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# Storying Gendered Violence: Indigenous Understandings of the Interconnectedness of Violence

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**Storying Gendered Violence: Indigenous Understandings of the Interconnectedness of  
Violence**

**By: Josie Nelson**

**Completed in Partial Fulfillment for the  
Masters in Social Justice and Community Engagement at  
Wilfrid Laurier University**

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**Abstract**

The research and scholarship of gendered violence on university campuses is growing; however, there is currently limited to no research exploring the experiences of Indigenous peoples, particularly women and two-spirit, non-binary and transgender students. To advance the knowledge of the interconnectedness of violence, I conducted two focus groups with six Indigenous women staff at Wilfrid Laurier University. This research, informed by Indigenous feminism and storytelling methodologies, shares their understandings of how colonial and gendered violence cannot be understood independent from one another. Participants also provide insight into the needed supports on campus for Indigenous students who have experienced gendered violence. Recommendations for future research and directions for institutional changes are considered.

## Acknowledgements

First, I wouldn't be who I am or where I am without my Heavenly Father directing my steps. Thank you for blessing me with the skills to further learn and to be equipped to serve You for the rest of my days.

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*Isaiah 1:17*  
*Learn to do good.*  
*Seek justice.*  
*Help the oppressed.*  
*Defend the cause of orphans.*  
*Fight for the rights of widow*

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## Introduction

*“Colonization is violence. Colonization has had an impact on both Indigenous women and men’s roles in all relationships but Indigenous women have taken the brunt of the impacts of colonization. Direct attacks against Indigenous women are attempts to erase them from existence so that there will be no future generations” (Jacobs, 2013, p. 1)*

The above quote introduces the complexities of understanding how gendered violence is not only a tool of patriarchy, but is also a tool of colonialism and racism (Smith, 2013). Gendered violence involves the subjugation of a person or group because of their gender identities. Researchers continue to cite that Indigenous women remain the most victimized group in Canada (Ontario Native Women’s Association (ONWA), 2011); however, there seems to be a gap of understanding between *what* happens to Indigenous women, and *why* it is happening. Beverly Jacobs (2013) argues that the violence against Indigenous women exist in a larger context of Canada’s colonial relationship with Indigenous peoples. Yet, this does not mean that the violence happens during, or as a result of, colonization, but “the colonial process is itself structured by sexual violence” (Smith & Ross, 2004 p. 1). Therefore, issues of gender oppression cannot be separated from colonialism—a relationship that seems to be disregarded in many institutional structures.

In recent years, scholarly and media attention has demonstrated how university and college campuses are locations known for heightened gendered violence against women. In general, rates of sexual assault are consistently high compared to other violence crimes, but there is an elevated rate that is experienced amongst university and college women—rates are four times higher for women identified students (Litchy, Campbell & Schuiteman, 2008). Litchy, Campbell and Schuiteman (2008) have found that between 15-25% of North American college

and university-aged women will experience some form of sexual assault during their academic career. The data also suggests that less than 20% of sexual assaults on college campus are reported (Burnett et al. 2009). Within Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC)'s report on sexual violence on campus, they cite that "racialized women are hesitant to report due to factors such as fear of racism, a history of negative experiences with authorities and fear of being disbelieved" (Olive, 2012, p. 4-5). Therefore, there could be a significant number of students who have not disclosed and are not getting the appropriate supports. Additionally, in their recent research in the United States, Coulter et al. (2017) found that "sexual assault was greatest among Blacks and people with other race/ethnicity (8.7% and 8.6% respectively)" (p. 9). Unfortunately, at the time of their research there were "no studies who have examined how sexual identity, gender identity, and race/ethnicity taken together may contribute to increased vulnerability for sexual assault among undergraduate students" (p.2). The lack of representation in the data is indicative of the crucial need for this type of analysis.

Additionally, without an intersectional lens, previous and current researchers continue to approach gendered violence on campus with the danger of a single narrative (Harris & Linder, 2017). There exists the dominate narrative of how sexual violence occurs when a [cisgender, straight] male student assaults a [cisgender, straight] female student (Harris & Linder, 2017 p. 9). Harris and Linder (2017) share that an "identity-neutral, power-evasive, ahistoric perspective informs higher education research and practice, resulting in a narrow view and surface-level approach to addressing sexual violence on college campuses" (p. 10). Instead of a focus on alcohol, fraternity affiliation or being an athlete, there needs to be more attention

placed on how power, privilege and dominance influence sexual violence (Harris & Linder, 2017).

In 2016, Wilfrid Laurier University's Board of Governors approved the "Gendered and Sexual Violence Policy and Student Procedures." The policy's purpose, led by the Gendered Violence Task Force (GVTF), is to outline how to respond to gendered and sexual violence experienced by students. During the research that led to the implementation of the policy, a survey was given to students that asked questions around gendered violence. It was found from the completed surveys that, "more than half had experienced or witnessed sexist jokes or inappropriate comments" and "eleven percent indicated they had experienced unwanted sexual contact" during the period of the study (Harrison, Lafrenière & Hallman, 2015). Further research on Laurier's campuses in the Spring of 2016 was conducted, where students were invited to participate in an anonymous online survey on gendered violence (GVTF, 2016). Similar results were found to the Change Project (2015) research above, where eleven percent of students selected yes when asked about personal experiences of sexual violence since September 2015 (GVTF, 2016).

These findings specific to Laurier University, as well as other universities in Ontario, set a timely and unique precedent for further research. Since the previous research does not look to racialized or Indigenous women for specific understandings and contexts, the work that my research undertakes is especially important to understand if there are appropriate support services for Indigenous women on campus. It is crucial to consider how gendered violence is a social and cultural construct that changes with the many intersecting identities and factors (race, class, ability, age, etc.). These changes influence the meanings and support available for

survivors of gendered violence; therefore, highlighting the importance of the particular expansion of this research in regard to colonial violence and Indigenous students on campuses.

### **Scope of the Research**

The purpose of this project is to highlight and share the stories of how Indigenous staff members on Laurier's campuses understand gendered violence, and what supports are necessary for creating safe(r) space(s) on campus. Using WLU as a case study, this research explores how Canadian universities approach the interconnections between gendered violence and colonial violence, and seeks to determine if there are appropriate cultural supports for students who self-identify as Indigenous women (including transgender, non-binary, and two-spirited peoples) and who experience gendered violence. However, the main purpose of this research is to advance knowledge of gendered violence against Indigenous women on campus by including the expertise and stories of Indigenous women who are both traditional knowledge keepers, and professionals working in the field of higher education. Through this research, I hope to further create a culture where Indigenous women's voices and insights are recognized and included in scholarship and university policymaking in regards to gendered violence on campuses—achieved through the lens of Indigenous feminism. I focused the current research on the Wilfrid Laurier campuses, which are located on the traditional territories of the Neutral, Anishnawbe and Haudenosaunee peoples.

I have a personal connection to this research, and the choices I have made herein are reflective of those connections. I identify as a Haudenosaunee woman from the Delaware Nation of the Six Nations community. Yet, it is also important to recognize that I have also had a Western upbringing. I am considered a “status Indian,” but it was not until recently that the

government recognized me as such. My Indigenous grandmother was adopted when she was very young, and was also raised without her Indigenous culture and histories. I am beginning to understand that I am part of the legacy of colonization, and I am continually on a journey of learning, unlearning, sharing and being silent. I tell this small part of my own story, as a personal connection to the family histories, culture, and lives that have been lost to colonization. This to me, is where the power of stories is seen. Stories are not just words, or language—but are life. Not only do I have a single story, but I am part of the bigger story. This is a story I don't fully understand, and yet, want to experience and learn more about.

The following research explores the relationship between gendered violence and colonization as discussed by self-identified Indigenous women at Laurier's campuses. The paper will be divided into six sections: (1) an introduction, (2) a literature review divided into five themes; (3) theory and methodologies; (4) results; (5) discussion and conclusions; and (6) recommendations and limitations.

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of the literature review is to explore scholarship surrounding the different aspects of gendered violence and colonialism. The literature review has five sections. The first section will provide historical contexts in understanding the interconnectedness of gender and sexual violence and Indigenous women, which includes the relationships between land and trauma, legislation found within the *Indian Act*, and finally the residential school system. Building off the foundations and context of colonialism in Canada, I will discuss the literature on sexual violence against Indigenous women, and the crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). A brief discussion of racism and Indigenous students' experiences

within the education system in Canada will follow. The next section will involve a general overview of the definitions of gendered violence within current literature. In the final section, literature relating to gendered violence on campus will be presented, with emphasis on the research conducted on Wilfrid Laurier's campuses, and will highlight how there is a gap in research on Indigenous women's experiences.

To note, for the purposes of this research, I will be using the term *Indigenous* to hold to the *United Nations* definition of Indigenous:

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them.

The term Indigenous will encompass what the Canadian government has defined as "Aboriginal" peoples of Canada including First Nations, Metis, and Inuit as recognized in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982.

### **Colonialization**

Before directly exploring literature concerning the relationships between gendered violence and colonization, a brief discussion of colonization in general is necessary. For centuries, thousands of Indigenous nations and communities have called Turtle Island, or 'North America' home. Before the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples were self-reliant, and ways of life ensured that community needs were met (Belanger, 2014). At first contact with the European settlers, the relationships between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people were largely based off trade and military alliances; however, the arrival of more Europeans and missionaries changed the state of the respected trade relationship (Loyie, Speak & Brissenden, 2014). Instead, settling nations' intentions shifted to declaring ownership of the 'new found'

land. These practices were largely based off the popular European practice of *terra nullius*, which is a Latin expression meaning ‘nobody’s land’ (Konsmo & Pacheco, 2016). If there were lands perceived to be unoccupied, colonial nations states justified their land claims by the nation who declared discovery (Belanger, 2014). Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, European settlement, on the land that is now called Canada, increased rapidly, and by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Indigenous populations were considered obstacles to further progression. Through a variety of legislative policies and actions, Indigenous peoples were forced from traditional ways of life. A brief overview of a few of the assimilative and colonial practices that connect to gendered violence will be given below.

### **Land**

Taking control of Indigenous land was the first act of colonization, as Indigenous peoples were soon required to move to designated areas known as reserves (Loyie, Speak & Brissenden, 2014). The Canadian reservation system was designed to make way for European settlement and to secure borders, while also clearing land for mainstream European industrial and agricultural economies (Hanson, 2009). To this day, the reservation system serves as a form of control in governing Indigenous populations. The forced relocations, and lack of control over lands deeply impacts Indigenous ways of being/knowing. Battiste (2002) argues how Indigenous knowledge is inherently tied to the land— “to particular landscapes, landforms, biomes where ceremonies are properly held, stories properly recited, medicines properly gathered, and transfers of knowledge properly authenticated” (p.13). Without the land, there are disconnections to Creation/Mother Earth.

Indigenous peoples traditionally believe that the health of one's body cannot be separated from the health of one's environment (Konsmo & Pacheco, 2016). The report, *Violence on our Land, Violence on our Bodies*, from the Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) and Women's Earth Alliance (WEA), shares the connections of sexual/gendered violence and land trauma. In the report, April McGill (Yuki/Wappo/Pomo) comments that Mother Earth is suffering— "And because [we are of her], we're suffering as women. We're going through so many things with our bodies—sexual violence, environmental violence—and we're feeling that from our Mother too" (p.28). Further, the suffering experienced is continued with the Canadian state's refusal to respect or ask for free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). FPIC is an internationally accepted principle that Indigenous peoples have rights to their lands and resources, and that third parties enter an equal and respectful relationship with them based upon informed consent (p.18). The attacks on the lands and water have direct impact on Indigenous peoples' bodies. These attacks include the "extractive industries of drilling, mining, and fracking lands on or near traditional Indigenous territories" (p. 6). For example,

In Alberta, Canada, in the Peace River, Cold Lake and Athabasca regions, territory to numerous First Nations and Métis communities, is the Tar Sands gigaproject—the largest industrial project in history. More than 20 corporations operate out of the tar sands, wreaking havoc on the environment and First Nations communities in what is possibly the most destructive project on earth (p. 10)

Anderson (2016) demonstrates that "the relationship with the land is critical to Native female strength and resistance" (p. 106). With the land as Mother, it provides both comfort and wisdom (Anderson, 2016), but these teachings and understandings are not as strong when there is suffering.

### **The *Indian Act***

With Canada recognized as an independent British Dominion in the 19th century, new legislation dictated responsibility over Indigenous peoples. The *Indian Act*, established in 1876, is a Canadian federal law that governs all matters pertaining to Indigenous populations—including Indian status, bands, and reserves (Hanson, 2009; Milloy, 1999). The very nature of the *Indian Act* was/is to eliminate Indigenous social and cultural practices and many aspects of the *Indian Act* are oppressive and discriminatory. For example, on top of the provision relating to land and schooling (which is discussed elsewhere), there are also provisions governing speech, movement, health, government, and enfranchisement. For the purposes of this research, a brief overview of information relating to Indigenous women's oppression will be explored because of its direct link to gendered violence.

Indigenous women were excluded from many rights, and their Indian status was terminated for a variety of reasons that were not applied to status men. Indian status, defined in the *Act*, is a designation akin to citizenship (Day & Green, 2010). In many different situations, a woman's status was entirely dependent on her husband—creating a patriarchal and paternalistic legislative control over Indigenous women (Hanson, 2009). For example, many Indigenous women lost their status when they married a non-Indigenous man. In 1985, the *Indian Act* was amended, due largely to Mary Two-Axe Early's resistance and activism, to coincide with the Canadian constitution, and Bill C-31 was passed (Hanson, 2009). However, Bill C-31 was still seen as unconstitutional, as those who have their status reinstated can only pass it on for one generation, and are subjected to a diminished status (Hanson, 2009; Day & Green, 2010). Brodsky (2016) cites, "To this day, people of Indigenous descent are still being denied

status because the scheme treats the female line as inferior. This ongoing sex discrimination signals to all concerned that Indigenous women are not equal” (p.21). There are attempts to further promote gender equity through Bill C-3 in 2010; however, there is still discrimination against Indigenous women and future generations. The gender bias does not only affect status either, as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) links the *Indian Act’s* gender discrimination to high levels of violence and to the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women (Brodsky, 2016, p. 21)

### **Residential Schools**

Canada’s first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald insisted that assimilation of “the Indian people in all respects with the inhabitants of the Dominion,” was a national goal (Milloy, 1999; Loyie, Speak & Brissenden, 2014). The strategy for assimilation consisted of using the education system as a method to re-socialize children (Milloy, 1999). To achieve the desired transformation, “to kill the Indian,” children needed to be removed from their parents and community, and placed in guardianship of the State and Church (Milloy, 1999). Thus, residential schools were created to fulfill the mandates of “civilization,” and replace Indigenous culture with European ways of life. As part of the assimilation process in residential schools, children were to deny all aspects of their Indigenous culture. Braided hair, which has spiritual significance, was cut, and traditional clothes were taken away and replaced with a school-uniform (Milloy, 1999; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRCC), 2015). Furthermore, children were given a Euro-Canadian name and were forbidden to practice any spiritual teachings that connected them to their familial roots (Loyie, Speak & Brissenden, 2014). From the view of the State, the process of assimilation could not be fulfilled until

children spoke only English or French (Milloy, 1999). Subsequently, these transformations disrupted the transmission of Indigenous knowledge and culture to future generations.

Residential schools' environments were institutional, and oppressive. Milloy (1999) argued that to keep with the vision of residential school education, "discipline was curriculum and punishment was pedagogy" (pp. 43). It is not surprising then that children attending these schools were subject to various forms of abuse, including high levels of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. It is estimated that, on average, between 48% and 70% of the children were sexually abused, while in some schools 100% of children experienced sexual abuse (Warwick, 2009). Elaine Durocher, a survivor, illustrates how authority figures took advantage of the power imbalances and "were there to discipline you, teach you, beat you, rape you, molest you" (TRCC, 2015, pp. 120). Within the residential schools, children were taught shame and rejection for everything about their identities, including their bodies, Ancestors, families, and spiritual practices (TRCC, 2015). Residential schools are an example of how colonization creates a loss of identity and self-determination amongst Indigenous peoples. The dehumanizing environment of the residential schools perpetuated situations where the modeling of aggressive and abusive behaviour by children was considered normal and almost expected—creating a cycle of intergenerational trauma that still affects Indigenous families today.

### **Sexual Colonialism and MMIWG**

The historical contexts of colonization of Indigenous peoples of Canada provides further understanding of the how colonialism and gendered violence are interconnected. While the Canadian state's model of dealing with sexual violence is very individualistic, Indigenous approaches to dealing with sexual violence involve every member of the community affected—

the victim, abuser, families of both, and the community witness to violence (ONWA, 2011). For Indigenous communities, taking care of generations who have lived through trauma is the responsible action to 'blood memory' (ONWA, 2011). Sherry Lewis, a member of ONWA, argues that there needs to be a culturally based gender analysis to the issues of sexual violence. This is based on different worldviews and knowledges, but is crucial to understanding the application of necessary supports for both survivors and perpetrators.

Within an Indigenous ideology of motherhood, Indigenous women are "powerful because they birth the whole world" (Shirley Bear, as cited in Anderson, 2016, p. 141). However, over time, the identities of Indigenous women have changed and have been categorized into dualities, "the Indian princess and the dirty squaw" (Anderson, 2016). These stereotypes were invented and reinforced because they were advantageous to colonizers (Anderson, 2016). There continues to exist a racist narrative that Indigenous peoples are dirty, and are "made sexually polluted" (Warwick, 2009). The sacred identities of Indigenous women were not valued under colonialism but instead women were often victimized—mainly due to women's ability to reproduce (Jacobs, 2013; Koonsmo & Pacheco, 2016; Smith 2013). Hernandez-Avila (1993) echoes this understanding, and how "it is because of a Native American woman's sex that she is hunted down and slaughtered, in fact, singled out, because she has the potential through child birth to assure the continuance of the people" (p. 386). Consequently, attacks against Indigenous women are attacks against the future Indigenous nations (Jacobs, 2013). Therefore, sexual violence, within a colonial lens, does not and cannot affect men and women the same way (Smith, 2013).

In a closing healing ceremony for his sister-in-law, elder Dan Smoke states how, “it is important to honour the missing and murdered women. It is unacceptable to marginalize these women. The Creator did not create garbage. He created beauty” (Stolen Sisters, 2004). Over the past ten years, there has been an increasing awareness of the haunting reality of the murders and disappearances of Indigenous women, girls, and LGBTQ2S people in Canada. From 2005 to 2010, the Sisters in Spirit initiative of the Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) has gathered information on 582 cases over a span of twenty years (NWAC, 2010a). Additionally, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) published a report in 2014 entitled, *Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women: A National Operational Overview*, where they reported the total number of incidents was 1,181, with 164 missing and 1,017 homicide victims (RCMP, 2014)—a total number that continues to rise, and where statistics may not be fully accurate as Indigenous identities are characterized as “unknown” roughly half the time (RCMP, 2014 p. 9). The Canadian government has finally taken some action and the National Inquiry of the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) was officially launched in 2015, and in August 2016 the Commissioners were announced. The National Inquiry for MMIWG is an important step in recognizing the systematic and colonial violence against Indigenous women.

There is also significant need for universities to acknowledge the seriousness of MMIWG. With research continually citing that just over half (55%) of the cases involve young women and girls under the age of 31, with 17% of women and girls 18 years or younger, (NWAC, 2010b), the target population is university-aged students. Additionally, the majority of women and girls have disappeared from and been found murdered in urban areas, 70% and

60% respectively. Therefore, this national crisis directly impacts Indigenous students, and there needs to be adequate supports and awareness of the violence against Indigenous communities.

### **Racism and Education**

The educational system today has been greatly influenced from the mandates of assimilative practices used within Residential Schools. There is a common misconception regarded in Canada of how universities are open and inclusive institutions of learning; instead, many Indigenous peoples would argue that universities are colonialist structures and “a tool of oppression” (Monture-Angus, 1996, p. 95). Many Indigenous researchers argue that education is one of the key institutions that continues to perpetuate racism against Indigenous peoples (Bailey, 2016; Clark, Kleiman, Spanierman, Isacc, & Poolokasingham, 2014; Lacourt, 2003; Neeganagwedgin, 2013). Clark et al. (2014) examined Indigenous students’ experience with racial microaggressions in Canada and found five emerging themes. In summary, Indigenous students in their research talked about *encountering expectations of primitiveness* (such as asking questions like “Do you live in a teepee?); *enduring unconstrained voyeurism*; *withstanding jealous accusations* (myth of free tuition and no taxes); *experiencing curricular elimination or misrepresentation*; and *living with day-to-day cultural and social isolation*. Overall, Clark et al.’s (2014) research documents some of the harsh, but lived realities for Indigenous students at university. Similarly, Bailey ‘s (2016) research, conducted at McMaster University, supports many of the same experiences that Clark et al.’s (2014) research found. In fact, many Indigenous students spoke to the levels of racism “that is ‘built in’ to the university system,” and that the “lack of awareness and knowledge” are reasons why racism still exists (Bailey, 2016, p. 1271, 1273). However, this understanding does not constitute a justification,

but rather represents the necessary changes that need to occur within universities. Indigenous students (and staff and faculty) should not believe they “have no politico-cultural voice at [an] institution [and to feel] like a tree, inside the colonialist structure [where] branches continue to be cut (Lacourt, 2003, p. 308).

### **Gendered Violence**

In the last couple of decades, research on the relationships between gender and violence is well documented. However, as society continues to change, the language used to describe certain phenomenon in relation to gender and violence is changing too. Merry (2009) describes how there have been debates over naming the problem since the 1970s, where concepts continue to be introduced, such as violence against women, gender violence, gender-based violence (GBV), family violence, domestic violence, and sexual violence. Many researchers agree that the language used to name a problem is significant to the various social, political, and legal responses to the phenomenon, as each term suggests a slightly different scope and underscores different orientations and solutions to the problem (Aghtaie & Ganjoli, 2015; Merry, 2009).

It is important when attempting to define gendered violence to acknowledge that both gender and violence are cultural constructs (Aghtaie & Ganjoli, 2015; Merry, 2009; O’Toole, Schiffman & Kiter Edwards, 2007; Scheper-Hughes & Burgois, 2004). An important shift in the conceptualization of gendered violence is how sex and gender are differentiated and how gender identities are more intersectional and exist along a continuum. The concept of ‘sex’ typically refers to the binary system, determined by one’s genitalia, chromosomes, and hormones that classifies people as male or female, although recent advocacy and activism has

made clear that intersex people must also be included. 'Gender' is a social construction and includes social and cultural dimensions to how one identifies opposed to only the biological (Merry, 2009). Therefore, these changes broaden past research on the specific attention to violence against women.

Despite these changes, there continue to be central debate on defining gendered violence and whether it should be broadened or narrowed. Merry (2009) seems to use a broader definition of gendered violence; "violence whose meaning depends on the gendered identities of the parties. It is an interpretation of violence of gender" (p. 3). As well, O'Toole, Schiffman and Kiter Edwards (2007), use the concept of gender violence to refer to any "interpersonal, organizational, or politically oriented violation perpetrated against people due to their gender identity..." (p. xii). When defining gender violence, many researchers support and reference the United Nations Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women (UNDEVAW)'s definition, where violence against women is

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public (strangers) or in private life (an acquaintance, a friend, family member, or intimate partner). (United Nations, 1993)

Overall, there seems to be commonalities between each definition, and those can be generalized with the understanding that gendered violence involves the subjugation of a person or group because of their gender identities (McIntosh, 2015). For this research, the concepts of gendered violence and gender violence will be used primarily; however, at times, the use of gender-based violence (otherwise referred to as GBV in this document) may also be used in acknowledgement that it is used more within international contexts and documents.

Not surprisingly, the forms of gendered violence are dynamic, and changing over time. Aghaie and Ganjoli (2015) argues that gender-based violence is “endemic, universal and multifaceted in nature” (p. 3). Furthermore, they place a great importance in the acknowledgement that GBV exists along a continuum, and that people will define their experiences of violence differently dependent on the times and locations in which it occurs. Within the *Change Project*, Harrison, Lafrenière and Hallman (2015) relate how gendered violence is intimately linked to other forms of violence, such as “racism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia” (p. 22). In addition, Merry (2009) included how “conquest, occupation, colonialism, warfare, and civil conflict,” also breed conditions for gendered violence. Therefore, gendered violence is [now] an overarching term for a wide range of interconnected violations (Merry, 2009; McIntosh, 2015; O’Toole, Schiffman & Kiter Edwards, 2007). This general overview provides a good framework from which to further gendered violence on campus.

### **Gendered Violence on Campus**

In recent years, there has been an emerging and quickly growing dialogue among researchers about gendered violence, particularly sexual violence, and rape culture on campus. Research conducted has explored not only the prevalence of unwanted sexual experiences on campus, but also disclosure and service use after experiences as well. Given the depth and complexity of this topic, I will first give a brief overview of key literature on gendered violence and rape culture on campus and summarize reports specific to Ontario that were catalysts for recent legislative changes. Then, a discussion of Bill 132 *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act 2016*, will follow and provide context to the changes required for Ontario university

policies. With this background, I will further narrow my research to review WLU specific research and reports from the past few years on gendered violence.

In Canada, it is consistently reported that at least one in four women-identified students have been sexually assaulted while completing their education (DeKeseredy & Kelly, 1993). In an updated study, DeKeseredy (2011) found that four out of five female undergraduates experienced dating violence, and of that 29% reported experiencing sexual assault. Many students also arrive at university and college with past traumas, and experiences. As of 2014, Senn and colleagues' research found that over half of first-year female students at three major Canadian universities had experienced one or more forms of sexualized violence since the age of 14. Rates of sexual violence also need to be taken critically, as there is a great likelihood of under-reporting. The government of Ontario has released multiple reports, resource guides, and legislative changes as examples to underscore that sexual violence in our communities and campuses will not be tolerated (Ontario Women's Directorate, 2013). A brief overview of two of these reports will follow.

### **Resource Guide**

In 2013, the Ontario Women's Directorate, in collaboration with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities published a report for "Developing a response to sexual violence: A resource guide for Ontario's colleges and universities" (now referred to as *Resource Guide*) as part of the government's Sexual Violence Action Plan. Overall, the *Resource Guide* provides a thorough examination of sexual violence on campus and appropriate responses to take. There is consideration of how intersections of identity influence sexual assault, and a detailed template of sexual violence policies and protocols is provided. It is worth mentioning

that as of 2015, there were only six universities (out of 20 universities in Ontario), that had a policy strictly on sexual violence, and zero universities had “rape”, “rape culture” or “consent” properly defined in any of their policies (Bozich et al. 2015). This illustrates the importance of the *Resource Guide* and their recommendations for universities.

## **METRAC**

Following the publication of the *Resource Guide*, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) also contributed to the efforts to address sexual violence on campus. METRAC argues that university prevention efforts “must be coupled with effective policies that address the impact of sexual assault on survivors/victims and deter perpetrators” (p. 4). A review of 15 colleges and universities documents related to sexual violence on campus throughout Canada were analyzed. In 2014, there were only three (3) universities in their sample that had a specific sexual assault policy, and like the future analysis by Bozich and colleagues (2015), many policies lacked a comprehensive definition of sexual assault (p. 8). METRAC reinforced how important it is for institutions to treat “sexual assault distinct from other kinds of misconduct given its gendered power dynamics” (p. 9). Their recommendations of what to include in their policies follows similarly to the Ontario Women’s Directorate. In addition to these recommendations, METRAC also makes a strong statement of how “well-written policies are only as effective as their implementation” (p. 15). It is safe to assume, that as a result of these two reports, among others (such as the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario’s *Campus Toolkit for combating sexual violence* (2013)), provided the necessary push and persuasion for Ontario to enforce singular sexual violence policies for each campus.

**Bill 132**

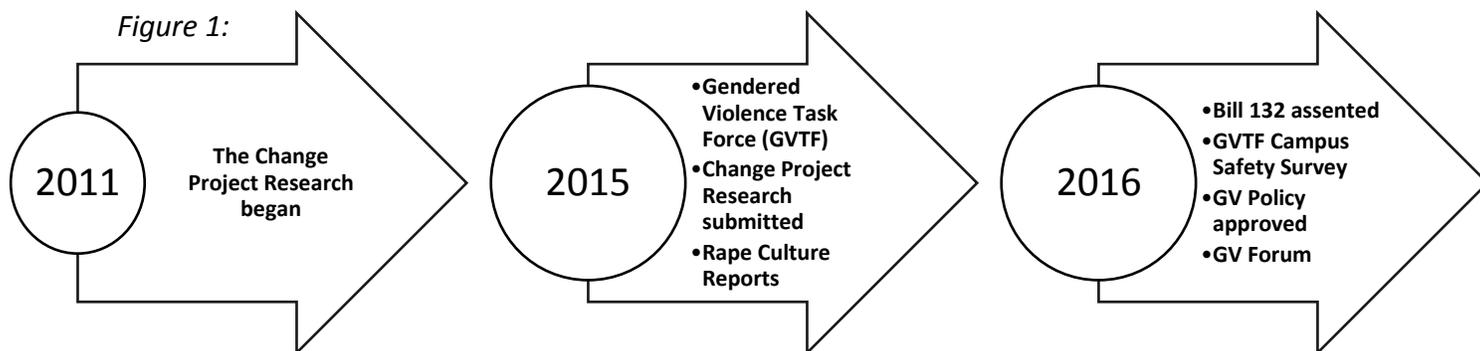
On March 8, 2016, the Government of Ontario amended/assented Bill 132, the "*Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act (Supporting Survivors and Challenging Sexual Violence and Harassment), 2016.*" This Bill required every college and university in Ontario to have a separate sexual violence policy that ensures student input is considered with the development and review of said policies by January 1, 2017 (MacCharles, T. Ontario, 2016). To provide further context to the objectives of this research project in addressing universities understanding of colonialism and gendered violence, a brief content analysis of the updated sexual violence policies of universities in Ontario follows.

Within the review, I used a key-term search to see if the new sexual violence policies includes/mentions any of the following: "Indigenous" or "Aboriginal;" "colonialism" or "colonization" and "racism or "racialized." Out of 19 Ontario universities, five universities (including Brock, Carleton, University of Guelph, Laurentian, and University of Ottawa) had none of the search terms present in their policies. Additionally, some (four) universities included a line like "some acts of sexual violence are also acts of sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia or transphobia," but did not include discussions on Indigeneity or colonialism. Wilfrid Laurier University was among three others that noted that the intersection of multiple identities (including Indigenous and racialized peoples, persons with disabilities, and those whose gender identity or expression does not conform to historical gender norms) may be especially vulnerable to sexual violence. There were only three universities (Ryerson University, McMaster University, and York University) that referenced all the search terms and commented on the interconnected nature of sexual violence and colonialism. In particular, York University

provides an excellent example of providing context for how “some acts of sexual violence are motivated by sexism, racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia, as part of a wider societal context that includes patriarchy, whiteness, and colonization as contributors to acts of sexual violence” (York University, 2016, p.2). These results were not too surprising given the gap in literature on colonialism and sexual violence on campus; however, that does mean that changes need to be made.

### Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU) Specific Research

Recently, Wilfrid Laurier University has acknowledged the importance of ending sexual/gendered violence on campuses. There have been a variety of different projects and research studies that have significance to this current research and understanding the current awareness of the issues of gendered violence on Laurier’s campuses. Despite a necessary in-depth review of past research and projects, for this research, only a brief overview of a couple of projects will be discussed. Throughout the discussion, I will attempt to place each project in a chronological order. The timeline (see Figure 1) below may serve as an informative illustration to follow the research Laurier has conducted thus far.



With funding provided through the Status of Women, the *Change Project: University campuses ending gendered violence: Final report and recommendations* (The Change Project),

could begin research on the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University's campuses. The Change Project was a collaborative project where there was partnership with community services such as the Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region (SASC), the Social Innovation Research Group (SIRG), support centres on campus, Wilfrid Laurier University (WLU), and the University of Waterloo (UW). The project was designed toward with the objective of ending gendered violence on campus by transforming the institutional and cultural climate (p. 9). In the report to WLU, the research conducted was both qualitative and quantitative and was concentrated at Laurier's Waterloo campus; however, there is limited representation from the smaller campuses (Brantford and Kitchener) in the final report. The project design was similar to the recommendations proposed by Litchy, Campbell and Schuiteman's (2008) research, where an ecological process for developing response was argued to be a useful method. The final report submitted to WLU in 2015 is extensive, and illustrates the care needed for this type of research.

The Change Project research team found it challenging to define gendered violence.

Their working definition is:

Gendered violence refers to any **practice or behaviour that establishes, exploits, and reinforces gendered power inequities** resulting in physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or mental harm. As such, it is the result of complex relationships between variables at multiple ecological levels. (Harrison, Lafrenière & Hallman, 2015, p. 19, emphases in original).

This research was foundational to the direction Laurier would adopt in using the language of "gendered violence" compared to the narrower lens of "sexual violence." Harrison, Lafrenière and Hallman (2015) argue that the "most compelling reasons for using a broad broader definition for this project is provided by researchers investigating gendered violence on

campus, who contend that women prefer a broader definition;" therefore, taking consideration of the research population's needs (p.22).

Of interest to my research is the Change Project's overview of systematic and structural oppressions that gendered violence includes. For example, they state that forms of gendered violence include: "sexism, gender discrimination, gender harassment, biphobia, transphobia, homophobia and heterosexism, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, and intimate partner violence" (Harrison, Lafrenière & Hallman, 2015, p. 22). Much like the sexual violence policies reviewed, though there is recognition of how different social identities intersect with gender, there is no reference to colonialism and its connections to gendered violence. Additionally, within the projects' survey data, the sample of racialized students was too small for reliable tests, and comparisons were made to "students who identified as white (n=375) to all students who identified as a minoritized race or ethnicity (n=190)" (Harrison, Lafrenière & Hallman, 2015, p. 24). Simply grouping all racialized students in one homogenous group to compare to white students is not an accurate representation of the different intersecting experiences racialized students encounters. Despite the continued acknowledgements of how Indigenous women are the most at risk for issues related to violence (as cited in the report on p. 24), there is very little empirical research to show how WLU understands Indigenous students' experiences of gendered violence on campus.

The energy around addressing gendered violence at WLU continued with the 2016 Campus Safety Survey conducted by the Research and Assessment Working Group of Laurier's GVTF. Approximately 2,900 students from Laurier's campuses were asked about gendered and sexual violence, including students' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes. Within the analysis

of experiences of sexual violence, there were disproportionately higher rates for each incident found among “females, LGBTQ+ students, students with a self-identified mental disability/long-term mental health condition” (GVTF, 2016, p.2). Though experiences from racialized students were not significant in this research, the above results still demonstrate the importance of an intersectional perspective towards understanding gendered violence. Additionally, the survey provided noteworthy results on the services and supports students use. Among those who experienced sexual violence, many students confided/disclosed to close friends or peers (66%), while a significant number also told no one (26%) (GVTF, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, there must be a priority placed on ensuring awareness, education, and training of gendered violence is reaching all students.

Most recently at WLU, there was the 2016 Gendered Violence Forum (“the forum”) which was promoted to facilitate the exchange of knowledge about GV with members of the Laurier community, and community partners (Burrows, Godderis, and GVRWAG. 2016). The 2-day forum was held at Laurier’s Brantford and Kitchener campuses in late October 2016. It was organized as a “working forum,” where there would be different presentations followed by working sessions. As discussed above, Laurier’s GVTF makes a statement about using the language of “gendered violence” and how it is to “encourage the development of institutional policies and strategies that address all acts that fall on a continuum of violence regardless of perceived severity” (p. 6). This research also supports this shift and promotes further acceptance of the language of gendered violence.

The core organizing values of the forum were accessibility and intersectionality. In this way, the forum and the final report outline how important the process is of recognizing “the

ongoing impacts of colonization and the racialized sexism inherent in colonial processes and policies that lead to violence against Indigenous communities” (p. 3). While acknowledging this, the organizing committee found problems in the representation of presenters, and made decisions to incorporate content related to MMIWG. The recommendations that were brought forth from the discussions on MMIWG are very relevant, appropriate, and pertinent to this current research. A few of the recommendations are:

- 1) “confront the invisibility of violence against Indigenous women within the Laurier community...2) provide additional resources to support the well-being and academic success of Indigenous students...and 3) increase the funding to hire Indigenous staff and faculty into full time employment to support Laurier’s stated commitment to Indigenization of campuses” (p.8)

These recommendations provide an influential foundation for Laurier to move forward in understanding the interconnections between colonization and gendered violence on campus.

### **Theoretical Framework: Indigenous Feminism**

*“As Indigenous peoples of the twenty-first century, we have much to celebrate. The fact that we still exist, that we are living and working within our own communities after centuries of colonial oppression and cultural genocide, is in and of itself an achievement” (Anderson, 2016, p. 31)*

Within Western academia there exists a dominant epistemology that values dualistic foundations, and the scientific method—resting primarily on the ways knowing/thinking of White, upper/middle class men (Strega, 2005). Indigenous researchers resist the dominant worldview as the most legitimate way to see the world and use this resistance as a way to “retrieve what we were and remake ourselves” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, p. 4). To do this in my research, I draw upon an Indigenous feminist framework that allows me to better understand how different oppressions interconnect and shape experiences within the world.

In traditional societies, before colonial contact, many Indigenous cultures framed

womanhood as a “sacred identity, an identity that existed within a complex system of relations in societies that we based on complementarity and balance (Anderson, 2016, p.33). These balances protected communities against the -isms—sexism, racism, ageism, heterosexism. However, the identities of Indigenous women changed from a sacred identity to ones that needed to be disempowered in order for colonial powers to dominate the land and the people occupying it (Anderson, 2016). Grande (2004) illustrates how colonialism is “a multi-dimensional force underwritten by Western Christianity, defined by white supremacy, and fueled by global capitalism” (p. 124). As a result, Indigenous feminism provides a necessary discussion on how colonialism has and continues to shape Indigenous peoples’ experiences.

However, it is important to first review the complicated and complex history between feminist theory and Indigenous women (Grande, 2004). Many Indigenous women remark on how Indigenous feminism is labelled in this way due to the history of mainstream feminism (Green, 2007; Smith, 2007). Green (2007) claims that critics see feminism as a “white” or “colonial” theoretical approach (p. 23). Additionally, Sandy Grande (2004) argues that mainstream feminism is structured from a white, middle-class experience, and therefore fails to recognize the privilege of coming from this background. Grande (2004) also questions if feminism has diversified, or if the dominant mainstream feminism remains at the core, while all other types of feminisms are placed at the margins. By being at the core, Western feminism, or “whitestream feminism” (Grande, 2004), creates overarching values that do not account and represent for the differences that exist between women.

A significant difference between each type of feminism rests in the common perception that experiences of colonialism are not represented through mainstream feminist perspectives.

Lorelei DeCora Means expresses that “we are American Indian women, in that order. We are oppressed first and foremost as American Indians, as people colonized by the United States of America, not as women” (as cited in Grande, 2004, pp. 50). Means provides an understanding of how the effects of colonialism creates a prioritization of oppressions that Indigenous women experience. Pam Colorado claims that within feminist theory, nothing addresses colonization, or how white women participate and benefit from it (as cited St. Denis, 2007). Additionally, Erin Koons (2011) illustrates these reflections in her piece on *Resistance to Indigenous Feminism* with stating, “[Forget] the ‘waves’ of feminism: we embody over 500 years of resistance before us, and are working several generations ahead. We’re an ocean” (p.29). Therefore, many Indigenous women feel reluctant to take the label of ‘feminist’ because they question why they need to “name what [our] struggle is” (Koons, 2011)

As well, compared to whitemainstream feminism, Indigenous feminism does not hold to the same influence of patriarchy as a system of oppression. It has been argued that many Indigenous communities come from egalitarian and matriarchal traditions, and there is less concern about the equality of sexes, but rather the dignity of an individual (St. Denis, 2007). The collective oppression of Indigenous women is not the primary effect of patriarchy (Grande, 2004). Instead, Kim Anderson (2016) found in her interviews that “in the midst of the gender disparities, however, it is uncommon to hear Native women simply blame men for their condition. I think many Native women are aware that the social problems that hit them the hardest are the outcome of colonization” (p. 31). Then, the greater assumption that all women are the oppressed victims of male patriarchy is not valued for Indigenous peoples to the same degree.

Overall, Indigenous feminism is a framework that creates a unique relationship with the theoretical and the practical (Formsa, 2011; Grande, 2004; Green, 2007; Lightfoot, 2011; St. Denis, 2007). Compared to other feminisms, Indigenous feminism exists beyond academia, and is “alive in Indigenous communities” (Lightfoot, 2011, pp.109). Indigenous feminism is an opportunity to practice the values taught throughout our life. These values exist deep within Indigenous ways of knowing, such as respect, deep listening, reciprocity, and community collectivism (Wane, 2013). As with all different feminisms, there will always be critiques that arise; however, many Indigenous women recognize that a feminist analysis can be a tool to challenge colonialism, sexism, and racism experienced. Therefore, they suggest the dismissal of feminism is more of a detriment to Indigenous communities than it is, an act of resistance. Instead, the acceptance and practice of Indigenous feminism provides opportunities to broaden what a feminist can be and recognizes that Indigenous women’s power predates colonization (Formsa, 2011).

### **Indigenous Methodologies**

*“Research is a tool that has become so entangled with haughty theories of what is truth, that it’s easy to forget that it is simply “about learning and so is a way of finding out things” (Hampton, 1995, p. 48).*

Kovach (2005) argues that theory is inseparable from methodology, and methodology is entwined with methods. As discussed, my research is framed upon an Indigenous epistemology, which allows for a more fluid, non-linear, and relational structure (Kovach, 2005). The strict, linear structures that dominate Western epistemologies do not consider that experience is a legitimate way of knowing, and do not value the necessary reciprocity between researcher and participants (Kovach, 2005). With this distinction, Kovach (2005) argues that since “Indigenous ways of knowing are intricately connecting to Indigenous ways of doing...epistemology, theory,

methods, and ethical protocols are integral to Indigenous methodology” (p. 32). For this research, I will use Indigenous feminism as my theoretical framework, which is ultimately linked to using Indigenous methodologies, specifically storytelling.

However, I must again acknowledge my position within this research, and continue to reflect on how ‘research’ is linked to negative Eurocentric implications, particularly to European imperialism and colonialism (Geia, Hayes & Usher 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). I also recognize the significance of being educated and socialized within a Western and Eurocentric frame, and how this affects my overall epistemological frame (Archibald, 2008; Strega, 2005; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Just as Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2012) reflects on how many Indigenous researchers are placed within an insider/outsider continuum, I am conflicted in fully understanding and practicing Indigenous methodologies. Yet, through this research, I hope to minimize my role as a Westernized researcher, and continue to learn the differences between doing research *on* Indigenous peoples and research *with* Indigenous peoples. Overall, my research will be a “humbling activity” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, p. 5), and I will continue to reflect throughout this research journey. Using storytelling methodologies, creates an opportunity for the stories that have been silenced in the past to be fore-fronted.

### **Indigenous Storytelling**

To understand how I will use storytelling methodologies in this research, I need to first explore the practice of storytelling within Indigenous communities. Traditionally, most Indigenous nations came from an oral society, and storytelling allows the teachings of Ancestors, culture, and traditions to stay alive (Kovach, 2009). Stories function as an intergenerational knowledge transfer, where stories shape shift in relation to the wisdom of the storyteller at the time

(Cruikshank, 1998; Kovach, 2005). Storytellers, within Indigenous traditions around the world, are those who are considered sacred knowledge keepers, and through their spoken and written word, communities are shaped (Sium & Ristskes, 2013). Consequently, there is an institution of eldership in the process of storytelling. Many Indigenous peoples recognize that a story “is a living thing, an organic process, a way of life” (Graveline, 1998, p. 66). Therefore, storytelling is a way to remind Indigenous peoples of who we are and our belonging as Indigenous peoples, in connection to relationships and community (Kovach, 2009).

Indigenous stories are powerful because of their ability to be both “method and meaning” (Kovach, p. 108). This indicates that there are choices within storytelling that must be made to understand the value of the knowledge, history, life lessons, and healing that stories can do. In his 2003 Massey Lectures entitled *The Truth about Stories*, writer Thomas King expresses the power of stories and how they are a “wondrous thing” but also “dangerous” (p. 9). In his lectures, King shares stories of his childhood, familial relationships, and experiences that have shaped him. He does this,

not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained to these stories as long as I live (King, 2003, p. 9).

In telling stories we share our lived reality. Sharing stories is an important Indigenous tradition, and can take the forms of stories of experience (Archibald, 2008). However, Thomas King cautions that there needs to be care taken with the stories that we tell, and the stories that we hear—especially in recognition of the power within stories. Archibald (2008) has also reflected on her journey in understanding the power of stories, and their role in “teaching, learning, and healing” (p. 85). In her learning, she quotes at length the words of Beth Cuthland:

We come from a tradition of storytelling, and as storytellers we have a responsibility to be honest, to transmit our understanding of the world to other people...In this process, there is something more than information being transmitted: there's energy, there's strength being transmitted from the storyteller to the listener... (Cuthland, 1989, p. 54, as cited by Archibald, 2008).

Therefore, the energy Cuthland describes acts as “a source of power that feeds and revitalizes mind, heart, body, and spirit in a holistic manner” (Archibald, 2008, p. 85). In this way, storytelling can be an act of healing, and is understood as a form of medicine for some Indigenous communities (Anderson, 2011; Kovach, 2009).

Understanding the power within stories is important to understand the reasons why many Indigenous scholars are using stories—storytelling, oral histories, and testimonies—as Indigenous research methodologies (Anderson, 2011; Anderson, 2016; Kovach, 2005; Kovach, 2009; Sium & Ritskes, 2013; Thomas, 2005; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Sium and Ritskes (2013) argue that stories can be “disruptive, sustaining, knowledge producing and theory-in-action.” (p. 2). As well, Indigenous stories are described as “anchors of resistance” (Anderson, 2016, p. 110). By using storytelling methodologies, this resistance can be directed toward deconstructing colonialism (Sium & Ritskes, 2013), and is a way to reconnect to homelands and create a cultural and political resurgence of Indigenous nations (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is & T'lakwadzi, 2009). For Tuck and Yang (2012), Indigenous stories are evidence of the failures of the colonial project in erasing Indigenous existence. Therefore, Indigenous stories have an important role in the “survival of First Nations peoples” (Thomas, 2005, p. 238).

Archibald (2008) argues that remembering stories helps not only in continuing oral traditions, but also in healing—where the term “remember” implies how one, if given authority, tell the stories to others and practices the principle of reciprocity (p. 27). This reciprocity is connected

to the relational value in sharing stories—an exchange between the storyteller and listener. As well, storytelling methodologies creates the necessary spaces to ensure that from the stories, Indigenous peoples remain at the center of the research and its consequences (Sium & Ritskes, 2013; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). Therefore, storytelling from Indigenous epistemologies allows me, as an Indigenous researcher, to re-center stories in order to further understand and uncover new and old ways knowing and being.

### **Storytelling extend: Western Influences**

Along this journey of understanding stories, I have been introduced to further research that also examines the significance of stories and their implications on our daily lives. The following research explores contributions within Western perspectives; however, despite the foundational differences, there are many similarities that are important to discuss.

Many Western scholars have questioned the significance of stories and narrative and their influences to understanding social life. For Ken Plummer (1995), he argues that “we work and worry, pray and play, love and hate; and *all the time we are telling stories* about our pasts, our presents, and our futures” (p. 20). In this way, Plummer approaches narrative from a symbolic interactionist lens, and proposes a ‘sociology of stories’ where stories are understood as social actions performed by social actors in social worlds (p. 17). Likewise, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) relate in how they argue narrative is “both phenomenon and method,” and where narrative researchers “write narratives of experience” (p. 2). Then, narrative inquiry occurs under the premises that narrative conveys the meaning of events (Elliott, 2005) and “is simply one thing happens in consequence of another” (Frank, 2010, p. 25). As a result, though not defined in the past as narratology—the study of how stories are done—there has been

interest in how we tell stories since the beginning (Plummer, 2011).

For many, there exists a dimension of understanding stories that moves from the theoretical and methodological knowledge, and instead represent a social reality (Clandinin, 2006; Connelly & Clandinin 1990; Elliott, 2005; Frank, 2010; Plummer, 2012). In Frank's (2010) book, *Letting stories breathe: a socio-narratology*, he clarifies that "stories may not actually breathe, but they can animate...human life; that is their work" (p. 3). Accordingly, storytellers value stories "not as *theirs* but *there*, as realities" (Frank, 2010, p. 17, italics in original).

Acknowledging that stories are living creates a connection to Indigenous storytelling and how they are critical for Indigenous peoples' identities of culture (Anderson, 2016). Furthermore, there is greater similarities with the proposed interactional and relational dimensions of narratives (Clandinin, 2006). Indeed, Frank (2010) and Plummer (2011) both comment on the abilities for stories to be companions—recognizing again how we are "*storying-narrating animals* ceaselessly creating stories and dwelling in *story telling societies*" (Plummer, 2011, para. 4)

Therefore, though there is an expansive literature of narrative theory, narratology, and the importance of stories, this brief discussion shows some of the interconnectedness of understandings between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. It is significant to note that the knowledge of the importance of stories is owed to Indigenous understandings. Western researchers are extending and borrowing from Indigenous ways of knowing. In this research, the understandings of gendered violence as expressed as stories reveals the significance of one's experience and knowledge as intrinsic to what is shared. This relationship is further achieved with the awareness of the connections between methodology and method.

## Method

For this research, I held two small focus groups with six Indigenous staff from Wilfrid Laurier University campuses. Focus groups provide an environment for group discussions and for people to exchange stories, and are useful for the exploratory nature of my research topic (Kitzinger, 1994). The open, less structured format of focus groups encourage participants to “share ideas, feelings, and experiences” (Hesse-Biber & Lewey, 2011, p.167). Clark, Kleiman, Spanierman, Isaac and Poolaksingham (2014) used focus groups within their research exploring Indigenous students’ experiences of micro-aggressions on campus. Their rationale for focus groups rested in the opportunities for interactions. The interactions prompted reflection, recollection, and elaboration of relevant experiences in ways that individual interviews would not (Clark et al., 2014). Interaction was also a key reason on why Jowett and O’Toole (2006) used focus groups. Overall, the interactions between participants can help prevent the researcher from assuming the meaning of any story or account expressed (Kitzinger, 1994). For research with Indigenous populations, it is important to continually reflect on the assumptions and conclusions inferred by the conversations, as in the past, Indigenous voices were not considered valid.

One of the advantages of using focus groups for research is the ability to gather in-depth data from a group of people in a short amount of time (Hesse-Biber, 2006). As well, since I intend to hold focus groups with participants who have pre-existing relationships, it provides opportunity to sometimes “tap into fragments of interactions which approximated to ‘naturally occurring’ data” (Kitzinger, 1994). Though it is recognized that focus groups do not fully approximate to participant observation and are still hosted in a setting that is artificially set up

(Kitzinger, 1994). For storytelling methodologies, one of the key tenants is how there is an “embodied reciprocity” that exists between people and their stories (Sium & Ritskes, 2013, p. 5). Furthermore, using the method of focus groups may allow for additional opportunities for the exchange of stories that create more relationality between one another. Archibald (2008) states how “synergistic interaction between storyteller, listener, and story is another critical storywork principle” (p. 33). These interactions are easier to accomplish within focus groups.

Focus groups also create a different social context, in which the locations of where the focus groups take place allow for a legitimized ‘safe’ space (Jowett & O’Toole, 2006). Within the safe space of focus groups, the imbalances of power between the researcher and researched is also addressed—which is of importance when doing research with Indigenous populations and allows focus groups to be classified as a feminist method. As mentioned before, storytelling methodologies places the authority on the storytellers first; whereas, in semi-structured interviews, the researcher has more control. Qwul’sih’yah’maht (Robina Anne Thomas, 2005) reflects on storytelling methodologies and explains why the word “interview” is not appropriate to describe her research experience (p.245). She notes:

I knew that if I asked specific questions, I would get specific answers. What would happen if I asked the wrong questions? What would my research look like? It would answer only the questions I asked and as such I would be structuring the process. I was not the expert; the storytellers were and I was the learner, listener, recorder, and facilitator (p. 246).

If I were to use interviews, I would be more hesitant of the questions I ask, and the structure and space that I would create. I need to be conscious of how the power I have as a researcher influences not only, the moderation of the focus group but also how I portray the stories I heard. Archibald (2008) teaches that “a researcher who enters a First Nations cultural context

with little or no cultural knowledge is viewed as a learner” (p. 37). Despite my Indigenous heritage, I still need to take the position as a learner.

### **Data Collection**

With the understanding that that Indigenous people have a complicated relationship with research and the research process, I wanted to ensure that I had support and involvement of additional Indigenous women on my research team. The Indigenous women who supported this research have previous experience and are equipped to manage the complexities of research engaging Indigenous peoples. Additionally, the research team has paid particular attention to ethical concerns that are specific to focus group approaches to research in designing the protocol. This research was granted ethics approval (REB#5312) from Wilfrid Laurier’s Research Ethics Board (see Appendix).

Purposive sampling was utilized for recruitment because it was important for participants to meet specific criteria, which included a) indentifying as Indigenous to Turtle Island, b) indentifying as women, trans, non-binary or two-spirited c) staff member or faculty at WLU d) being above the age of 18. Despite the small sample size, a diversity of Indigenous communities and nations in the research are included in the research, with participants indentifying as Haudenosaunee, Metis, or Anishinaabe.

For each focus group, I wanted to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for expression, I guided conversations through a few open-ended, but complex questions. The focus groups were framed with the following questions with the use of probing for additional information:

- (1) How do you understand violence?
- (2) What supports are available for Indigenous peoples who have experienced gendered

- violence on campus?  
(3) What supports are needed for Indigenous peoples who have experienced gendered violence on campus?

These questions are intentionally broad to allow for participants to respond in ways they find appropriate for this research. Though overall, the intention is to understand Indigenous students' experiences through their perspectives, personal and professional experiences may also become known. The focus groups were 60-90 minutes in length.

Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of participants is a main concern. Therefore, all responses are anonymized in the transcription and analysis phases, as well no identifying information will appear in publicly accessible documents. Participants were asked to choose a pseudonym by which they will be known in the research. The participants have been given an opportunity to review this paper and have provided approval regarding how their views are presented in this document.

### **Limitations**

Although offering a means for understanding Indigenous students' experiences with gendered violence on campus, my approach does elicit several limitations. While every effort was given to invite all Indigenous women-identified staff and faculty to take part in the focus group, I acknowledge that the participants that shared their knowledge is not a representation of Indigenous peoples collectively. In addition, the study's findings could be enhanced by conducting further research with Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the issues suggested by Indigenous staff within the current investigation. Finally, the different scheduling needs of participants only allowed for two focus groups with a total of six participants, which means that sample size is limited;

however, the findings stated here are an important first step in understanding the needs of Indigenous students on campus.

## **Results**

As noted above, I approached each focus group wanting participants to have conversations surrounding the open-ended questions I asked as a guide. These questions served as a foundation to identify if there are discrepancies/inconsistencies in how violence and gendered violence is understood, and if the supports on campus for Indigenous students who have experienced gendered violence are working or if there is room for improvements.

The three themes that emerged from each focus group are consistent with the questions I asked—colonial violence, gendered violence, and supports. Therefore, in what follows, I will further explore each theme more in-depth and share participants' knowledge through illustrative quotes. Given the interconnectedness of the subjects discussed, each theme is interrelated and should not be taken as separate. For example, despite the categorical distinction between colonial violence and gendered violence, it is impossible to understand one without the other. This is crucial to understanding the overall knowledge and experiences shared between participants.

### **Colonial Violence**

When participants were asked how they understood violence, there was agreement amongst participants that violence has different forms and manifestations, and does not exist just in the physical realm or between persons, but includes all life. Alex and Tracy elaborated on this understanding:

My conceptions of violence are also grounded in the belief that violence is something that happens between like living being or beings with spirits. So, I don't believe that for

instance, breaking a window of a building is violence, but I would consider someone striking someone else, or abusing someone else mentally is violence, or somebody...clear cutting a forest or polluting a river also consider that to be violence.  
Alex

I think I see violence not just between people but also between people's relationship with the land and to other relatives like the animals. And so, I see violence not just a person to person thing but on different spheres and levels. I think it's whether it is knowing or not, it's causing harm or suffering to somebody else. All life. All life has spirits. Tracy

These descriptions may differ from how violence is characterized within Western worldviews; however, it is significant to understand how all life is changed by violence. Mary Leona reflected on this when she said, "I've seen it, witnessed it, been a part of it, helped people through it. I have been shocked by it, [and] saddened by it...." Mary Leona further stated that she does not "know if [violence] will never be a part of my surroundings or my life." This powerfully illustrates how invasive and controlling violence can be, especially placed within appropriate contexts. Louise described how "violence is usually defined in society as something that happens to an individual, but [that is] not taking into context the historical violence...perpetrated against communities and Nations." Similarly, Lee stated that "we can't divorce ourselves from our histories in which violence was inflicted upon us as Indigenous peoples." In relation, Tracy considered how:

we are taught that we are the land, and the health of the land is a reflection of us and we can't exist without the land...But we can abuse the lands and we see that and the earth is responding to the abuse around us.

Therefore, participants addressed how colonial violence against Indigenous peoples is not separate from different forms of violence, but is intertwined in their understandings of violence itself. Figure 2 below illustrates one way to represent the complexities of discussing

colonial violence. With their experiences of colonial violence, participants connected colonial violence to land violence, and land violence to gendered violence—a continuous cycle, where despite the different descriptions, are also all characteristically connected to colonial violence. It is crucial to remember that participants’ responses were rooted and intimately linked to their personal experiences and histories as Indigenous women.

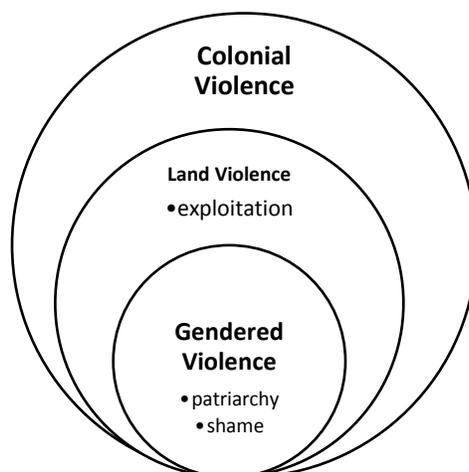


Figure 2

### **Gendered Violence**

When participants were asked about their understandings of gendered violence, there was a sense of difficulty among participants to describe/explain this concept. Cindy shared how she

“does not spend a lot of time thinking about how to separate gendered violence from just overall violence or harm...but would say that anytime there is any type of harm inflicted between the different genders, that would be gendered violence.”

Overall, participants agreed that any harm inflicted against how people choose to express themselves and their gender would be gendered violence. Participants also reflected on how one’s identity changes one’s experiences. For instance, Lee describes how there “is a lot of privilege that goes with certain peoples lived experiences that other folks don’t have access to, and when crossed with race, community and nation...it just gets worse or better.” This was important in relation to how many participants felt that gendered violence is just part of reality,

and commonplace. Lee relates that “when you step back and navigate the world, you just get used to the fact that you are going to experience violence, then you don’t even think about it and become numb to it in a way.” This expectation of violence is then linked to Indigenous peoples’ experiences of colonial violence.

Further extending the concept of gendered violence, participants again discussed the relationships of land and body violence. Louise argues, “violence on the land is violence against Indigenous people but more specifically Indigenous women and two-spirit, non-binary and trans women.” Similarly, Tracy shared how the land “is a mirror of the theft, rape and pillaging...” and how:

for centuries, years and decades it’s always been women’s bodies for exploitation. And I think it really mirrors the land but there’s always this attitude. We have been living in patriarchy and oppressive male dominated systems...it’s their world and we just live in it.

Participants reflected on the connections of gendered violence and patriarchy. Alex shared that when asked about gendered violence, “the first word that comes to mind is patriarchy” and how in our current structure, “masculine things, masculine people are upheld as better and more rational, logical, stronger, and more fit for positions of power.” For many Indigenous communities, there have been significant changes in the dominate system, and how traditions and ceremonies have changed. Cindy questioned on “where the rigidity came in, and how rigid was it before contact... and how do we reject all the colonial baggage that we now carry.” Cindy also reflected on how gendered violence was “uncomfortable” to discuss with others. Alex also questions this and asks:

When did those things become so uncomfortable. When did we become so shamed about talking about our bodies. That shame also comes from somewhere... Nobody

should feel that dirty or wrong, or that deeply embarrassed that they can't even have a conversation about your own body. You know. It's not okay.

Overall, Lee's comments summarized participants' understandings on gendered violence and how once "you start to have these conversations, you start to see the colonial influences on our understandings of gender and other spaces." Therefore, throughout their discussions, the interconnections of violence were more thoroughly described/illustrated.

### **Supports**

#### **Available**

After sharing their knowledge and understandings of colonial and gendered violence, participants were asked questions about campus supports for Indigenous students who have experienced gendered violence. Discussions around the supports that are available to students were limited. Yet, participants described the services and spaces available to which students currently have access. Louise elaborated that "it's just, that's who they come to—that could be LSPiRG, the Ab-house, faculty, admin—usually it's other students though." Tracy mentioned that "when I have had students disclose to me about gendered violence, I let them know about the policy...and the resources available to [them]." As well, participants also discussed the importance of community collaboration and supports. Lee said that "if an Indigenous student experiences violence and they want community support, we try to refer them to it..."

Therefore, Indigenous students do have access to some supports; however, most of the conversations were concerned with what supports are needed for students.

#### **Needed**

There were three distinct themes that emerged from discussions around the supports needed on campus. The themes consisted of institutional support, recognizing that identity matters, and the importance of people.

### ***Institutional Support***

In this theme, participants discussed the importance for students to believe and trust that they are a priority. Lee expressed this view clearly when she reported that “it is really really important for our students to feel safe, to see themselves reflected, and to be able to have multiples spaces they can go to.” Instead, Mary Leona described how she feels like “the systems in place on campus are to protect the interests of the university...not to protect the interests of the students...It’s like everything is to protect Laurier.” Cindy also relates how “there is no trust in the system whatsoever and no trust in us to be able to help them...” and states that “I can’t advocate for change if students aren’t comfortable attaching their name to it or allowing me to go forward with it.” For students to come forward and disclose, they need to know how the institution will support them throughout the whole process. Alex, for instance, expressed how:

“Much like how survivors sometimes ask what is the point of reporting because it is going to go nowhere, I don’t have any proof. It’s the same... So, I think they are right. To think it’s not going to go anywhere. I think that’s smart and based on their lived experiences at the school, and what the school values and how they handle problems”

Additionally, participants cautioned how Indigenous students may experience further violence.

Tracy says that:

sometimes the campus resources are perfect for them and sometimes they’re exactly what they don’t know and they get this whole colonialism thing within the structure of the university and they are further harmed by the support they’ve received

Reflections that fall into this theme, bear a common thread of how Cindy shared that “people are going to go where they feel comfortable,” and how there is not a formalized process known for students to reach out to specific people or spaces.

### ***Identity Matters***

This theme draws attention to how students’ identities change the supports that are appropriate to meet their needs. Louise states that when supporting students who have experienced gendered violence it is important to remember that “Indigenous, racialized, trans students, queer students usually experienced multiple traumas where they are not just dealing with one assault—they’re experiencing overlap and overlap of traumas.” Participants shared how within the current system, it feels like, as Tracy says, “there is no place for identity, which is like the underlying thing for 90% of this work with students.” Therefore, what is needed is to ensure there is, as Lee notes, “diversity of nations represented on campus because there is going to be a diversity of students...we need to make sure that when we are providing supports for students, they are coming from a diversity of worldviews and communities.” Louise describes a scenario on how she “can see the difference when I am trying to support a student in university when it’s an Indigenous person who is like seeking support versus a non-Indigenous person seeking support.” The differences in support should always consider how diversity creates more understanding of the lived experiences of students with intersecting identities.

### ***People***

Overwhelmingly, participants continually referenced the importance of people as supports for students. Mary Leona simply argues that “more staff...to have some sort of an Indigenous

presence” is needed on campus. Additionally, Lee maintains that “students connect with people,” and how the university “can’t indigenize campus without indigenous peoples here.”

Participants reflected on how some supports available to students are not being utilized. Tracy continues to reflect on who can do the work and shares that

I don’t think it’s well-meaning or well-trained allies, but I think it’s actually people who have lived it, been in the trenches and did the work. And who have persisted through the internalized and external racism that they face everyday in these systems.

As a result, there were reflections on how there may be a lack of representation within supports available. Tracy describes that although she knows “of a few key people who I feel are culturally safe...in a perfect world I would love to refer to an Indigenous counsellor.”

Participants connected how supports need to be connected to be the most effective. Mary Leona describes how:

part of the problem that I have seen, and I am not trained but I have life experience, is students don’t trust, don’t want to go and talk to some random old white lady, they want to talk to someone they trust. And who do they trust? You and me. And that’s who they feel safe with.

For students to feel more supported, there needs to be people to trust. Overall, Alex uniquely summarizes participants’ reflections:

on campus supports are wholly inadequate. They are over-worked, the position doesn’t get the amount of support from the administration to actually do things and help students, and yeah, and there needs to be more hours, more support, and more people, and need to be taken a lot more seriously.

### **Discussions and Conclusions**

The current study advances and extends gendered violence on campus research by considering the perspectives/knowledge of Indigenous women staff at Wilfrid Laurier University. The research is informed by an Indigenous feminist perspective where Indigenous

women's voices are brought to the fore-front, which is again ultimately linked to using Indigenous methodologies, specifically storytelling. Indigenous feminism exists within a context that makes "things better for a collective group of people and taking on the system that is responsible for the roots of patriarchy in the first place" (Lightfoot 2011, p. 107). Williams and Koonsmo (2011) share how "we all have our own truths and histories to live" and how "we have the need to differentiate ourselves by race and politics because of historical injustices" (p. 29). To elaborate, I have come to understand with this research that sharing one's truths and histories further resists the colonial practices that de-values Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

In the research Tracy reflects on colonization and how:

everyday we live it and everyday our students have stories... they are all different and they are navigating their own stories, and that's all okay because we are picking up the shards of what happened and we are living through the injustices... I mean we live it all the time just by our very existence. Just for being here.

The reflections and understandings shared throughout this research are stories and are examples of Indigenous peoples' lived reality. I hope by using storytelling methodologies, I ensured that the Indigenous women who participated in the research remain at the center, while also respecting the relational value in sharing their stories.

The current study suggests that universities in Canada, and in particular Wilfrid Laurier University, do not fully understand the complexity of violence and how one's interconnections of identities shapes one's understandings of violence. Violence for Indigenous peoples cannot be separated from the different forms of violence. For universities working on preventing and eliminating gendered violence completely, just as WLU has made this commitment, there needs

to be the acknowledgement of what it really means for violence to be cited as a social and cultural construct (Merry, 2009), and the acknowledgement of the fluidity of violence itself.

Certain themes in the current study are consistent with the overall understanding of how violence is recognized within an Indigenous worldview. Williams and Konsmo (2011) argue that “struggles while fought at an individual level are often a community struggle” (p.29). Participants discussed how society differentiates between violence against an individual, whereas Indigenous peoples see all life as being effected. Colonial violence remains visible and continues to support the disregard of Indigenous cultures, and traditional roles Indigenous nations placed on genders. Discussions surrounding rape culture—the complex belief and practice that normalizes and perpetuates sexual violence (Kane, Godderis & Mensah, 2016)—will not be beneficial unless informed through different worldviews. Sarah Hunt (2016) argues that “rape culture emerges from, and is fostered through, colonial ways of seeing the world which are expressed in the daily interpersonal actions, beliefs, and attitudes of all who make up the settler colonial nation of Canada” (p.3). As well, for indigenous women, trans, non-binary, and two-spirited peoples:

[the] safety of their bodies and the safety of their lands goes beyond biology, physiology, and sexual health. It is crucial to examine the role patriarchy and capitalism play in the struggle to rid Indigenous lands and bodies of destructive and predatory industries” (Konsmo & Pacheco, 2016, p. 38).

Participants shared their understandings of the ways colonial violence and gendered violence are deeply intertwined. Students’ experiences of gendered violence are associated with “their particular lived experiences, informed by their gender, sexuality, race, and other structural forms of oppression and privilege” (Worthen & Wallace, 2017, p. 190).

Regardless of the current limited literature of Indigenous students' experiences with gendered violence on campus, there is research that reaches similar conclusions and recommendations for supports to students overall. Research confirms that students can experience institutional betrayal or "wrongdoings perpetrated by an institution against individuals who trust, or are dependent on that institution" (Smith, Gomez, & Freyd, 2014, p. 459). In fact, within Shaunga Tagore's poem, "A Slam on Feminism in Academia" they question:

let me ask you exactly which graduate students' education are you concerned about here? Not those who survive sexual violence and need extra time to grieve rage or deal... Not anyone with familial, historical ties to places and races always under siege living under governments set on killing their people (Tagore, 2011, p. 38).

Racialized and Indigenous students may experience the feelings of institutional distrust more commonly if they feel their identities and experiences are not represented or set as priorities within the institution. In Clark et al.'s (2014) study of Indigenous students' experiences with microaggressions in Canada, they found that Indigenous students experience a more complicated lived experience. With the necessary desire to combat misinformation and disrupt racial hegemony perpetrated within higher education curricula, Indigenous students would like to see the universities recognition of and commitment to Indigenous peoples (Clark et al., 2014). However, Williams and Ligate (2011) argue that "good intentions are simply not enough to do the hard work to challenge and reconstruct these systems of power" (p. 161). To mitigate the feelings of powerlessness, and the distrust in the system, students must be involved in planning and implementing prevention and response strategies to gendered violence—especially those who are not typically at the university decision making tables (Godderis & Root, 2017; Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). Survivors of gendered violence are those who have the

expertise and know exactly of the supports that are working, and the supports that need changes and/or better execution.

There is considerable research on the importance of approaching gendered and sexual violence using an intersectional lens (Harris & Linder, 2017; Worthen & Wallace, 2017). In their recent research, Worthen and Wallace (2017) examined how students' social identities affect their awareness and perceptions about sexual assault utilizing an intersectional feminist framework. This framework allowed the researchers to consider the ways in which multiple marginalities interact to disadvantage individuals. Similar to the results in the current study of how students' identities matter, Worthen and Wallace (2017) found that "without recognition of the intersection of identities in students' lives, prevention efforts are hampered by an incomplete understanding of campus sexual assault and students' diverse needs cannot be met" (p. 184). Harris and Linder (2017) argue how institutions continue to use an unilateral focus that frame sexual violence as a white-women only issue. In the research, Louise commented on how the institution put everything into "a particular mold and a one-size fits all type thing." Harris and Linder (2017) argue that catchall policies negate students' intersectional identities, while also obscures how "a history of colonization, terrorization, and domination continue to influence sexual violence in higher education" (p. 10). All students' needs on campus must be catered and accommodated to ensure that the needs of one dominate population or identity is not over-represented.

Within the current study, there was an overwhelming response to how important people and community are in preventing and challenging gendered violence on campus. Quinlan, Clarke, and Miller's (2016) research examined the existing structure of campus sexual

assault services at Canadian universities. To date, the results of their environmental scan “confirmed that prevention and advocacy services on campus are woefully inadequate” (p. 48). There is less than one-quarter of all colleges and universities in Canada that even have a sexual assault centre—this corresponds to over 10,500 female university students in Canada for every one sexual assault/women’s centre (p. 48). These results indicate the importance of continuing to improve the existing supports on campus, as well as creating opportunities to advance further supports for students’ intersecting identities. To do this, there needs to be adequate funding and resources to show universities’ investments in preventative and intervention programming to eliminating gendered violence on campus.

An important finding in relation to the need of a diversity of people at WLU to support survivors of gendered violence, is the benefit and reliance on volunteers and the collaborations with off-campus community organizations. As found in this research, students are most likely to disclose and listen to their peers (Quinlan, Clarke, & Miller, 2016; Wooten & Mitchell, 2016). In their research on campus assault centres or women’s centres, Quinlan, Clarke and Miller (2016) found that “volunteers form a crucial labour force” and that “volunteers help make the services more accessible to those who prefer a student-run program” (p.46). These studies cited the importance of providing extensive training to volunteers, which may have included “training in sexual violence issues, anti-oppression beliefs and practices, active listening and peer support, and centre policies and procedures” (p. 46).

Any training related to gendered and sexual violence could include awareness on the interconnectedness of violence experienced by Indigenous students, and could be offered to not only to students but also staff, faculty, and administration. At Laurier’s campuses, there are

currently no opportunities for students to volunteer directly with on-campus gendered violence prevention services. Implementing these opportunities may look different depending on the existing campus services; however, student volunteers could further help with advocacy and outreach efforts, which may additionally create safe(r) places for students to feel more represented, and valued. For Louis Esme Cruz (2011), “being a ‘safe place’ implies that harm will not happen while people are sharing that space” (p. 53). This was an important discussion amongst participants in this study where the recognition of students’ safety was a top priority, and to ensure that no additional harm would occur within the limited safe(r) spaces available to Indigenous students.

### **Recommendations**

Indigenous peoples have been resisting colonial violence for generations. It is imperative to remember the strength and resilience Indigenous peoples continue to have in the face of all the trauma experienced. There needs to be short and long-term institutional changes to address gendered violence on campus overall. Specific attention directed to the acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of violence should be a priority. There also needs to be an urgency within universities’ visions to acknowledge and accommodate to students’ intersecting identities and their experiences of violence. In doing so, universities need to challenge the normalization of violence against Indigenous peoples, specifically Indigenous women, trans, non-binary, and two-spirited peoples in relation to the continued legacy of colonization and the national crisis of MMIWG. Furthermore, universities must “recognize that beneath the campus concrete, this land remembers other ways of being not predicated on rape culture” (Hunt, 2016, p. 12). With continued understanding of the connections between gendered violence and

land violence, universities should continue to take appropriate direction from Indigenous peoples in knowing how to honour the land—practicing land acknowledgement is only one step of recognizing the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

Overall, there needs to be a climate of trust and support for survivors of gendered violence, accomplished through education and training opportunities, and reflected within policies and procedures throughout all aspects of Laurier's community. Hiring more Indigenous staff and faculty into full-time employment would be a demonstration to Laurier's commitments to Indigenization of campuses. As well, universities should increase the opportunities for *all* students to get involved in planning and implementing prevention and response strategies for gendered violence. Universities are encouraged to consider training student volunteers to assist with advocacy, outreach, and general peer support for students who have experienced gendered violence.

Future research is necessary to continue the advancement of knowledge of Indigenous students' experiences of gendered violence on campus. In particular, research that works specifically with Indigenous student populations is needed to understand their perceptions, experiences, and areas of improved supports on campus.

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## Appendix

## WILFRID LAURIER UNIVERSITY

## INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

**Storying Gendered Violence: Indigenous understandings of the interconnectedness of violence**

Josie Baker [Principle Investigator]  
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Kandice Baptiste (Co-Investigator)  
 Manager  
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My name is Josie Baker and I am a graduate student in the Social Justice and Community Engagement (SJCE) program at Wilfrid Laurier Brantford. You are invited to participate in a research study that will explore Indigenous understandings of gendered violence on university campuses. The purpose of this study is to highlight and share the stories of how Indigenous staff at Laurier's campuses understand gendered violence and the needed supports for creating safe(r) space(s) on campus.

**INFORMATION** Throughout the past few years, there has been an increase of research on the experiences and incidents of gendered violence on campus. This study seeks to advance the knowledge and research on Indigenous women's experiences, and whether there are culturally appropriate supports available on campus that are necessary for campus safety.

You will be asked to participate in a focus group with other Indigenous women-identified employees from Laurier's campuses. The focus group will not be formally structured but asked general open-ended questions on the research topic. You are open to share your opinion and experiences about your understandings of gendered violence on campus. The focus group will last approximately two (2) hours. Focus groups will be audio recorded and will be transcribed.

The information you share will be collaborated with the knowledge gathered from three focus groups, which will then be generated into a final research paper. This paper will be utilized to fulfill the requirements of Josie Baker's graduate degree and may be published and/or presented in academic journals and conferences. If requested, once the data collection and analysis is complete (September 2017), a summary of research findings will be emailed to you. If desired, we can send you a copy of the full report or other publications.

**RISKS**

The research team understands that Indigenous peoples have a complicated relationship with research and the research process. With this understanding, there are minimal risks associated with this research. The discussions within the focus group may cause negative effect or discomfort—especially around issues of racialized inequalities. You will have access to a list of community-based supports and

resources. You can participate as much or as little as you like and do not have to discuss or share anything that you are not comfortable with. Additionally, since participants are colleagues the potential exists for a loss of status or reputation should participants disagree with one another or have competing opinions. Participants will be encouraged to express a diverse range of opinions and the PI will make it clear that the research is exploratory so diverse opinions are welcome.

### **BENEFITS**

The findings of this research will advance the knowledge and understanding of Indigenous peoples' experiences of gendered violence on campus. You will be involved in an opportunity to openly discuss your knowledge of gendered violence and the necessary supports required to make improvements to campus safety. The research, hopefully, will then be used as a foundation for the development of these supports on campus.

### **ANONYMITY & CONFIDENTIALITY**

Privacy and confidentiality will be maintained during the data collection process. The primary investigator (Josie Baker), and co-investigators, Hayley Moody and Kandice Baptiste, and research supervisors, Tarah Brookfield, will have access to the data information. Paper records will be securely stored within a locked filing cabinet within an office at Laurier Brantford University, and data entered into a computer database will be stripped of personal identifiers such as name and address, and only include the participants study ID number. All data will be stored for 5 years and then destroyed.

All information you provide will remain anonymous. Participants who wish to remain anonymous will be assigned a code or can choose a pseudonym by which they will be known in the report. If participants do not want to be quoted they can choose not to be. Quotations used in the research will not contain any identifying characteristics.

### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. You may decline to discuss any questions during the focus group without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. If you withdraw from the study, every attempt will be made to remove your data from the study, and have it destroyed. You have the right to omit any information that you have shared at any point during the research process.

### **ANY QUESTIONS?**

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, or you experience adverse effects as a result of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher, Josie Baker, at [bake1215@mylaurier.ca](mailto:bake1215@mylaurier.ca) or 519-476-9702, Dr. Tarah Brookfield at [tbrookfield@wlu.ca](mailto:tbrookfield@wlu.ca) or 519.756.8228 ext.5792. This project has been reviewed and approved by the University Research Ethics Board (REB# 5312). If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Dr. Robert Basso, Chair, University Research Ethics Board, Wilfrid Laurier University, (519) 884-0710, extension 4994 or [rbasso@wlu.ca](mailto:rbasso@wlu.ca).

### **CONSENT**

I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study. I agree to participate in this study, with the understanding that the focus group will be audio-recorded and remain confidential. I agree that anything discussed in the focus group will not be shared outside of the focus group.

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I consent to the use of my quotations in this paper. Prior to publication, member checks will be used to ensure that quotations are used within appropriate and respected contexts

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to review any future documents that may come out of this research *before* the documents are published?

Yes                      No

Rather than a pseudonym, I would like my real name to be used in this research project

Yes                      No

If yes, please sign below:

Participant's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

If no, I would like the following pseudonym (a fictitious name) to be used in all research publications and presentations when referring to me: \_\_\_\_\_

Release of Contact information: only to be used for contacting participants to share publications and results. Participants email address: \_\_\_\_\_



May 31, 2017

Dear Josie Baker

REB # 5312

Project, "Storying Gendered Violence: Indigenous understandings of the interconnectedness of violence" REB Clearance Issued: May 31, 2017

REB Expiry / End Date: September 30, 2017

The Research Ethics Board of Wilfrid Laurier University has reviewed the above proposal and determined that the proposal is ethically sound. If the research plan and methods should change in a way that may bring into question the project's adherence to acceptable ethical norms, please submit a "Request for Ethics Clearance of a Revision or Modification" form for approval before the changes are put into place. This form can also be used to extend protocols past their expiry date, except in cases where the project is more than two years old. Those projects require a new REB application.

Please note that you are responsible for obtaining any further approvals that might be required to complete your project.

Laurier REB approval will automatically expire when one's employment ends at Laurier.

If any participants in your research project have a negative experience (either physical, psychological or emotional) you are required to submit an "Adverse Events Form" within 24 hours of the event.

You must complete the online "Annual/Final Progress Report on Human Research Projects" form annually and upon completion of the project. ROMEO will automatically keep track of these annual reports for you. When you have a report due within 30 days (and/or an overdue report) it will be listed under the 'My Reminders' quick link on your ROMEO home screen; the number in brackets next to 'My Reminders' will tell you how many reports need to be submitted. Protocols with overdue annual reports will be marked as expired. Further the REB has been requested to notify Research Finance when an REB protocol, tied to a funding account has been marked as expired. In such cases Research Finance will immediately freeze funding tied to this account.

All the best for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Basso". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

Robert Basso, PhD  
Chair, University Research Ethics Board  
Wilfrid Laurier University

