabilities that make them victims of crime.

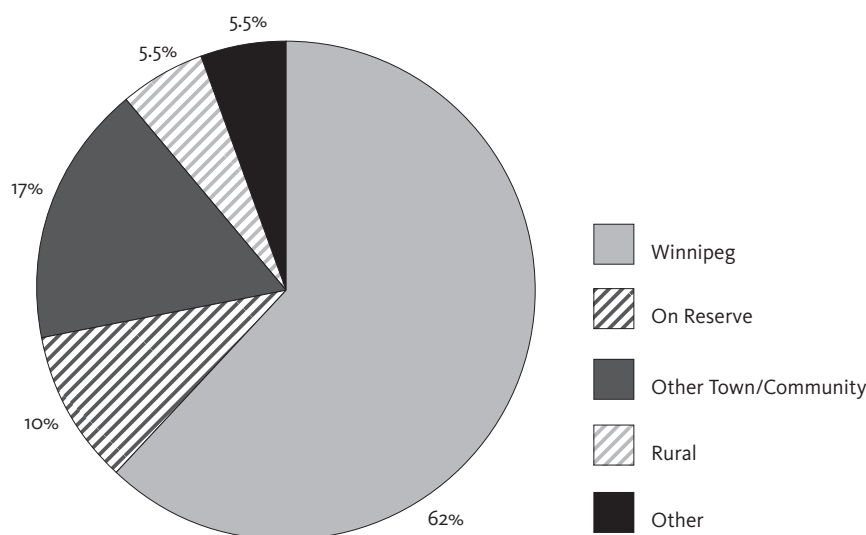
The findings of the database are summarized as follows:

- **Solved/Unsolved:** There are 82 unsolved and 61 solved cases. For the purposes of the present analysis we have defined a solved case to be a case where the offender has been identified and charges have been laid.
- **Murdered/Missing:** The number of missing cases equals 35 and this constitutes

24 percent of the total population of MMIWG. Murder cases, therefore, equal 108, which is 76 percent of the total number of MMIWG. In comparison to this, SIS database statistics show that the missing cases make up 16 percent of the total number of cases in Manitoba, murder cases 81 percent and the rest 3 percent is classified as suspicious death (NWAC 2010b:1). Our database has gathered more missing cases than previous efforts. In the present study the missing cases are associated with women and girls going missing under suspicious circumstances. However, it is worth noting that the long-term missing cases are generally atypical in the total of all missing cases (Clark, Warburton, and Tilse 2009). There are a lot of common reasons for people going missing. Examples can be rebellion against parental authority, wandering off because of dementia, forgetting to notify others of a planned absence and escaping financial difficulties (Henderson et al. 2000). It is important to understand the difference when analyzing the issue of MMIWG.

- **Children left behind:** We found that there were at least 121 children left behind without mothers. We were unable to follow up, however, as to what care arrangements were offered to them after the tragedy. Based on the conversations we had with family members, we are aware that some family members have sought guardianship agreements for the children of missing or murdered family members. It is reasonable to assume that there are even more children left behind than we were able to document as the NWAC (2010b) report findings suggest that the family size in Manitoba is larger than the average. The vast majority of women in their database involved mothers (86 percent) and almost

FIGURE 1 Distribution of Cases by the Location of Murder / Disappearance



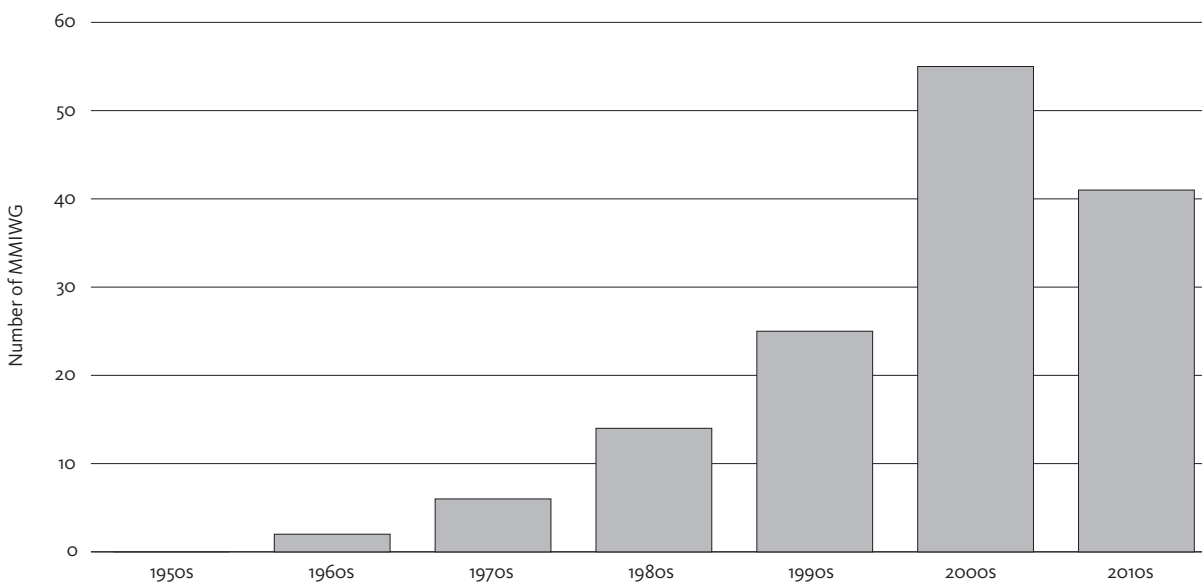
half of the women (49 percent) had three or more children. For the purpose of comparison, the *Winnipeg Free Press* database of the *unsolved* cases of MMIWG (as of February 2014) concluded that there were 67 children, at a minimum, who were left motherless (Welch 2014).

- **Location:** For the murder cases, the location is the place where the body was found. For the missing person cases, the location is where the person was last seen. From the graph below we can see that Winnipeg is the location where the majority of cases occurred (62 percent), followed by ‘other town/community’ (17 percent).
- **Year:** The breakdown of data by the year of the occurrence is presented in the graph (Figure 2). Although there are a high number of cases that fall in the last two decades, this does not necessarily indicate that there was an increase in missing and murder cases in recent years. An important factor is the availability of information and the data collection method. As was noted in Pearce: “... there are more cases originating from 1999–2013 than other decades within

the Database but the conclusion that there are more missing people or murders from these decades cannot be made. The data collection methods themselves give rise to the higher number of cases in the last two decades” (Pearce 2013:26). Since databases like those of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and CBC that this study uses rely on Pearce’s findings, this explains the bias toward the recent decades.

- **Age:** Victims aged 14–35 years old are the most prevalent age category and comprise 63 percent of all cases, therefore we can conclude that the MMIWG are relatively young. There are 13 victims under the age of five. The average age is 25 years old.
- **Children in care:** It is problematic to gather precise information as to whether girls were in care at the time of murder/disappearance. Therefore, the findings might underestimate the true numbers. However from what we were able to find there were at least 12 children in care, which makes up for nine percent of the total population of MMIWG in our database.

FIGURE 2 Distribution of the Cases by the Year of Disappearance / Murder



- **Domestic Violence:** We have identified at least 15 cases of domestic violence, which constitutes 11 percent of the total number of cases.
- **Sex trade workers:** 22 percent is the share of sex trade workers in our sample. This finding is consistent with the result of Maryanne Pearce. She found that around 80 percent of MMIWG were not involved in the sex trade. The RCMP (2014) reported an even lower proportion of sex trade workers among Indigenous victims of homicide (12 percent).
- **Relationship to the offender:** Due to the lack of data forthcoming from the RCMP and WPS, we were unable to gather this information for the database. However it is an important factor to consider. Previous findings suggest that victims generally know the offenders (RCMP 2014). However, the relationship has to be further defined. It was suggested that “current and former spouses and family members made up the majority of relationships between victims

and offenders, representing 73 percent of homicides of Aboriginal women and 77 percent of non-Aboriginal women in RCMP jurisdictions in 2013 and 2014” (RCMP 2015:14). While it is accurate to assume that family violence is a significant contributor to the rising numbers of MMIWG, it is incorrect to assume that family violence is the main contributing factor to the deaths of Indigenous women. In an earlier RCMP (2014) report it was demonstrated that from 1980 to 2012 Indigenous women were as likely to be murdered by acquaintances (30 percent) as by spouses (29 percent).

- **Transgender women:** There is one case of a murdered transgender woman in the database. It is important to mention that transgender women and two spirited persons¹³ often face disproportionately higher risks of violence. Due to lack of awareness about the impacts of gender-based discrimination on this group of people, not enough attention is attributed to their vulnerable situation. They are

often deprived of family support and social recognition, lack adequate job opportunities and live in poverty (Thapa, 2015). Such social marginalization makes transgender women more susceptible to violence with “alarmingly high rates of homicidal violence” (UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015). Statistics Canada reported that the hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation were more likely to be violent than hate crimes targeting other groups (Allen, 2015). It was also found that transgender women face 4.3 times the risk of becoming homicide victims than the general population of all women in USA (Human Rights Campaign, 2015).

This section looked at the numbers of MMIWG nationally and across the province. We were able to gather information on the available databases and summarize the general characteristics of the MMIWG based on our own attempt to gather statistics on existing solved and unsolved cases.¹⁴

Apart from the victims themselves there is a whole population of co-victims. The co-victims are families, friends, relatives and children of the MMIWG. The impact of the issue on this population is tremendous, but it is hidden from the spotlight and is therefore underestimated. Henderson (2000) suggests that for every case of a missing person, for example, an average of at least 12 other people are affected in one way or another. As for homicide, Holmes (2004) estimates that there are on average 10 people who are directly affected. Indigenous families are known to be generally large and close relationships may exist with both members of immediate and extended families. Therefore, it can be suggested that the number of people impacted in one Indigenous family can be far greater than reported in the previous studies that focus

on other cultures. However, the average family size of the Indigenous family needed to arrive at the approximate number of family members left behind is hard to obtain. As was pointed out in *Social Conditions of Indigenous People* (n.d.) in the Canadian Encyclopedia:

Canadian census-based data are naturally based on the dominant culture’s sense of what comprises a family unit, a sense that may not be consistent with Aboriginal peoples’ ideas of family, where extended family support systems are common. Thus, the figures for ‘single-parent families on reserves’ may be misleading in terms of actual household composition and how children and adults interact within these arrangements.

However, from our conversations with family members of MMIWG it was clear that the Indigenous families are large and multigenerational, a factor that needs to be taken into account as it shows that the problem may affect a great number of people, even whole communities. For example, one participant in the sharing circle conducted as part of this research stated that her loved one passed away in her early 30s and had left behind many children and grand-children with a total of 54 family members left behind.

Armour (2002) emphasized the need to recognize and officially count the co-victims of homicide by government agencies by citing it as one of the policy recommendations. Unfortunately, such statistics are not being collected.

With the assistance of the Families First Initiative, we have undertaken an effort to contact family members and assess the impacts that losing a loved one has left on them.

To provide an understanding of those impacts, the following section is devoted to what family members have shared about their loss and the lasting and broad impacts that follow.

“It is not just this little thing”: Overview of the Impacts on Families Left Behind

In this section particular attention is paid to sharing the experiences of the affected family members. We acknowledge the importance of giving those families a voice and engaging different parties like First Nation Chiefs and Councils, governments, community leaders and social workers in meaningful discussions around the results.

The testimonies collected from following events and interviews are included and analysed in this section:

- Sharing circle discussion in Thompson, MB in February 2015
- Sharing circle discussion in the Pas, MB in February 2015
- Sharing circle discussion in Sagkeeng First Nation, MB in April 2016
- 5 one-on-one interviews conducted in Winnipeg from November 2015 to August 2016

A questionnaire was developed for the one-on-one interviews that asked about searches, fundraising for searches, organizing or taking part in the events to create awareness, contacting police, accommodating children, seeing a doctor about the health conditions that might have developed, receiving or not receiving financial assistance

from government or other sources and similar topics. Additionally, the family members were strongly encouraged to guide the researcher in the discussion in order to identify where exactly the impacts were felt most. Ethics approval was granted from the University of Winnipeg Human Research Ethics Board. Participants have given informed consent to take part, and were free to withdraw from the process at any time.

Due to participants being at different stages of their healing journeys, and interviews being semi-structured, the precise monetary values for financial impacts were challenging to track down. Nevertheless, the discussions helped to reveal some of the family members’ biggest concerns about the issue and those will be highlighted below. Naturally, some recommendations have emerged from our conversations with the families and will be summarized along with other findings.

Overall, the sharing circle discussions and interviews included 37 participants¹⁵ and covered 14 cases of MMIWG:

- 6 solved murder cases,¹⁷ 1 unsolved murder case, 5 long-term missing cases, and 2 deaths that were not treated as homicide despite family suspicions.

- 8 of the missing/murder occurrences took place in Winnipeg, 3 in Northern communities in Manitoba, 2 in British Columbia, 1 in Saskatoon.
- 8 cases of MMIWG occurred in the period from 2010 to 2015, 5 cases in the period from 2000 to 2009 and 1 case occurred in 1990s.
- 21 children were left behind as the result of these murders and disappearances. It is important to mention that 11 of those children (52 percent) were in care of Child and Family Services (CFS) at the time when their mothers went missing or were murdered.

The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime detailed that criminal victimization impacts people on multiple levels such as emotional, physical, financial, psychological and social levels. According to this classification, we will describe some of the experiences of the family members we were able to contact and discuss the common patterns with previous studies.

Although the present paper explores the subject of missing and murdered females together, it is important to differentiate the impact of missing and murder cases on the family members who have been left behind. Both bring almost irremediable trauma to the family members; however the experiences of families bereaved by homicide and families with missing family members are not entirely the same in terms of the grieving process, legal procedures and available services. We will point out those differences in the following subsections.

It is also important to recognize that all impacts are interconnected. Some practical problems like dealing with official agencies can have a profound emotional impact. In turn, dealing with the variety of emotions can have an impact on families' employment and financial situations, lifestyles and relationships (Holmes, 2008).

"I don't think people understand the intensity of what, what the whole family, that whole circle

and community goes through you know, so yeah I don't think people have an understanding."

Sister of a murdered woman

"It affects my mom's family, it affects her relationship, it affects her social life, it affects her future and it affects my parenting skills. It is not just this little thing."

Sister of a missing woman

Below we will uncover what family members have shared with us to this point about their experiences as the co-victims of a relative being missing or murdered and their views on this complicated issue.

Emotional

Families of Murdered Women

Asaro and Clemens (2005) reviewed the homicide bereavement literature and were able to conclude that those deaths that involve suddenness, violence and most importantly acts of "human design" are more likely to create "exaggerated and, potentially, complicated grief responses" (2005:1).

"It wasn't a good death, it was horrible, it was horrible. She was so loving and caring and this guy did a horrible thing to her."

Sister of a murdered woman

"My daughter was scared to die, that's one thing, she didn't want to die, you know she was scared of, a little bit of speeding when I was speeding, slow down mom you're going to fast you know. She was scared to die, she wasn't ready."

Mother of a murdered woman

The nature of death and the irreversibility of the tragedy leave an enduring imprint on the emotional and psychological state of a person. Shock, numbness and disbelief are usually immediate reactions to the loss (Asaro & Clemens 2005). This is supported by the experiences of the par-

ticipants of the sharing circles and interviews conducted as part of this research.

“The first year I lost my daughter, even the second year was like a blur.”

Mother of a murdered woman

“There is so much hurt, there is so much pain, confusion.”

Grandmother of a murdered girl

“You’re so traumatized you’re, you’re just, yeah it’s like you’re in a dream, surreal hey, you’re just, I just wanted to curl up in a corner.... It’s like your soul is out of your body and you’re just, you can’t think.”

Sister of a murdered woman

Participants in the present study have identified the following emotional responses to the loss: anxiety, anger, despair and horror. Our findings are supported by *The Canadian Resource Centre for Victims of Crime* that cites the following common emotional responses to loss of loved ones: shock, disbelief, denial, anger, rage, fear, frustration, confusion, shame, intense grief and sorrow (The Impact of Victimization 2005). Especially during the initial years, families are confronted with extreme trauma and grief.

“I still, you know I still today you know even though I know they found her remains but I still, I still don’t believe, like I don’t, I don’t believe it at all.”

Cousin of a murdered woman

Families of Missing Women

For missing person cases the lack of closure dominates the families’ emotional journey. Without the proof of death, it is almost impossible to come to terms with the loss even in situations when death seems most likely.

“No matter on how many healing trips you go, it doesn’t help you if you have no closure.... We cry,

me and my sister. No day that goes without....

It’s an on-going thing without a closure, it gets harder, people think it gets easier as the years go by, it’s the other way around.”

Aunt of a missing woman

The extreme difficulty to heal in the circumstances of a loved one’s disappearance is also supported by Holmes (2008). Holmes notes that “families live ‘in limbo’ as long as their family member remains missing” (2008:11). The uncertainty surrounding loss is excruciating and immobilizing. The pain as the result of a loved one being missing may not diminish over time (Holmes 2008).

“I still have a hard time dealing with it. I really do. Every day I wonder where she is, where her body is; all these things go through my mind. Even when I hear the stories when somebody lives in the captivity in some homes, to this day I wonder if my daughter is in that situation. Not knowing, that’s what hurts the most.”

Mother of a missing woman

“What I went though it is not going to go away overnight.”

Sister of a missing woman

As noted in Betz and Thorngren (2006), the families of missing relatives might go through cycles of hope, only to be disappointed once more. Even in the situation when the woman is missing for almost 20 years, the relatives cannot fully accept the loss.

“We shouldn’t be so faithless. Maybe one day she will show up at the door and come back. Take us all by surprise. I’ve been looking for you guys. One day that could happen, you don’t know. You don’t know if she is actually missing. We should have faith.”

Niece of a missing woman

When the loved one suddenly vanishes this can be referred to as experiencing an *ambiguous loss*,

a term coined by Dr. Pauline Boss when she began working with families of soldiers missing in action (Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit, 2014). Boss (2002) notes that ambiguity in the case of missing loved ones is confusing. A person is physically missing but psychologically present. Not knowing prevents family members from moving on and reconstructing their lives according to what happened. It is extremely difficult for them to carry on in their everyday lives without closure. To cope they have to hold two opposing ideas in their minds. Boss specifies “they may believe that their loved one, though dead, is still with them in some sense; or they may move on with their lives while still holding out hope of finding the body” (2002:39).

It is worth pointing out that not only are there differences in the grieving process of families of missing and families of murdered people, there are also differences in the grieving of individuals *within* families that can affect the existing relationships and family dynamics (Asaro & Clemens 2005). The grieving process of an individual is shaped by a whole variety of factors such as family member’s relationship to the murdered or missing person, the circumstances of death or disappearance, cultural beliefs of the family, the age of the victim and the offender relationship to the victims (ibid).

“When someone dies in the family you sort of like, almost everybody kind of goes into their own little separate worlds and your family doesn’t have that same cohesiveness.”

Sister of a murdered woman

“...my husband doesn’t like to see me go through that. But he doesn’t know how to deal with it, with me, with what I feel.”

Mother of a missing woman

Since the loss is intangible and uncertain for the relatives of missing persons, the lack of social acknowledgement may deny the family mem-

bers the right to grieve and impede the natural healing process.

Moreover, Bentz and Thorngren note that healing is extremely difficult “if the loss is socially stigmatized, such as if a loved one suffered from AIDS” (2006:361). This is also true in the case of the family members of MMIWG. Family members of MMIWG have been suffering from social stigmatization of their loved ones who often led “risky lifestyles” that are condemned by the rest of the society. The participants have pointed out numerous that their loved ones were being viewed as statistics and not as human beings. This stigmatization affects both relatives of missing and murdered loved ones.

“It doesn’t matter who you are. People say, she knew what she was getting herself into. Maybe not.”

Aunt of a missing woman

Apart from the stigmatization, families may lack important emotional support because feelings of someone with a missing or murdered loved one can rarely be understood by another unless the person went through the same traumatic experience. That is why families often turn to each other for healing and support.

“I can’t tell anybody I know what they’re going through because I don’t until now, until I lost my own.”

Mother of the murdered woman

“When we have our gatherings like with other families and it’s bittersweet but it’s, you feel a comfort, it’s a family you know like you’re connected by something in common and it’s very beautiful but it’s sad you know, but it’s more beautiful.”

Sister of a murdered woman

Some participants found that they needed to continue living for their children, this helped them to overcome the development of depression.

“I know a lot of times I break down, it took me a while before I could go somewhere and do something, but when I look at my grandkids they still need a parent, they still need their grandparent, so I couldn’t keep myself sheltered in the house, I had to keep going.”

Mother of a murdered woman

“I cannot let this beat me, I cannot, ‘cause if I do then I’m going to fall into a depression. I have kids at home, I have responsibilities.”

Sister of a murdered woman

However, the family members cannot always find the purpose, strength and resources to continue living their lives in a healthy way, especially when they have few culturally appropriate supports available to them. Families expressed concern that the antidepressant pills they were prescribed by doctors were addictive and did not help them with their grieving process.

“Well at first I went to see my doctor and then he gave me pills and that was it, pills. Yeah, he gave us to try to sleep at least. So it’s like okay but that’s all he offered, he didn’t suggest any healing programs or grieving programs or trauma programs or you know.”

Sister of a murdered woman

“And all my family are all on antidepressant pills which I refuse.... If they are not on antidepressant pills, then they’re on alcohol.”

Aunt of a missing woman

The participants also mentioned that Indigenous cultures and languages historically provided them with a way to heal that was later lost.

“Our language dictates to us what happens in our culture.... If you go back to that, you don’t need to go to a psychiatrist because we are so well established inside.”

Participant in sharing circle

Therefore, participants specified that healing can come from inside if culture is revived. This is an important distinctive feature when dealing with the trauma experienced by Indigenous people. Some costs for counselling can even be offset if there are more opportunities to heal through Indigenous spiritual, religious and cultural traditions. However, it is also important to mention that the families had to incur some financial costs even when accessing traditional healing practices, which often included travel and gifts to Elders.

“Traditional medicines they, they do all these ceremonies but they’re not always recognized as an eligible medical expense under say Blue Cross.”

Sister of a murdered woman

Although it is worth noting that even though the need for the revival of Indigenous traditions has been identified a great number of times, some family members will prefer different ways of healing (e.g. through Christian practices).

Healing is of paramount importance in the discussion of the issue of MMIWG. Families need to heal in order to find strength to reconcile with what happened and attempt to reconstruct their lives.

Some of the recommendations as they pertain to emotional supports are as follows:

- Attribute more importance to healing through ensuring that individual solutions and approaches are available to families. There is no ‘one size fits all’ solution like pills when it comes to healing. Poor medical advice may result in negative impact on people’s health and in costs to government (e.g. going through rehab as the result of getting addicted to pills).
- Prepare those working in the medical profession for dealing with patients who are experiencing the extreme trauma of losing a loved one; ensure that they are able to refer Indigenous families to culturally appropriate supports.

- Help families deal with the feeling of loneliness and isolation by having a crisis line support person to guide families through all necessary steps and procedures.

Physical

Sadly, there is a whole variety of physical impacts that a homicide survivor and a relative of a missing person may experience. Participants shared that the loss affected their biological health. They often revealed feeling physically sick. Some of the physical impacts mentioned by the participants are: depression, headaches, loss of appetite, loss of weight and high blood pressure. *A Survivor's Guide to Homicide and Grieving* (2012) published by Victims of Violence lists the following impacts in addition to the impacts already mentioned: fatigue, insomnia, nightmares, hyper arousal / hyper-vigilance, lethargy, muscle tension, chills, increased heart rate, nausea, cramps, fainting, dizziness, respiratory problems, impaired immune response and decreased libido.

"It is not finished and it is making me sick, physically now. I have taken on too much, it has gone inside my body, I did not know I was getting sick and had to leave work."

Sister of a missing woman

"Every day is really hard on my family. And as the years go by it gets harder. I'm losing family members that are getting sicker and sicker... Some of them died without the closure but I believe in my heart that they are with them now, you know. I don't know, it's hard."

Aunt of a missing woman

Another participant shared that she had two mild heart attacks as the result of a relative going missing. When family members of missing persons seek tirelessly for clues that would bring them closure, they tend to forget about their own health in order to apply maximum effort to the search process.

"Me and my brother-in-law we had blisters so bad that we couldn't even shuffle anymore or dig anymore. The younger ones, they took over and me and my brother-in-law we couldn't search for a week till our blisters were healed."

Aunt of a missing woman

Leaving work because of the physical pain and illnesses, seeking medical treatment — those are some of the many costs that subsequently may impact families financially as all the impacts are interrelated.

Psychological

The co-victims that we were able to interview were also impacted psychologically. The circumstances of the murder or disappearance of their loved one made them reevaluate future actions, and sometimes it created psychological barriers.

"It changes your outlook. I never used to be such a worrywart, now I am. You can't seem to go back to that space that you once were. It is like you have a totally different perspective, you know. It's like you never feel totally calm again."

Sister of a murdered woman

"I used to be like go at home and oh I got to clean my house and blah, blah you know, now I just oh its dirty, I'll clean it up later. Your priorities change."

Sister of a murdered woman

The trauma creates different fears; for example, fear of calls early in the morning or fear of watching crime shows. One participant revealed that she feared to send her children to Winnipeg to pursue a higher education.¹⁹

"... my daughter is here. She wants to go to school in Winnipeg. She is doing really good. She wants to go to University. And you think I will let her go there where my sister was taken?"

Sister of a missing woman

Since education options are limited, particularly in remote communities and reserves, this results in lost opportunities for educational attainment. Therefore, it inevitably has a bearing on children's future, their jobs and incomes, indirectly influencing children's future personal development and the future economic development of the province.

Winnipeg provides more opportunities for healthcare and education than most of the small towns and communities in the province, but the concern for the high crime rate, fear and anger might prevent affected Indigenous people in need of these vital services from accessing them in order to improve their life and well-being.

"My cousin had to relocate to Winnipeg; she had 2 kids. And the son had seizures all the time. It was impossible to keep him in the reserve; he needed to live close to the hospital. She moved because she cared for her son. And after a year and a half she was brutally murdered. These children no longer have parents."

Cousin of a murdered woman

Relationships with children and the challenges of helping children cope with the loss is another important aspect to mention. Participants expressed concern for the younger generation and the need for appropriate supports for them.¹⁷

"She [granddaughter] already started to ask questions. I would love to sit down and talk to her but she is just too young. As a child, how is she coping?... Children are left in the dark; there must be special help for them, as they do need it especially when they start asking questions."

Mother of a murdered woman

"My sister's children, we've had them in counselling since their mom died and it's been almost four years and even my oldest niece you can see that it's really affected her, like you know she's so unsure of herself, like always trying to fit in but not really knowing where she belongs you know."

Sister of a murdered woman

"And then it affected him [son of a murdered woman] because like he stayed home and at night I would have to hold him 'cause he'd hyperventilate because he would like ask me, what did he use to cut her up, you know. Like he was only, he's only; well he's 13 now, so he was 10."

Sister of a murdered woman

It is a challenge to find a counsellor, let alone a culturally respectful one, that would be able to come to a reserve to meet with children at home where they feel most comfortable.

Other studies reveal more physiological impacts that the co-victims of homicide can experience that we were not able to confirm in full through our interviews. Those can be but are not limited to mental health disorders, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety disorders, sleep disorders, eating disorders, substance abuse issues, intrusive repetitive imagery, nightmares, fear, hypervigilance and guilt (Mastrocinque et al. 2014; Armour 2002). Lack of trust in larger systems is also identified as one of the psychological impacts in this literature that was confirmed by one of the participants.

"I don't trust nobody. When I see my shadow, I am scared sometimes."

Mother of a murdered woman

Social Injuries and Secondary Victimization
Losing a loved one and the emotional turmoil that follows is just the beginning, as the process of going through necessary official procedures for the police and the justice system can be dehumanizing and re-traumatizing in itself. In case of homicide, the body is seized as 'evidence' and the state starts to withhold information from the family. As specified in Casey "the system itself will barely recognize the family because they are not 'players' in the process; they do not have a formal role in how the investigation is conducted and no role in the theatre of the trial" (2001:32). Thus, family members become frustrated. They

fear that they are not in control of the process, which subsequently increases their sense of powerlessness. Being left in the dark is antagonizing because it creates the sense that nothing is being done. Infrequent communication with the police, lack of clarity on police procedures and investigation standards, having to learn the details of the loved one's passing only when they go public — all of these confused and upset families that participated in this study. Thus, communicating with various official agencies is sometimes referred to as 'secondary victimization' because the system is making the effects of crime worse.

"No copy of autopsy, no police reports, nothing."

Mother of a murdered woman

"In the paper, we read it like a horror story, what he did to her."

Sister of the murdered woman

Similarly, the inevitable contact with media for the purposes of publicizing the disappearance of the missing loved one can be traumatizing, however necessary it might be to help the families to "fulfill their duty to keep up the momentum of the search" (Holmes 2008:39).

The intrusion of media in the life of the family can later cost family members time and money to deal with the consequences of the negative stereotyping of their loved ones. Family members might undertake attempts to dispel bad stereotypes about the missing or murdered loved ones created through the media by way of organizing community events and walks.

Frustration grows for the family members of missing women as the missing person case gets colder. The lack of communication between families and the police is responsible for this situation and needs to be addressed.

"I don't even know where my sister's investigator is anymore.... Nothing is being done, it's just everybody passing the buck."

Sister of a missing woman

The cost of some searches and police investigations is another factor responsible for much anxiety among family members. Searches can be extremely costly and impossible to conduct without the financial help of the government (e.g. landfill search²⁰). At the same time, action is very important for the families of missing persons. Searches and other activities can help families to heal by fulfilling their duty of care for their loved ones and ensuring that every possible action is being taken to bring them home. That's why government's reluctance to dedicate necessary amounts of money for searches amplifies families' frustration. In the connection to Project Devote,¹⁹ one participant shared:

"That's a slap in the face when you see your loved one on a bus that was missing ten years ago, like they should have did that ten years ago."

Sister of a murdered woman

However, despite the lack of cooperation shown from the police, some families still engage in the laborious volunteer searches such as Drag the Red.²¹

Oftentimes, protracted investigations, and therefore unsolved crimes, mean that the murderer is still at large. This was brought up during one of the interviews — the long term missing case was solved only after the perpetrator had killed another woman. The second death could have been prevented if police had identified the murderer earlier by solving the missing case:

"They phoned him, they didn't go to his house, the police, they just phoned him when she went missing.... So because of that those omissions or negligence or you know who-gives-a-crap attitude, you know my sister's gone, she's dead you know."

Sister of a murdered woman.

It is important to emphasise that most of the MMIWG have dealt with different hardships in their lives stemming out of poverty and colonization — lack of education and economic op-

portunities, substance and domestic abuse. Generally, social norms dictate the fate one might “deserve”, which makes it extremely hard for the families of the missing or murdered loved ones to get help and acknowledgement if the person had a criminal record and/or was struggling with substance abuse. Thus, the stereotyping of Indigenous victims within the various public agencies was overly common.

“They were not taking me seriously because my sister was on the streets, because she had a drug problem. So I kind of tried to make it that she is someone that she is not, just so somebody could take that report. I tried to get my sister out of this category.”

Sister of a missing woman

Participants in the study of Holmes (2008) raised a similar concern. They feared that incorrect and negative assumptions made by the police about the missing persons’ lifestyles would affect the quality of investigation.

The racist attitudes targeted at the family members of MMWIG during the exchanges with the police and justice system officials is one of the biggest concerns emphasized at the sharing circles and interviews.

“It’s body language you get from the RCMP, from the investigator, it’s looks that they give to each other, it’s the way they say things sarcastically, but yet you can’t do nothing about it because it’s indirect. I can’t say nothing. But you know, you feel it. It’s there.”

Sister of a missing woman

“When we inquire about what happened [to police], we do not get any feedback and we need that. I feel like I am becoming demanding to them. But I am just asking a question. There is no respect there for a native person.”

Sister of a missing woman

Families emphasized that during the interactions with police and other agencies they lacked

culturally appropriate support and a permanent contact person to be able to inquire about the investigation and who would make them feel safe and understood.

“That doesn’t cost much like you know to be treated with kindness you know. But emotionally it helps you a lot.”

Sister of a murdered woman.

“They should have Elders in the police force to talk to. Like some people feel uncomfortable when they talk to the social services worker.”

Aunt of a missing woman

Some family members expressed that they wanted to see a better investigation as the death of their loved one seemed suspicious, but wasn’t treated as such by the police and the medical examiner officer. The families pointed out that they don’t have the leverage they need to challenge the procedures and outcomes of the police investigations.

“They [RCMP] don’t really listen... when you file the complaint with the Public Complaints Commission, it’s the RCMP investigating themselves. They are never going to go against their own members.... I already knew like when I filed the complaint that we weren’t going to get anywhere and they basically came back saying that the investigation was done within the standards, practices of the RCMP.”

Sister of a murdered woman

“When they do hear screaming and you know, or seeing something, nobody, police don’t listen or they don’t follow up or they don’t go and check it out you know. They think it’s just a party you know. Domestic whatever.”

Aunt of a missing woman

Comparing their loved ones’ investigations to the investigations of the white victims is an additional trigger for resentment and an impor-

tant factor in secondary victimization for the Indigenous families. Seeing the difference in the treatment of Indigenous and white populations creates deep frustration for the families.

“They spent millions of dollars on that person... she was searched for a month until she was found and they used heavy machinery when they searched... same situation, she was in a dump.”

Aunt of a missing woman

“If she a non-Indigenous woman, there is so much more effort put into it, than if she were Indigenous. It’s like there is the tier system when it comes to ethnic groups in the society I guess.”

Sister of a murdered woman

“They [media] described [her] as Caucasian, so we’re like should we change it, we’re like well if we change it then people won’t care, so we left it.”

Sister of a murdered woman

Besides lengthy investigations and trials, social norms can also affect the victims’ perception of the emotions regarding the loss. Negative emotions are less socially acceptable. Therefore, some family members are likely to conceal their problems or feel uncomfortable talking about them.

“They think there goes the crazy lady; she goes to the mental health centre.”

Mother of a murdered woman

The loss itself is just the beginning of the painful journey. Families have to wade through the complexities of the criminal justice process and the unfairness of the social responses, at the same time trying to remember and honour their lost loved ones. As we were able to show in our attempt to contact family members of MMIWG, lack of communication with investigators, absence of effective tools to challenge authorities to conduct proper investigations, racism and intrusive media involvement were the main contributing factors to the secondary victimization.

Some of the immediate *actions* that can be considered to soften the traumatic effects of secondary victimization on families as conveyed by families themselves are:

- Review and clarify the investigation standards and procedures to families, especially on reserves.
- Allow for independent bodies to challenge police procedures and rulings.
- Engage an Elder in the police force to provide information and support for the families.
- Respect families’ privacy as they want to be informed of what has happened to their loved ones *before* the information goes public.

Financial

All of the impacts discussed above can in some way or another affect families’ financial situation. The financial impact on families can be both direct and indirect. Direct financial impacts involve an actual monetary exchange (Day et al. 2005). The examples of such costs can be paying for professional counselling services and medication, travelling to court to attend a hearing or a trial and paying for legal counsel services. Relatives of victims can also incur costs in seeking guardianship of the children left behind, in transferring child tax benefits or in registering children for school. Indirect costs, on the other hand, have an imputed monetary value and do not involve an actual monetary exchange. For example, family members can lose income as a consequence of taking time off work or from other income generating activities to conduct searches for the missing loved one. In turn, frequent absences from work can later result in missed promotions and salary increases, and possibly loss of employment. Therefore, intensified financial pressure on families as a result of a murdered or missing relative is often accompanied by the loss of earnings.

Some expenses can be recovered through the *Compensation for Victims of Crime Program*. The program assists with certain types of costs the families of murdered women and girls incur such as counselling services, travel and accommodation, bereavement leave, funeral coverage and compensation for relatives who were financially dependent on the victim. The family members addressed the insufficiency of the supports provided through the program.

“Even though you get some money from Victim Services, it, it, you don’t get all your money back.”

Sister of a murdered woman

Furthermore, according to the Victims of Crime Compensation rules, an applicant is not eligible for compensation if the victim, in this case — a murdered woman — had a serious criminal record (Compensation for Victims of Crime, n.d.). After May 2011 this rule was amended to include lesser criminal offences like probation breaches (Nicholson 2015) with decisions regarding compensation being made on a case-by-case basis (CTV Winnipeg 2013). This has negatively affected families of murdered women who often had criminal records (Nicholson 2015). The cost of funerals, for example, is too high for many Indigenous families living in poverty to be able to afford. Due to the public’s negative reactions to this particular policy change and the media bringing attention to the issue, the provincial government was set to review it. However, according to the province’s current information sheet the serious crime rule still applies for eligibility. It is important to make sure the people who are left behind are able to get the supports they need, including compensation from the Victims of Crime program without further re-traumatizing and impoverishing them.

Moreover, the families whose family member’s passing has not been treated as a suspicious death do not qualify for the Compensation for Victims of Crime Program. The family members

interviewed often felt discouraged at the poor support systems available to them, especially in the remote Northern reserves.

“I am raising my grandchild who will be 10 in March and I am not going to settle for \$300 per month. My daughter was worth more than that.... It is not even the value of the money that matters, once it runs out what are they going to do for us?”

Mother of a murdered woman

This family member raised an important concern that stretches far beyond the immediate help and money assistance claimed inadequate. The money runs out, the trauma stays. There is no way to bring the loved ones back. However, it is important to see in this idea the plea for broader change, systemic action to transform the life of the distressed families and communities and offer opportunities to build a better future.

“I am not going to allow my sister’s name to go in vain. I am going to use her name so we can make a better future for these kids. And, honestly, I think that in order for something like this to happen we have to have higher up people to come up and listen to our stories first hand.”

Sister of a missing woman

Hence, the policy responses to solve this issue should be driven by listening to families while they share their first-hand experiences, the approach that is supported and developed by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs’ Families First Initiative (Pastora Sala & Williams 2015).

As discussed earlier, partial coverage of costs is available for the relatives of murdered victims; however, very few resources are available to assist families of missing women and girls.²² While the missing person cases do not involve funerals or trials, families still go through the insupportable emotional turmoil and bear significant expenses. Large investments needed to productively engage in searches for the missing relatives can

limit families' opportunities to search. However, the process of searching is fundamental to the experience of "missingness". Clark et al. specifies that for the participants of their study on the experiences of family members of missing persons searching "provided purpose and focus, and helped to contain an emotional reaction some feared would overwhelm them" (2009:273). If searching is not possible in view of financial constraints, it deprives families of this essential purpose and focus. Despite the lack of support some families continue to search tirelessly.

"My family, we don't go to wedding or parties, we go to Winnipeg to look for my sister. We all can stay in the hotels. It is just we can't afford it. We sleep in ugly campgrounds. Well, you can't even sleep because it is close to the highway. And then we have to travel to the other side of the city to go and find a spot to search."

Sister of a missing woman

"Me and my mom would drive numerous hours. I would drive, she would drive the first four, five, six hours and then I would go at night... So I mean in-between me and my mom we probably searched for about 12 hours, 10 to 12 hours a day."

Sister of a murdered woman

"Everyday searching with the gas and the food the expenses, there would be 10 or more of us, that's like couple of hundred a day to a few hundred a day. Just for you know 12-hour search 'cause we have to feed our helper and we'd have to buy our water and what not. The most expensive thing for us was the gas."

Aunt of a missing woman

Even one month of the constant search such as described by the participant above would suggest the monthly costs of over \$CA5,000. Some participants reported camping outside of the city, which brought additional expenses of buying tents and other equipment.

"I was putting like literally \$30 a day just to get from where I needed to go and then to be able to park my vehicle and get to where I needed to go, then to go back and do my rounds again."

Sister of a murdered woman

Paying \$CA30 for gas every day to drive outside the city to search results in \$CA900 per month just for transportation (excluding posters, tents and any other related expenses); this is almost equal to what a family of two adults without children may get in social assistance per month: \$CA957 monthly in both provincial and federal benefits for general assistance recipients (Employment and Income Assistance, n.d.).

Printing posters is another expense in the search process. One participant shared printing over 1,500 posters a week because they were getting torn down. Assuming the cost of one simple poster is 10 cents, this brings the cost of posters to \$CA150 a week or \$CA600 a month.

Apart from the direct spending on searches, taking time off work is another cost category identified by the participants which results in the loss of income. Family members can only recover 55 percent of the income lost over a maximum of five days (up to \$CA94 per day) through the Compensation for Victims of Crime Program. This means that family members can recover a maximum of \$CA470 of the income lost from Compensation for Victims of Crime Program Support for Family Members whereas, for comparison, one participant has reported having lost \$CA5,000 due to taking time off work. At the same time lunch hours would be spent on writing letters to police, medical examiner's office and so forth.

"As soon as she went missing I, I didn't go to work. I don't think I went to work for quite a while actually. So I missed a lot, I had to use up a lot of my sick time through this whole process. And then when I did go back to work I only went for like you know maybe half a day, sometimes an hour 'cause you know just, you

just get retriggered and it's like I'm just going to go home, you know so, so I used up most of my sick time because of that."

Sister of a murdered woman

For the families of murdered loved ones additional financial pressures might come from the need to spend on funerals, wakes, counselling services and traditional healing.

"I used to use all my Welfare to support to buy supper for the feast, 'cause whoever looked after that feast,... the wake and we were running short of stuff."

Sister of a murdered woman

One participant identified the following amounts for various spending needs: \$CA1,700 for a two-day wake, \$CA10,000 for the burial²³ and an average of \$CA400 per year on traditional healing ceremonies. Some agencies and programs provide assistance to help cover some of these costs (e.g. the First Nation band office, Victim Services, Canada Pension Plan Death Benefit), but as was mentioned earlier, they are usually not able to fully cover these expenses.

Due to the great financial costs to the immediate family that result from the tragedy, at certain times family members had to choose one type of spending over another. This limited their capabilities to seek the justice they wanted, increasing anxiety and having to forever wonder whether they could have done much more to honor their loved ones. One family member reported not being able to file a civil lawsuit against the RCMP for not conducting a proper investigation or hire a private investigator because of having to spend significant amount of savings on fighting the legal battle to win custody over the children of participant's deceased loved one.

In addition, the need to cover many costs associated with a loved one passing has resulted in deferred plans and missed opportunities for some participants.

"My sister died before my husband and I got married and we were going to either like buy a house or build a new house but we like invested so much money like in helping the legal fight that it sort of, you know you always step up for your family right, like it sort of deterred a lot of our plans."

Sister of a murdered woman

A number of on-going costs were highlighted in the interviews. For example, burying a loved one on the reserve results in more frequent travel to the home community to visit the gravesite and, therefore, associated travel expenses.

It is critical for family members to continue to keep the memory of the loved one alive. Therefore, on-going spending for annual vigils, feasts and memorials have also been highlighted. The cost of one memorial was estimated to equal \$CA2,000.

One participant shared that her family and herself had spent at least \$CA127,000²⁴ in total over the period of five years since the loved one's passing (not including any search expenses).

The challenge for Indigenous families that live on social assistance in conditions of severe poverty is to be able to find resources of their own for many vital activities such as searching, healing, honoring their loved ones and fighting for justice if they fear that the investigation of their loved one's case was conducted negligently. It is often the case that families are financially disadvantaged and are unable to invest in many important activities by having to choose between one spending and another.

The economic outcomes of the issue of MMIWG are, first of all, a negative fiscal impact on government through program and social services spending and, second, a boost in economic activity by way of people's increased spending on commodities (e.g. fuel for searches, food for memorials and feasts). The flipside of such an increase in economic activity is that by leaving the issues unaddressed and not providing time-

ly services and sufficient financial assistance to families, vulnerable Indigenous populations are made even poorer with fewer opportunities to heal. Consequently, this increases their reliance on public services and further re-traumatizes them, creating further social instability and distress among Indigenous communities.

Some of the immediate actions and recommendations that were identified by the family members in connection to the financial impacts are:

- Emphasize the importance of making a will for the family members to avoid legal fights and associated costs, this way preventing more trauma for the family if tragedy strikes.
- Include families of long-term missing persons into the Compensation for Victims of Crime program to provide counselling services and traditional healing opportunities.
- Recognise traditional healing as an eligible medical expenses under medical plans.

This section has demonstrated a great number of monetary costs borne by families of MMIWG. Even though families' emotional reactions and

dedication to achieve justice for their loved ones may supersede the associated financial costs, there is still an acute need to maintain the discussion of financial costs of murder and long-term missing cases which was emphasized by the families themselves.

“Do you know how much it costs to put up posters? 10,000 dollars... That the money that's needed. Those facts need to be out in the public.”

Aunt of a murdered woman

The extent of the present effort to evaluate the financial impacts of the issue on families and the community does not allow for the in-depth study of the suggested victim costs. Nonetheless, we are continuing the discussion of the economic impact of the issue of MMIWG by looking broadly at not only the out-of-pocket costs of the co-victims of homicide and missing cases but also at other types of costs incurred by police, the justice system and other agencies. In the next section we have attempted to arrive at an estimate of the current spending on the tragedy of Indigenous women and girls going missing and being murdered.

Preliminary Estimate of the Cost of Doing Nothing

In this section we will attempt to construct a preliminary estimate of the cost of doing nothing to prevent many Indigenous women and girls from going missing and being murdered, that is the cost of dealing with this tragedy, based on calculations drawn from the literature and on our estimates of the number of MMIWG in Manitoba. Our goal is to see how much has been spent in 2014 on dealing with the consequences of Indigenous women being murdered and going missing. Relevant cost categories and their estimates will be drawn from Hoddenbagh, Zhang, and McDonald (2013). From there we will consider the following types of costs: average spending for police, court, prosecution, legal aid, funeral, victim services as well as average medical costs of homicide victims and the average medical and counselling costs incurred by families. In addition, we will try to assess the ongoing police expenditures for the long-term missing cases and historical unsolved homicides based on the information we were able to collect on Project Devote, a Manitoba integrated task force for missing and murdered women.

Murdered

We were able to identify eight homicide cases involving Indigenous women in 2014. There are four solved and four unsolved homicides. Foul play was ruled in one of the unsolved cases. However, the family of the victim disagrees with this conclusion of the RCMP (Barrera, 2014), therefore we are capturing the case in our estimation. An arrest in another unsolved case was made in 2015 (Chura, 2015); so for 2014 this case is treated as unsolved and the justice system costs are not applied. The solved cases are divided as follows: there are two cases ruled as manslaughter and two cases ruled as second degree murder. The information gathered on these cases was drawn from publicly available sources such as online news articles. Although we tried to collect and verify as much information as possible, we accept that there is a chance that some of the cases were not covered in the media, and are therefore overlooked.

The estimates in Hoddenbagh et al. (2013) for 2009 were adjusted for inflation and applied to our statistics on murdered Indigenous women in 2014 presented above. In the absence of a charge for the unsolved cases, we assume that the police costs for an unsolved homicide case

are equal to the police costs for second degree murder cases.²⁵ We further assume that the surviving family members have accessed victim services, counselling services and medical services in a way that corresponds to the methodology in Hoddenbagh et al. (2013).

To add to this, we were able to find that there were at least three arrests made in 2014 for the murders that took place before 2014. Consequently, court, prosecution and legal aid costs for those cases have been added.²⁶

Moreover, there are a number of unsolved homicides from previous years that, assuming that the investigations are still active, can have a significant fiscal impact. There exist special units that deal with the unsolved murders; one such unit being Project Devote, an integrated Unit of RCMP and WPS investigators that will consider a case when criteria of substance abuse, transient lifestyle, hitchhiking, mental health illness or involvement in the sex trade is evident. Of the total of 29 cases that the Unit is currently investigating, the number of unsolved murders involving Indigenous females equals 22 and the number of missing cases involving Indigenous women equals six. Project Devote is working on one more case involving a male that will be excluded from our consideration for the purposes of this study.

We were able to calculate the average annual salary expenditures per unsolved case based on the information about the staff of Project Devote. The total salaries for twenty-five full-time employees equal to roughly \$CA1,662,818.²⁸ Therefore, average annual salary expenditures per unsolved case in Project Devote equal approximately \$CA57,339. Based on this assessment we were able to find the share spent in 2014 on both unsolved murder and missing cases that took place before 2014.

It is worthwhile stating that the salaries of police officers form just one of the many cost categories. The investigation process, especially for cold cases, is complex. The costs are variable

and can include but not be limited to: re-submission of DNA, regular contact with families, media strategies, extensive travel to follow up with investigative leads, conferences, forums, meetings, presentations and continued communication with communities and leaders.

Based on the partial data we were able to gather, we estimate Project Devote's share of salaries spent on unsolved murders to be \$CA1,261,458. Moreover, there are about 23 unsolved murders that are not being investigated as a part of Project Devote. Assuming the same intensity of search for these unsolved murder cases as for the unsolved murder cases in Project Devote, we can add further salary expenses of \$CA1,318,797.

Despite the controversy surrounding the inclusion of intangible impacts discussed earlier in the paper, we can consider the loss of life enjoyment for the families and loss of life as exemplified in Hoddenbagh et al. (2013). The statistical value of life used in Hoddenbagh et al. (2013) is retrieved from Viscusi (2008) and equals \$CA7.0 million. The estimated value of loss of affection and enjoyment to family members is \$CA65,000 per homicide victim. This brings an additional \$CA65.4 million for the murders of 2014.

Therefore, if the impacts of the murders in Manitoba correspond in monetary terms to the estimates made in Hoddenbagh et al. (2013) we can expect at least \$CA5.0 million in expenses annually related to the murders of the Indigenous women or \$CA70 million with the inclusion of the intangible impacts.

Missing

We focus on the long-term missing cases where foul play is suspected and where the investigations, we assume, are still ongoing. As was mentioned earlier, Project Devote investigates 6 such cases. There are also 29 missing Indigenous women that we were able to identify in

our database that are not part of Project Devote. In our estimation we are, again, only using the salaries of the officers investigating the cases. Therefore, multiplying average annual salary expenditures per unsolved case in Project Devote by the total number of missing cases brings an additional \$CA2.0 million in police investigation costs.

Third party costs presented in Hoddenbagh et al. (2013) for female homicides in Canada will not be applied for the missing Indigenous women in the present paper. We recognise that many of the costs of families of missing women are still ongoing (counselling, medical, etc.) and that they certainly are not limited to the year of disappearance. However, due to insufficiency of data on the services used by the families of missing women and girls in later years, we are leaving this for future research.

Overview of the Calculation

The results of each step are presented in the table below.

Therefore, our partial, small-scale exercise to measure costs of treating the consequences of Indigenous women and girls going missing and being murdered in Manitoba has revealed that at least \$CA7.0 million was spent in 2014 in direct expenditures to deal with the issue. To put the total estimate in perspective, it is more than twice the annual \$3.5 million operating budget of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, a political advocacy body mandated through the Chiefs-in-Assembly, to devise collective and common political strategies and mechanisms for coordinated action by First Nations and their organizations. The costs are likely over ten times as high, around \$CA78.0 million, if we consider intangibles of the loss of human life and life enjoyment for families.

TABLE 2 Preliminary Estimate of the Cost of Doing Nothing on MMIWG in Manitoba in 2014, Can. dollars

Murdered	
Costs attributable to 2014 homicides (immediate expenses on police, court, funeral, counselling etc.) ²⁷	\$2,611,196
Project Devote's share of salaries spent on investigating unsolved murder cases	\$1,261,458
Salary spending on other unsolved homicides (assuming the same intensity of search as in the case of Project Devote)	\$1,318,797
Total 1	\$5,191,451
Missing	
Project Devote's share of salaries spent on investigating missing cases	\$344,031
Salary spending on other missing cases (assuming the same intensity of search as in the case of Project Devote)	\$1,662,818
Total 2	\$2,006,849
TOTAL (Total 1 + Total 2)	\$7,198,300

Conclusion

The present study has focused on the pressing issue of MMIWG in Canada and in Manitoba in particular and emphasized the huge emotional and financial costs borne by society and individual families. While there exist a number of studies exploring the impacts of homicide and missing persons on families and community (e.g. see Mastrocinque et al. 2014; Armour 2002; Casey 2011; Holmes 2008), our study is unique because it jointly explored both murder and long-term missing cases and focused on a particular demographics — Indigenous women in a country where the history of colonialism and oppression has made Indigenous people more socially and economically excluded than the rest of the population, and Indigenous women more susceptible to sexual violence and exploitation, than others.

Other studies and our preliminary qualitative assessment of impact on families and a quantitative assessment of the fiscal impact of the issue suggest that there is a whole array of consequences that inevitably results from the issue of MMIWG left unaddressed: the increased reliance of families on public assistance, families' expenses on searches, counselling,²⁹ travel and other needs, increased compensations

payments, lost opportunities for education and work, grief and suffering, lost leisure time and life enjoyment, and, generally, the continuous social and economic divide between the Indigenous population and other Canadians. Our paper has provided a glimpse into these and many other issues, many of which have not yet been a part of the discussion in connection with the issue of MMIWG such as the families' financial costs to search, heal and honor their loved ones. It has drawn from the experiences of family members of MMIWG to inform improved policy responses in relation to people who go missing and are murdered and their families.

While acknowledging the wrongdoing from a moral perspective we were able to show that violence against Indigenous women resulting in murder and disappearances drains resources of our economy from government, businesses, community groups and individuals. We were able to estimate that at least \$CA7.0 million was spent in 2014 in direct expenditures to deal with the issue of MMIWG in Manitoba, revealing only the tiny portion of the cost of doing nothing. This result can be used as a policy advocacy tool to

improve the situation for family members and to argue for more effective prevention strategies as a whole.

Day rightly observed that a large part of our economy exists because violence against women exists: “The medical, dental, policing, legal, penal and many other service systems are far bigger than they would otherwise be” (1995:1). Therefore, it is important to emphasize that this economy is proliferating out of the grief and suffering of

Indigenous families, taking away resources that can otherwise be used productively in a non-violent economy.

The overriding emphasis of government policy must be to take action to reduce the cases of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, whatever its cost. The thrust of this research is to demonstrate that doing nothing to prevent this violence carries its own huge costs in both financial and human terms.

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Endnotes

- 1 For purposes of the present study the word “Indigenous” is being used to include First Nations, Métis and Inuit as identified in Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
- 2 Although Indigenous men are not included in the discussion in this paper, it is important to acknowledge that Indigenous men account for approximately 71 percent of Indigenous homicide victims in Canada (Deerchild, 2015). Moreover, Indigenous men live in the same conditions of extreme poverty as many Indigenous women brought about by the legacy of the Indian residential school system, unemployment, poor housing, poverty, and racism. However, the objective of the MM1WG focused discussion is also to include sexual violence and exploitation as part of the discourse and to emphasize that Indigenous women experience “double discrimination” (Baum, 2016, February 1). Moreover, recommendations involving systemic change that will result from discussion of MM1WG and that address poverty, lack of services, racism and other issues are believed not only to improve the conditions of Indigenous women, but also the conditions of many Indigenous communities, including Indigenous men.
- 3 The issue of MM1WG is particularly prominent in the province of Manitoba that continues to have the highest percentage of Indigenous people among Canada’s provinces — 16.7 percent according to the National Household Survey, 2011. Miladinovic and Mulligan (2015) reported that in 2014 the rate of homicides involving Indigenous victims was highest in Manitoba among Canadian provinces.
- 4 The Families First Initiative is a Manitoba made, grassroots approach to address the tragedy of MM1WG guided by listening and understanding that puts the families of MM1WG first. It is hosted by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.
- 5 Names of the participants will be kept confidential at their request.
- 6 “Language that normalizes the issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation must not be used, including as examples, “sex trade” which infers personal choice or free will in the act of a person “trading” a sexual act for money. “Sex work” is not employment, there is no employment in engaging in the “sex industry”.
— AMC-Our Circle to Protect Sacred Lives: Manitoba First Nations respond to human trafficking of Women and Girls Project (Survivors of Human Trafficking/Sexual Exploitation)
- 7 Perreault (2011) suggests that 15 percent of Indigenous women reported spousal victimization in the past 5 year versus 6 percent in the case of non-Indigenous women making them two-and-one-half times as likely to be victimized by a spouse. At the same time Brennan (2011) estimates that 69 percent of Indigenous women that were victims of spousal violence within the previous five-year period did not report the incident to police. This statistic is similar to that of non-Indigenous women (76 percent). In Aboriginal Women And Family Violence participants of the focus groups held as the part of the study pointed out that “when violence occurs, it must be very severe — often nearly fatal — before the woman will report it to the police or leave the home” (2008:14).
- 8 Missing under non-suspicious circumstances is not considered in the estimate provided here.

- 9 The total is composed of 67 percent murder cases (death as the result of homicide or negligence), 20 percent missing women cases; the rest (13 percent) are cases of suspicious death and unknown cases.
- 10 Information extracted as of July 2016
- 11 81 percent of cases are murder cases, 16 percent is the share of missing cases with the rest (3 percent) being classified as suspicious death.
- 12 The national RCMP database for missing persons and unidentified remains continues to be incomplete and is running far over budget. Families of MMIWG and Indigenous leaders see the initial delay in launching the database and no efficient efforts to complete the database as the lack of political will and commitment to resolve the issue of MMIWG on the part of the current government (Beeby 2015; CBC News, 2015, August 31).
- 13 A term derived from Ojibwe that refers to a person who embodies both a masculine and feminine spirit.
- 14 It is important to mention that some deaths were not ruled as suspicious and, hence, were not included in the official statistics on MMIWG. However, from the conversations that were held with the family members of MMIWG as part of this research, it was found that a number of families believe that the death of their loved one was not accidental despite being treated as such by the police. The same topic is explored in the article of Moore and Troian (2016) which raises questions of whether many official rulings of suicide or accidental death are accurate by looking into specific cases. Therefore, it can be assumed that the official numbers of MMIWG are incomplete because they only reflect the cases that police ruled as murder or death under suspicious circumstances.
- 15 30 female and 7 male participants.
- 16 Despite some murders having “solved” status at the time of the interview, many cases remained unsolved for years and families were engaged in extensive searches.
- 17 Winnipeg accounted for 63 percent of the total number of cases of MMIWG in our database.
- 18 As a reminder, findings reveal that there are at least 121 children left motherless.
- 19 It was estimated that the government had spent \$CA211,643.21 on the landfill search for Tanya Nepinak in 2012. Originally the full project was estimated to cost about \$1 million, with only a 5 percent chance of success (Pursaga, 2012, December 7).
- 20 Project Devote is a provincial integrated task force of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Winnipeg Police Service focuses on addressing unsolved historical homicides and missing person cases (Project Devote, 2016).
- 21 Drag the Red is the movement of volunteers who want to solve the cases of murdered and missing women and girls which started in 2014. Ground searchers are checking the banks of the Red River and with the use of a boat and hook are also searching for bodies that might have sunk to the bottom (Drag the Red: Meet the Volunteers Searching for Bodies in Winnipeg’s Red River | VICE | United States, n.d.).
- 22 It is recommended that the government include families of missing persons in the Compensation for Victims of Crime program.
- 23 Maximum compensation for funeral, burial, cremation, or similar kinds of services available through the Compensation for Victims of Crime Program is \$CA5,400 (Compensation for Victims of Crime Program Support for Family Members, n.d.).
- 24 The total is comprised of the following: \$50,000 for legal fees to fight for custody over the children of the diseased loved one in court; \$60,000 for food, clothes, entertainment and other related expenses for children during 3 years they were living with the family after their mother’s passing; \$5,000 for funeral, wakes, etc.; \$10,000 for memorials and feasts (\$2,000 ongoing annual expense); \$2,000 for the traditional medicines/ ceremonies to heal.
- 25 Hoddenbough et al. (2014b) found that police costs for 1st and 2nd degree murder are higher than police costs for manslaughter (\$CA342,224 vs. \$CA88,526).
- 26 Correction costs (e.g. provincial/federal custody costs) are not included.
- 27 Not to overstate the costs, the calculation is based on the minimal engagement rates effective January 1, 2014 Source: <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/recruiting-recrute-ment/rm-mr/rates-taux-eng.htm>
- 28 Source: Hoddenbough et al. (2013)
- 29 The financial costs of providing counselling services to families is just one group of costs that can be looked at and estimated. Emotional and psychological costs borne by caregivers are equally present, however, but, as any intangibles, are more difficult to estimate.



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