



## **LESSON PLAN 3: Stolen Sisters: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

**TRADITIONAL TERRITORY STATEMENT:** We would like to acknowledge that Dawson College is located on the traditional territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk) people. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples.

This series of lesson plans aims to familiarize students with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis communities in Canada. Each lesson explores a different facet of contemporary Indigeneity, and includes resources by Indigenous voices. Students are invited to confront and unpack stereotypes and develop a clearer understanding of what it means to be Indigenous and an Indigenous ally in this country. The lessons in this series recognize and honour the histories, traumas and strengths of today's Indigenous communities, presenting them in accessible, engaging ways. They are meant to be an inspiring starting point that encourages educators and students to ask more questions and explore different hands-on learning activities that can put the lessons' information into practice. The possibilities are endless.

While exploring the topics in these lesson plans, some students may be triggered. Indigenous students along with other classmates who have experienced genocide and oppression may require support. Please ensure that there are proper measures in place to take care of their feelings.

### **★ The goals of these lessons are for students to:**

- Grasp and develop their knowledge of the topics presented
- Understand the multi-generational impacts of colonialism
- Question and reframe cultural biases
- Discover how Indigenous people are reclaiming their power and identity
- Understand contemporary issues and policies that impact both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in Canada

### **LESSON PLAN 3: Stolen Sisters: Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls**

For many Indigenous females, Canada has proven to be a dangerous place to live. Over decades, thousands of First Nation, Inuit and Métis women, girls and two-spirit people have gone missing or murdered and the vast majority of these cases remain unsolved.

This national crisis brings up many important questions, such as: Why are Indigenous women and girls at such high risk of violence? Why isn't more being done to protect them?

*"The complex interplay of factors – many of which are part of the legacy of residential schools – needs to be examined, as does the lack of success of police forces in solving these crimes against Aboriginal women."*

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Final Report, December 2015**

**\*Read more about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at the end of this lesson plan**



*Still Dancing* by Jonathan Labillois

This devastating reality impacts all Canadians, and this means that we can all play a part in solving it. To begin, we can examine the statistics and colonial reasons for why Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit people are at such a disadvantage. Following this, we can collectively acknowledge the lives of these women and honour them as people – not numbers. This work allows us to humanize the colonial violence that has been stealing our Indigenous sisters for far too long.

### **LESSON PLAN 3 GOALS:**

To understand why Indigenous women are at greater risk of violence, what the implications are within Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and how Canada is responding to this national crisis.

- **Origins of vulnerability: why are Indigenous women so targeted?**

**READ:** *Root Causes Against Aboriginal Women and the Impact of Colonization:*

[https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Root\\_Causes\\_of\\_Violence\\_Against\\_Aboriginal\\_Women.pdf](https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fact_Sheet_Root_Causes_of_Violence_Against_Aboriginal_Women.pdf)

- **Statistics: what are the numbers, and what do they mean?**

**READ:** *Violence Against Aboriginal Women:*

[https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Violence\\_Against\\_Aboriginal\\_Women.pdf](https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Fact_Sheet_Violence_Against_Aboriginal_Women.pdf)

- **The faces behind the statistics: who are these women and what are their stories?**

**WATCH:** *Where is the Justice:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uQx-lePBxQ>

**READ:** *Stolen Sisters* by Emanuelle Walter

**READ:** *Missing and Murdered:*

<http://www.cbc.ca/missingandmurdered/>

## **Justice: What is being done by Canada's law enforcement and the National Inquiry?**

**WATCH:** *Searchers: Highway of Tears:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz63Vppw3gE>

**EXPLORE:** The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Women and Girls:

<http://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>

**READ:** Federal Government to blame...

<http://nationalpost.com/news/politics/missing-and-murdered-inquiry-blames-slow-progress-on-federal-government-in-interim-report>

- **Taking Action: events and initiatives to commemorate and protect Indigenous women:**

### **Walking With Our Sisters**

*A commemorative art installation for MMIWG:* <http://walkingwithoursisters.ca/>

### **The REDress Project**

*An aesthetic response to the more than 1000 Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women in Canada:* <http://www.theredressproject.org/>

### **Annual Women's Memorial March/Vigil**

(held each year on October 4 and February 14 across Canada)

### **Suggested class activities:**

1. Identifying current perceptions and biases around Indigenous issues:

-Teacher poses a question/statement (ex. "Isn't it time for Indigenous people to get over what happened to them?").

-Pair up students or put them into small discussion groups.

-After discussing, invite each group to report back to class with key thoughts.

-Invite students to write their take-aways and further questions.

2. Explore ways that students (and Dawson at large) can help to spread awareness of the MMIWG crisis and support Indigenous women. **\*Ideas can be displayed on a bulletin board for all of Dawson to see.**

3. Host a panel discussion on the MMIWG crisis with members from nearby communities (Kahnawake or Kanasatake).

**Suggested homework assignments:**

1. Come up with ideas on how some of these issues can be fixed (Ex. address the issue of transportation for women by implementing a better bus line.)
2. Write a letter, poem or song to the Indigenous women and girls who are missing or who have been murdered.

**Additional literature and videos:**

*Strutting for Our Sisters:*

<http://workingitouttogether.com/content/strutting-for-our-sisters/>

*Sexualized Genocide:*

<http://workingitouttogether.com/content/canadas-legacy-of-sexualized-genocide-mmiwg/>

*Butterflies in the Making:*

<http://workingitouttogether.com/content/butterflies-in-the-making/>

*Before She's Gone:*

<http://workingitouttogether.com/content/before-shes-gone/>

*The Marginalization of Aboriginal Women:*

[http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/marginalization\\_of\\_aboriginal\\_women/](http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/marginalization_of_aboriginal_women/)

**Related female Indigenous artists (visual and performance) who are re-empowering women and reclaiming their power and sexuality through their art:**

*Lori Blondeau:* <http://bit.ly/2C7fwT8>

*Monique Aura:* <http://auralast.wixsite.com/auralast>

*Chief Lady Bird:* <http://chiefladybirdart.tumblr.com/>

*Dayna Danger:* <http://www.daynadanger.com/>

Rosalie Favell: <http://rosaliefavell.com/>

### **What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (the TRC) was officially launched in 2008 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. This multi-faceted agreement, widely understood to be one of the largest settlement packages in the history of the country, was intended to compensate survivors for the unthinkable abuse they suffered in Residential Schools. The TRC was also intended to be a process that would guide Canadians through the difficult, fact-finding journey toward reconciliation. The first stage of the TRC came to a close in 2015. The work of the TRC has now been transferred to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, where the journey continues. You can visit the NCTR website at [www.nctr.ca](http://www.nctr.ca).

