

KIM ANDERSON, MARIA CAMPBELL & CHRISTI BELCOURT, *Editors*



Keetsahnak

Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters

 The University of Alberta Press

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(The Missing Chapter) On Being Missing

From Indian Problem to Indian Problematic

MAYA ODE'AMIK CHACABY

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Missing But Not Missed

Dirty Lying No Good Indian was the name given to me by my grandmother—an empty bitter husk of a woman whose spirit went missing in residential school. I went missing when I was thirteen years old. No one came to look for me. No benevolent adults. No mourning family. I was not counted missing and I was not missed.

WAAJIYE, GIWII-BANGI-DIBAAJIM: I am telling a story about missing Indigenous women who do not count in the mournful cries of “missing but not forgotten.”¹ I am telling a story about where the ones who are missing *and* forgotten live. It might not be where your family members are, but that is where I lived for a very long time. I lived there longer than I have lived anywhere else. And I am angry and grieving too. So, I am putting on one of those Red Dresses and dancing a ghost dance about that dispossessed, missing and forgotten space.² Maybe if that space is noticed, we will see what has been missed and where so much of what is missing can be found. Giinawind, giwanishinimin.

There is a tenuous space *between* Being Missing and Being Murdered. I know. I lived there for over a decade. I remember it like a dream, that hypnagogic space, living in the death world,³ a spectral Indian ghosting the colonial wastelands, the slums, the seedy piss-filled corners and alcoves between walls and fences. Living between passing out in snow banks (latex boots frozen to skin) and death, between rape and death, drugs and death, cops and death, safe spaces and death, friends and death. Living between the lonely sorrow of being unwanted into non-existence, my spectrality glinting off the eyes of each passerby, and the cold angry adrenaline shock of real fucking death. That space *between* Being Missing and Being Murdered is a borderland, “a narrow strip along a steep edge” where tension “grips the inhabitants...and death is no stranger.”⁴ A place where the inhabitants are missing, but not missed.

Missing but not missed. We are caught up, hooked in, counted, catalogued, and fixed as objects. Not as sad pictures of missing children on milk cartons though. Fixed instead in the psychic disequilibrium of being a less than human human. Counted as a certain kind of problem: the imperial Indian Problem that fails to adjust to modernity,⁵ institutionally transfixed, pinned down by the gaze of arrogant perception. Fixed by this gaze, my missingness becomes part of the pornotropic narrative of Indian girls who just can't be helped, so you can help yourself to us anyway you want. Missing, but certainly not missed.

Manifest Destination

My destination was a place called “anything is better than what I came from.” Better to be abused by strangers than family. Better to be cold on the streets than fear death in a warm bed. Better to be unknown and unloved than to be called a Dirty Lying Indian by those who are supposed to love me.

The destination for missing Indigenous women and girls is a diasporic compulsive displacement from selfhood—the privileges

of subjectivity and agency—to the objectifying discursive field of “problem” with its colonial classifications of “Indian” and institutionally constrained “solutions.” A place where the colonial fixation with the Indian Problem means “mapping it, describing it in all its different manifestations, trying to get rid of it, laying blame for it, talking about it writing newspaper columns about it . . . researching it, over and over.”⁶ A place, where I am a series of negations.⁷ A negative. I am posters of my dead sisters, empty red dresses and moccasins. I am Missing. I am issues: addictions, suicide, poverty, homelessness. Until I am not. And then I am either dead or rehabilitated: another disappearance.

No matter what, I can only arrive ghosted, where institutions pick up bits and pieces of what they think I am. And that is it. I am only what I am made through institutional responses to the colonial myth that somehow I am responsible for my own demise, that having failed at rehabilitation, my capacity for modern life is tenuous and likely I am already dead.⁸

My destination: a haunting in that space between Being Missing and Being Murdered to be discovered as an object in the one-dimensionality of institutional disappearance. Made manifest.

The Doctrine of Institutional Discovery

I didn't just disappear. I went out with a fight: attempting to kill my pedophilic grade seven teacher, launching a police investigation on my father, and calling C A S to come get my little sister. I thought that maybe, if I fought against all the abuse it would end. It did not. They discovered instead that I was the problem.

Representation of difference, as Homi K. Bhabha explains, “is a discourse at the crossroads of what is known and permissible and that which though known must be kept concealed.”⁹ What has been discovered and represented in the news, in research reports, and even at the rallies and gatherings is only what is permissible: that there are Indians and that they have problems:

missing and murdered women and girls, alcoholism, poverty, housing, violence. What is not permissible, and therefore something that cannot be discovered, is the underlying fact that the social construction of “problems” faced by Indigenous people are not only historically rooted in a nation-sponsored genocidal regime that began long before residential schools, but that existing contemporary institutions, and their version of solutions are in fact responsible and accountable for continued oppressive practices.

This accountability can be theorized in academia where we can all point our fingers at the phantasmagorical of colonization and cry out for justice at the rallies—a justice predicated on a form of humanness and human rights created by that colonizing beast to begin with. But not actual discovery through comprehensive legislative reviews, institutional ethnographies, discovery of what lies behind the problem/solution dichotomy, and certainly not discovery of social environments and social structures that produce, consume, and subsume us.¹⁰ It is easier to look at the behaviours of individuals as the problem, rather than look at those behaviours as reasonable responses to a horrific situation. The situation itself, and the role that institutions and social environments play in perpetuating it, is left undiscovered, not made accountable for and therefore still missing.

Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women become discovered as a problem through the vulgarity of quantification: a tipping point in public opinion that, after a certain number, it begins to count. However, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women from a colonial perspective is paradoxically a problem with the Indians that will not go away and therefore remain a legislative burden, a fiduciary duty that slows the resource extraction process, a disruption to the myth of benign nationalism. The Indian Problem from an imperial perspective further consists of “unproductive” bodies who disrupt economic growth by refusing to be human resources. My being a missing Indigenous women is considered

then a problem of our failure as Indigenous people to function in civilized society. We can point fingers at who caused these failures, but never debate the legitimacy of what is considered a productive functioning and fully human body. Solutions too are discursively confined within the realm of imperial westernized possibilities.

The underlying social constructions of the problem/solution must be kept concealed (undiscovered) by placing the burden on Indigenous people and their behaviours as the problem and only imagining solutions that do not challenge and instead sustain the status quo. This means that policies, inquests, media attention, and research tend to place the Indian Problem with the individual or community instead of the need for a total upheaval of social structures.¹¹ If social structures are incriminated, they are either blamed on “bad” individuals within the institution or, if the institution as a whole is to blame, it is safely placed in the past, the unfortunate (but necessary) history of development with the assumption that we have either now progressed or are capable of progressing within the same ideologically saturated institutional systems.¹²

The Human Proclamation

I refused to interact with the kids or teachers at school, I would not speak to humans and refused to speak English. So after failing grade one, they diagnosed me as retarded. A line was drawn. If I wanted to be human, I had to speak English. If I wanted to progress, I had to interact with the humans. And I did. Progress. By grade five I spoke in Shakespearian soliloquies and drew lines with broken beer bottles along my arms. Teased by my classmates for my failed suicide attempts, “Aren't you dead yet?” they'd ask.

Progress? We have progressed further into “Murderous Humanitarianism” where the fabricated version of what it is to be human becomes universal human rights created by the very same thinking that produced, in the name of human progress,

mutilated, raped, debilitated, impaired, criminalized black and red bodies.¹³ The same thinking that destroys our land and enforces violence amongst us.

Progress? We have inherited (by force and fraud) a colonial legacy that presupposes a natural link between the terms “Indian” and “Problem.”¹⁴ This problem, spawned in the seething, disease-filled, impoverished, and war-torn land of excesses, extremes, and degradation, also known as Renaissance Europe, emerged at a time when the very nature of humanness was in question. This occurred soon after the Christian God as Europeans’ source of humanness, social structures, and morals died. They killed their own god, and too late realized that the beating god-heart that sustained their morals and social practices could not be revived.¹⁵ Philosophers, politicians, scientists, merchants, and the like rushed forth with constructions of humanness based—not on faith—but on imaginary borders of nationhood with larger military, a whole new economic system, and a bio-medical model of authority to enforce it. An identity born from the bloody killing of their holy father; an identity born of patricide swaddled in the expansive cloth of colonial resource extraction.

This “immense historical rupture” led to an identity based on the “rise of the West” and the “subjugation of the rest of us.”¹⁶ The new iteration of human was based on the myth of a civilized political subject and had as its comparative Other, the uncivilized not quite human humans.¹⁷ To be a civilized human was based on colonial difference—a difference marked along a mythical racialized spectrum ranging from complete savagery (not remotely human and therefore natural slaves or beasts of burden) to the noble savage (less than civilized human but human and therefore capable of being uplifted to civilization). The result, as Sylvia Wynter explains, “would be ‘the rise of Europe’ and its construction of the ‘world civilization’ on the one hand, and, on the other, African enslavement, Latin American conquest, and Asian subjugation.”¹⁸

Fed with gold, pelts, and pornotropic stories of the savage, the infant colonial human leaves its toy soldiers and forts behind (Pax Britannica, following the collapse of the Napoleonic Revolution and North American War of 1812) mutating into Imperialism. Now instead of a fragile infant version of human kept secure in colonial forts while the Indians run wild and do the resource extraction work, the Imperial Human requires the Indians to be contained (reserves) so the nation-building empire can expand. Cities and towns along its borders, the new imperial nation spreads like acne on pubescent skin.

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Gradual Rehabilitation

After missing in Winnipeg I tried to go home and failed. There was no safe home to return to. My failed attempt to go home wasn't noticed but my failed attempt at suicide soon after that was. Then a psych ward, where being served breakfast meant staying in your locked concrete room crying all day. No breakfast means you got electro-shocked, hosed down and left for a day of rehabilitative oblivion. I never tried to go home after that. I was fifteen.

The historical rupture of the Enlightenment required a different course in the treatment of the Indian Problem, away from annihilation towards an ethically (and ethnically) palatable cleansing of the filth of Indianess in order to increase their worth to civilized society.

Through this process, the colonial state and its institutions produce a discursive whitewash that firmly entrenches the Indian Problem as a de facto category of disablement;¹⁹ the “grease and dirt” of the Indian Problem as the “darkest blots” of civilized society, and a new destination: erasure through rehabilitation; for “there is no better way to escape the face of strangeness than by forgetting aberrancy through its dissolution into the social norm.”²⁰

Dissolution, in the nineteenth century, was the empirical norm of enlightened thinking for the treatment of all the “not quite human humans of undesirable difference” through the institutionalized hegemonic system of assimilative-rehabilitation.²¹

For Anishinaabeg, the empirical norm played out first through an etiologized ensconcement—classified specifications (the Indian Registry, Enfranchisement Act) and safe confinement (reservations and the Indian Act)—to a process of rehabilitation through sanatoriums, residential schools, westernized male-dominated chief and band council governance, children’s aid, and myriad policies that, like the smallpox-infected blankets of the past, were disseminated through every institution that Indians came in contact with. All formulated to ensure there would be no Indian Problem; we would all arrive rehabilitated and ready for civilization.

This negation of self through a rehabilitative model based on what is considered a “normal” human is the only legitimate and institutionally actionable doctrine of discovery. My negation: high-school drop out, suicidal, emotionally unstable, underage, homeless, abused, violent. A new negation depending on which institution discovered me. It did not matter if the negations negated themselves; they could and often did contradict. What mattered was how those negations were acted on.

The Missing Act

“Fuck you” was my most common response to social workers who acted all nice and shit. They weren’t going to stick around and really help so why give ’em what they want: another participant in some pointless program? Fuck you. I wish I could tell them that I really did want help.

The *fact* of my status as a missing child was not made institutionally actionable through a culturally competent, responsive, caring system. Instead, it was operationalized through a hierarchical system of stigmas. Even if the individuals are caring, their

responses are institutionally constrained by who they are allowed to work with, what they are allowed to do, and for how long. What is made institutionally actionable becomes the only reality that is responded to, that people can go to work on—the actualities are subsumed by these forms of representation.²² Actualities (having no safe and culturally relevant place to consider home) and personal experiences (the fact that I needed a sense of identity beyond homeless, beyond missing, abuse survivor towards something more like belonging in a positive nurturing relationship with the social environment) are based on a medical model of rehabilitation discourse “torn between specification (bordering on exclusion) and nondistinction (which thinks it tends towards integration).”²³

Non-distinction, the great un-becoming of the Indian Problem, is the default institutional response for dealing with Anishinaabeg. Un-becoming becomes the actuality that subsumes any other, launching a chain reaction of institutional responses towards un-becoming the Indian Problem. Be it mental illness, alcoholism, family violence, intergenerational trauma, autism, or diabetes, the specifications of impairment are usurped by the master status of the Indian Problem, where Indianess is the primary disabling condition.²⁴ The *fact* of my lived situation was subsumed by the *fact* of being the “discredited Aboriginal subject” undeserving of any supports beyond meagre provisional service, starved out of access to anything but the most basic rationed human services as if anything more would be a waste.²⁵

Rehabilitation becomes a slow crawling progression of adjustment to the norm of un-being; an erasure of any beforehand (that my feral refusals were a response to colonial captivity and inter-generation trauma—a cognitive dissonance with colonial reality); an arrival at the gateposts of civilization-cum-technocratic administration “where Aboriginal subjects as deserving of services and of respect, tying in neatly with longstanding racist ideas of Aboriginal people [are treated] as polluted, child-like, and incapable of being modern subjects.”²⁶ No matter the impairment we can only ever

arrive at the margins of civilized society. We can only be the negation: rehabilitation to become the not quite Indian Indian that forever produces for the whitewashing agents “a supply of docile human bodies that can be ‘subjected, used, transformed, and improved.’”²⁷ In other words, by our un-becoming, by our being the assimilated “success stories,” the rehabilitated not quite Indian Indian, we replicate into perpetuity the institutional doctrine of discovery of the Indian problem.

Missing or Murdered. For over a decade I haunted those who would discover me, not as a missing child to be returned to the arms of her loving family, but instead, I haunted them as *the* Problem. The doctrine of institutional discovery as the only legitimate form of recognition strips away everything but the problem.

Their housing. I refused. Why would I live in a concrete slab in alone and isolated while all my friends are downtown?

Their high schools. I refused. Why would I stay somewhere that forces me to go to high school with children who have never been trafficked?

Their therapy. I refused. Why would I talk to a stranger who can’t teach me my language and thinks nothing of culture?²⁸

Their treatment centres. I refused.

Their food. I refused.

Their drugs. I refused.

Their psychiatric assessments. I refused them all.

And every time I was discovered, captured, and confined in their institutions my dear street friends broke me out; jailbreaks sometimes even when I was still incapacitated, pushing me down the street in a wheelchair while security guards chased after us.

I was the harsh reminder that their system fails people like me. Western institutional interventions could not fix me. To those institutions built entirely on a medical model of rehabilitation towards a societal “norm” that Indigenous people have never authored or authorized, not being fixable means not a failure on their part but a failure on mine. And so, it is far easier to dismiss me, to miss me from what counts in their performance reports

and practices. To disappear me again and again in their inability to discover how their systems reproduce my missingness. The doctrine of institutional discovery places me at the same dismissed and impermanent status as my ancestors, not able to claim my own selfness, relegated to a justified negation as my ancestors were stripped of homelands and sovereignty. In order to keep the doctrine of institutional discovery alive and well, it is better to act as if I do not exist. It is better to keep missing me.

But I refuse.

From Indian Problem to Indian Problematic

Kinaanaakomininaawaa kakina awiyaa e-wijiishiwaaj.

The territory that the Indian problem inhabits is one of unidirectional progress towards deterritorialization (i.e., Gradual Civilization Act, Indian Act, and modern iterations virally dispersed through omnibus bills—the new germ warfare). It is an arborescent process which continuously cuts along a vertical hierarchy marking (debarking) the text-to-work-to-text genealogy from Indian Problem to not quite Indian Indian through reterritorialized rehabilitative pruning.²⁹

We are considered rehabilitated and therefore no longer missing when we get nuclear-family-type housing isolated from our communities, get off the street drugs and get on antidepressants, go to Western schools, get a “normal” job, and get our children back from Children’s Aid Societies. That is it. That is rehabilitation. What is really missing though—what is made to remain disappeared through the assimilative process of rehabilitation towards a norm that is not ours—is learning how to live well as Anishinaabe. Not some frozen-in-time beads-and-feathers version, but how to live the good life as skilled knowers of our environment even if that environment is the urban Anishinaabe post-apocalypse.³⁰ Wellness or everyday good living in a contemporary social environment includes our languages, our Clans, our

ceremonies, our political practices, our gender roles and responsibilities, our economic practices, our education systems, our Clan kinship ties, our food security practices, our health care system, our social welfare systems, our art, and our technologies. However, these do not count as rehabilitation and are simply disappeared, left under-resourced and delegitimized. That is what is really missing.

Resistance is similarly contained. We can resist by perpetuating the Indian Problem (e.g., deterritorialize through incarceration, tire-burning, disengagement with society via alcoholism, violence, and homelessness), or we can be the rehabilitated not quite Indian Indian, the success stories, the reterritorialized educated middle class, the ones who have cleaned up our acts, overcome our Indian Problems and contribute to civilized society. We become the Indian experts, the ones who are brought in to comment on, diagnose, or intervene with the Indian Problems at the other end of the spectrum. Even the discourse of Indigenous reclamation and reconciliation is often safely confined to ubiquitous free-floating concepts of colonialism (where no one is responsible) or specific instances of injustice, pain, and suffering (the poor Indians and their problems). This containment—the minimizing and suppressing of dissent³¹—is a dynamic conservatism³² that avoids awareness of the interstitial (rhizomatic) connections between dominating discourse, repressive desublimation,³³ and ruling relations.³⁴

To un-become the un-becoming of assimilation we cannot be the Indian Problem: we must be the Indian Problematic. Problems are the issues, revealed experiences, propositions, points of anger, the moans and groans of pain and suffering. The Indian Problematic is an awareness of the spaces where real experience hooks the local to the extra-local and trans-local making the workings of society visible.³⁵ The Indian Problematic entails a “knowledge of how the structures of everyday activities are routinely produced [enabling] us to tell how we might proceed for the effective production of *desired disturbances*.”³⁶

I am not a success story.

I am not a rehabilitated Indian.

I am the new story: the Indian Problematic.

Un-settling Society

Apane babaamosed a'aw Nenabozho gii-pabaamose gii-ayaad omaa. Mii dash o'ow ani-babaamosed gaa-izhi-miikawaad onow binesiwana, onow gii-naganaawaad omaamaayiwaa omaa. Gaa-izhi-gagwejimaad, "Aaniish giinawaa ezhinikaazoyeg," ogii-kakwejiman a'aw Nenabozho. Mii dash, ogii-nisidotaagoon i'iw ayaawid. Mii dash, gaawiin ogii-nakwetawaasiagoon onow binewan. "Gaawiin giwii-pooni'isiinooninim. Aaniish ezhinikaazoyeg?" Mii dash binesiwag gaa-izhi-inaawaad, "Bine indizhinikaazomin." "Oon." Inashke niin niizhing indizhinikaaz. Mii i'iw bezhig, Nenabozho indizhinikaaz. Miinawaa dash Bebaamosed gaye indizhinikaaz." Oon." Gaawin ogii-nakwetawaasiigoonaan Nenabozho. "Wiindamawishin ezhinikaasoyan. Niizhing akina awiia adayaanaawaa izhinikaazowinan," ogii-inaan Nenabozho. Mii dash iniw binewan, "Gawigoshko'iweshiinh indizhinikaazomin gaye niinawind," gii-ikidowag. "Sate! Gaawiin giin. Onzaam sa go gibi-wiji'ininim," gii-ikido a'aw Nenabozho. Mii gaa-izhi-zhaagode'enid gaa-izhi-miiziinaad onow sa binesiwana. Mii dash gaa-izhi-maajaad a'aw Bebaamosed.³⁷

Gawigoshko'iweshiinh, the un-settlers in this story are little baby partridges who are accosted by Bebaamosed and forced to tell him their name. Bebaamosed then proceeds to shit all over them. The story goes on with Bebaamosed continuing along his journey without another thought for the damage he caused those babies. And then, at a moment when Bebaamosed least expects it, the mother partridge jumps up and startles him. Bebaamosed not only fails at what he most desires, but ends up falling right off the cliff.

To be the Indian Problematic, we must be the un-settlers. This is the consciousness of being less powerful in a relationship of

power, but able to make actionable in every space between institutional un-being a “*consciousness of opportunity*, an opening in the situation through which one might intervene and turn matters to one’s advantage.”³⁸ An unsettling presence of Indian that disturbs the norm rather than a consignment to failure at achieving the norm. An unsettling presence of Anishinaabe. Not ghosted or reconciled to somehow fit into Western society, to come to terms with being colonized. No. An unsettling presence that brings awareness of relationships that have too long been occupied with erasure.

To be the Indian Problematic we must ask those unsettling questions: What is really missing, who is missing, and what do we need so that they can be found, not as a solution to a problem, but celebrated for their potentialities and protected from the damage on non-distinction?

So what is really missing? A place to come home to. Home is my language and the privilege of subjective agency as well as the necessary resources to find my sense of self in something other than what I have been subsumed by. This includes an unsettling of what we consider being human and having rights. Home is a network of Clan and kinship ties that allow safe passage through multiple spatial and conceptual territorialities; this is the definition of Anishinaabe Nationhood. Home is a social environment where Anishinaabe leadership, gender, life-cycle, and Clan responsibilities are imbued in everyday interactions. Home is the economic infrastructure to fulfill those responsibilities; this is our true measure of wealth. Home is ceremony, upliftment, and rites of passage through every life stage. Home is being celebrated, mentored, welcomed, and wanted. Home is my bundle.

What is missing are the strategies for creating this kind of home in contemporary urban spaces. We are missing the opportunities to behave this way and create these kinds of social environments regardless of funding and policy constraints. Without this kind of home, why would I want to be rehabilitated to fit into a society predicated on the destruction of my people? My missingness was created in a society that has, as its foundation, the need for the

disappearance of the Indian. So what does it give me to become a normalized “functional” citizen when the basis of functionality is disappearance through whitewashed education, chemical lobotomization, lonely housing, isolation, lateral violence, consumerism, chronic disease, a cultural void, abuse, and failed relationships? Why would I want to be found when there is no home to return to?

Who is missing? Did you see her? She was here just a moment ago, that twelve-year-old girl with the angry glint in her eyes and cuts along her arms. She is missing right in front of you. And that one too, the mother who can’t show up for access visits. And the kids who are missing from school because there is no food for lunch and if the school found out, they’d call CAS. And the quiet boy who has seen too much. He is also missing. The teachers and Elders are missing too. The little kids told me so. The children who tell me how much they want to be taught their culture and language but no one is there to teach them. And the ones missing their names and their Clans. The ones missing their language. The ones living in homes that are missing love and kindness. The girls who wander the streets at night with nothing to do and no safe places to just have fun. The ones who are missing any vision of what they might be in the future, missing connections, missing role models.

To those kids, we are the ones who are missing.

What needs to be found? I need to find a way to speak my language, a way to fulfill my Clan, gender, and life-cycle responsibilities as part of contemporary economic engagement.

To those Beings who gift us Clans, names, language, we are the ones who are missing.

What needs to be found? I need to find a way to be raised up by Elders and taught more than beads and feathers. I need to find a way to be raised without violence.

We are missing. Don’t you feel it?

We must create a home worth returning to—for all of us. We must find one another. We must find a home where community behaves resiliently every day, where social environments celebrate

life and everyday good living. If we don't find this kind of home, our people will continue to be lost.

I wonder if the plight of missing Indigenous women is worth that kind of effort.

Postscript

Cleaning the Bones of My Ancestors

I went to our ceremonial Ancestors Feast this winter. It is a ceremony where, in a darkened room, the conductor describes the ancestors who have responded to the calling in. Unexpectedly, the conductor described my grandmother. Her features, clearly defined in the dark of ceremony. She was spectral now, not me. I stood, holding my feast plate to her. After all these years that I have been missing, she found me. I spoke to her for the first time in thirty years. I only spoke Anishinaabemowin. She stood there beside the Old Man, beside the lost children. I told her my true name and my struggles since she passed. She opened her arms to me and accepted my offering. She called me by my real name. For the first time I was not *Dirty Lying No Good Indian*, the name she called me my entire childhood. She has been brought back, bones polished. The decay of suffering scrapped from every crevice and carefully rubbed clean. She might be long dead, but she found me. She has returned in and through me to a space before her spirit went missing in residential school. Now, I can carry her home. Now I can carry home all the bones of my ancestors. Now I can carry my pipe and my bundle, my language and my Clan without feeling like something is missing.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am thankful to people who found me: Julie who parked her car at the bar in Winnipeg at 3 A.M. and got me away from certain death at age fifteen. Betsy Martin at the Battered Women's Shelter where they let me in at age sixteen even though the rules say a child cannot go to that shelter without their

mother. Ma-nee Chacaby who saw me dancing in the fields amongst the ghosts and, along with Betsy, adopted me. It took ten more years before I believed they wanted me. Before I could let them love me. Meanwhile on the streets of Toronto, Phyllis Novak who let me play piano and do art and told me I was amazing every day at the drop-in centre. Then she took us street kids seriously and created a whole new drop-in where we could just do art, no questions asked. My street family (Half-pint and Emmet) who babysat me in constant crisis for most of my youth. Amanda Dale who took me seriously and Cynthia for running talking circles at Sistering's for the worst of us high, drunk, messed-up, angry Anishinaabekwe. Cynthia is the reason I felt Native enough to go get real help: the Elders at the Friendship Centre, Vern Harper and Alex Jacobs, who scraped me off the streets and taught me ceremony and language. And later in life, Alex McKay, Keren Rice, The Old Man, Wilfred Cyr, Gordon Waindubence, Rebecca Martell, Patricia Ningewance, Lilian Pitawankwat, Ed Pitawanakwat, and Doug Williams, who all invested their time and knowledge in me. None of these people were paid to do this. But they are the ones who really found me. I would be dead if they hadn't.

NOTES

1. My condolences to those families who have lost loved ones or who are mourning their missing loved ones. I acknowledge your anger and your grief. Your sorrow and your experiences are valid and valued. This is just a different story. This story may or may not be helpful to you, but it is in no way meant to be disrespectful of your experiences.
2. See the REDress Project website, <http://www.theredressproject>.
3. Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).
4. Gloria Anzaldúa quoted in Julie Avril Minich, "Disabling La Frontera: Disability, Border Subjectivity, and Masculinity in 'Big Jesse, Little Jesse' by Oscar Casares," *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 37.
5. S.H. Razack, "Timely Deaths: Medicalizing the Deaths of Aboriginal People in Police Custody," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 9, no. 2 (2011): 352-74.
6. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 91.
7. W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1961).

8. Razack, "Timely Deaths."
9. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 128.
10. Jack D. Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals: The Wétiko Disease of Exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008).
11. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 92.
12. For example, rather than acknowledging that the RCMP is an institutionally racist organization in need of system-wide restructuring, former RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson claims that there are a few racists in the RCMP. This statement was made to a gathering of First Nations Chiefs in December 2015 in discussion about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The RCMP response is a clear example of maintaining oppressive institutional systems by placing the blame on a few individuals, as if getting rid of a few racist individuals would solve the problem.
13. Samuel Beckett and Alan Warren Friedman, *Beckett in Black and Red: The Translations for Nancy Cunard's Negro* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1999), xxxi.
14. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 96.
15. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Modern Library, 1995); Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold V. Miller and J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
16. Howard Winant, *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994) cited in Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 262.
17. Tanya Titchkosky, "Disability Studies: The Old and the New," in *Rethinking Normalcy: A Disability Studies Reader*, ed. Rod Michalko and Tanya Titchkosky (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2009), 42–43.
18. Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality," 263.
19. Razack, "Timely Deaths."
20. Henri-Jacques Stiker, *A History of Disability*, trans. William Sayers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 136.
21. Titchkosky, "Disability Studies," 42–43.
22. Dorothy E. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2005), 212.

23. Stiker, *History of Disability*, 156.
24. Razack, "Timely Deaths," 372.
25. Jo-Anne Fiske and Annette J. Browne, "Aboriginal Citizen, Discredited Medical Subject: Paradoxical Constructions of Aboriginal Women's Subjectivity in Canadian Health Care Policies," *Policy Sciences* 39, no. 1 (2006): 91-111.
26. Razack, "Timely Deaths," 359.
27. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 136.
28. Michael J. Chandler and Christopher Lalonde, "Cultural Continuity as a Hedge against Suicide in Canada's First Nations," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 35, no. 2 (1998): 191-219.
29. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
30. Lawrence William Gross, *Anishinaabe Ways of Knowing and Being* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2014).
31. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 11-12.
32. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).
33. Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*.
34. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography*.
35. Smith, *Institutional Ethnography*.
36. Harold Garfinkel, "Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities," *Social Problems* 11, no. 3 (1964): 227, emphasis added.
37. Collins Oakgrove, "Miskwaagamiwi-zaaga'igan Red Lake," in *Living Our Languages: Ojibwe Tales and Oral Histories*, ed. Anton Treuer (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2001), 174-77.
38. Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey, "Narrating Social Structure: Stories of Resistance to Legal Authority," *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 6 (2003): 1336.