

4

Colonialism, Gender Violence, and the Making of the Canadian State

Chapter Outline

This chapter explores the roles of Indigeneity and gender in relation to colonialism in Canada. It considers the roles of law, legislation and social cultural factors. The chapter suggests that these elements collectively contribute to forms of gendered violence that Indigenous people face. Further, the chapter argues that these forms of violence are not just an effect of Canada's history of colonialism but actively function to produce colonialism today in Canada. Gendered violence was essential to the colonial project and has continued to impact Indigenous life as it is interwoven into law, policy, and social perceptions of Indigenous people.

This chapter begins with a historical overview of the colonial process in Canada. It demonstrates how Canada constructed Indigenous lands as lawless spaces in need of colonial law. It also demonstrates that gendered sets of social relations were built into the colonial enterprise. The result was a westernized construction of Indigenous women's sexuality that was based on fictitious stereotypes.

The chapter then discusses how the colonial process has marked Indigenous people for death, which is seen as inevitable and, as a result, violent acts against Indigenous people go unnoticed. This is especially the case in terms of violence against Indigenous women where generations of abuse and sexual violence have gone unchecked. According to the author, Canadian colonialism continues to structure gender violence by vacating Indigenous women of authority and legitimacy. This is carried out through stereotyping and cultural appropriation. The chapter concludes by demonstrating that Indigenous women are refusing many of the forms of representation that are being placed on them. Through blogs, scholarship, and activism, Indigenous women carve out their own spaces, having their voices heard.

Learning Objectives

- To identify why Indigenous women in Canada are victim to gender and racial violence
- To understand how colonialism has structured gender and Indigeneity in Canada
- To understand the historical process of Indigenous gendered violence in Canada
- To recognize how stereotypes and cultural appropriation have resulted in violence against Indigenous women
- To understand how Indigenous women have challenged the treatment they have received in both historical and contemporary contexts

Study Questions

1. How have Indigenous people been cast as subordinate minorities of the state?
2. Why did Canada construct Indigenous lands as lawless spaces?
3. How was domesticity used to remove Indigenous women from their places of power in Indigenous societies?
4. How did policies of assimilation target aspects of Indigenous family life?
5. How was the “deviant” label applied to Indigenous women?
6. In what ways is Indigenous gendered violence made permissible in the current context?
7. How have Canadian colonial culture and institutions created an environment that renders violence against Indigenous women permissible and lawful?
8. How does cultural appropriation serve to perpetuate stereotypical interpretations of Indigenous people?
9. List three examples of cultural appropriation. How do these examples perpetuate violence against Indigenous women?
10. What impact can Indigenous stereotyped Halloween costumes have on Indigenous people?

Additional Resources

Readings

- Anderson, Kim, Maria Campbell, and Christi Belcourt eds. 2018. *Keetsabnak: Our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Sisters*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bruckert, Chris and Tuulia Law. 2018. *Women and Gendered Violence in Canada: An Intersectional Approach*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Francis, Daniel. 2011. *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Hargreaves, Allison. 2017. *Violence Against Indigenous Women: Literature, Activism, Resistance*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Valaskaks, Gail, Madeleine Stout and Eric Guimond eds. 2009. *Restoring the Balance: First Nations Women, Community and Culture*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Websites

Appreciating or appropriating Indigenous culture <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/appreciating-or-appropriating-indigenous-culture>

This site is a blog that discusses the difference between appropriate use and appropriating of Indigenous traditions.

Legal Strategy Coalition on Violence against Indigenous Women <https://www.leaf.ca/legal/legal-strategy-coalition-on-violence-against-indigenous-women-lsc/>

This site provides information on reports that this organization has been involved in calling for an end to violence against Indigenous women.

National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/>

This website provides information on the MMIWG Inquiry and includes various documents, reports, and interactive activities.