Many have eyes but cannot see

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Purpose: to Promote Indigenous Warrior Culture, Fighting Spirit, & Resistance Movement.

Stop Violence & Abuse Against Women & Children
Globalization & the Assault on Indigenous Resources

"In the global economy, the growth of corporate control over the peoples and resources of our planet is such, that even the term "empire" implies an imperial uncontrollable force moving through the globe, wishing to control or destroy all opposition to its plan. The local community is an obstacle to the expansion of its market. It is not surprising, then, that efforts are being made to destroy the indigenous people, their land, and their culture, "Al-Qassam Brigades" and other terrorist organizations are not alone in this. The national and local governments, the business community, and even the international community, are all involved in this."

Global Environmental Crisis

"Earth faces more major hurricanes, floods & tornadoes, caused by a warming climate in the century to come... Natural disasters appear to be becoming more frequent & their effects more severe. Rising global temperatures are likely to raise the incidence of extreme weather events, including storms & heavy rainfall, cyclones & droughts."

System of Self-Destruction

"What becomes clear from our research is that the economic system which evolved in the industrial West & which is now spreading throughout the entire world is slowly undermining itself. As now structured, it will not take us very far into the next century. The question, then, is whether we can find another path that can be sustained."

When Civilization Collapses

"Modern civilised people spend most of their lives in artificial cocoons, where indoor temperatures can be regulated, food, water, & clothing are easy to obtain; and shelter is always available. The underpinnings of technology that support this existence are fragile, as can be seen when a natural or manmade disaster occurs; the amenities of civilization collapse, and life itself depends on the basic things such as food, water & shelter are difficult or impossible to obtain. Even a 'temporary power outage' illustrates the thinness of civilization's veneer. Modern man is at a loss when electric stoves, refrigerators, air conditioners, & automatic garage doors cease to function."

Conflict & Crisis

"The global environment is rapidly deteriorating due to industrial pollution & resource depletion. Global warming is already causing extreme weather patterns, including storms, droughts, deadly heat waves, bug infestations, forest fires, melting of polar ice caps & glaciers, etc., all of which have negative effects on the global economic system."

"The convergence of war, economic decline, & ecological crises will lead to greater overall social conflict within the imperialist nations in the years to come. It is this growing conflict that will create changes in the present social conditions, which will create greater opportunities for organized resistance..."

"When two groups meet each other and both are masked, the password identifies them so we know they are not Israeli agents," Abu Muhammad said. He said Israelis were posted on the edges of Gaza and the outskirts of towns to watch for raids by Israeli forces. "If they see something, they send the information back up the line to the joint operations room, and all the groups," Abu Muhammad said. "Special forces cannot enter Gaza easily."

"It is difficult to say how many Palestinians are members of armed groups. Israeli intelligence officials say there are probably as many as 20,000 hard-core members of the various factions, most of which are in the Gaza Strip. But including free-lancers who join in when the fighting picks up, military officials say the militiamen's forces outnumber the 15,000 members of the Palestinian Authority security force."

"According to the accounts of Israeli intelligence officials and senior Hamas officials, the influence of Hamas leaders in Gaza weakened further after they joined the Palestinian Authority in the wake of parliamentary elections early this year. The Hamas Brigades, which is believed to have received money from Saudi Arabia until recently and now from Iran, grew in the 1990s as a counterweight to the Aksa Martyrs Brigades of the Fatah Movement, then led by Yasir Arafat (PLO)."
when they joined the government,” said Abu Muhammad, a Qassam Brigades field commander in Jabaliya. “New leaders attacked against the Israeli military post in June.

The government itself was surprised by the Qassam Brigades’ crisis. This is why, according to many accounts, the Hamas-led Palestinian & Israeli analysts say, the Qassam Brigades now communicated regularly to plan actions. By all accounts the operations room is more virtual than real, but spokesmen for three of the groups insisted that the Hamas’s military alliance during the American colonial occupation. There have been frequent clashes between the groups organized a “joint operations room” when Israel began threatening to invade Gaza two or three weeks ago.

At least six other armed groups field soldiers to fight Israeli occupation. There have been frequent clashes between them. The current crisis seems to have pushed the militias to join ranks. Several of the militia members said the groups organized a “joint operations room” when Israel began threatening to invade Gaza two or three weeks ago. By all accounts the operations room is more virtual than real, but spokesmen for three of the groups insisted that senior political and military leaders of the seven militias now communicate regularly to plan actions.

“We are more united now than at any time before,” said Abu Majahed, spokesman for the Salahadin Resistance Committees. Abu Muhammad, the Jabaliya field commander, said the Qassam Brigades was in charge of the operations room because it was “the backbone of the resistance.” Nightly operations are mapped out, and a password is agreed upon for fighters of different factions to identify themselves in the field.

“Despite Ties to Hamas, Militants Aren’t Following Political Leaders”

by Craig S. Smith, NY Times International, Friday July 21, 2006

JABALIYA REFUGEE CAMP, Gaza, July 20 – Five men in black hoods emerged from a dimly lighted street of stark concrete houses and garbage-strewn lots. With Israeli drones buzzing overhead, they kept the meeting short.

“We ask America to stop supporting the Israeli aggressors,” said the leader, who carried a new Czech-made Kalashnikov rifle while another shouldered a new Gaza-made rocket-propelled grenade launcher.

The men are members of the Izzeddine al-Qassam Brigades, the well-armed, highly organized military wing of Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic movement that now governs the West Bank & Gaza Strip. Members of the militia led last month’s raid in which they killed two Israeli soldiers & captured another, setting off the current crisis.

Despite its links to the Palestinian government, Palestinian & Israeli analysts say, the Qassam Brigades does not take orders from the governing leaders of Hamas. This is why, according to many accounts, the Hamas-led government itself was surprised by the Qassam Brigades’ attack against the Israeli military post in June.

“They lost their position as leaders of Hamas when they joined the government,” said Abu Muhammad, a Qassam Brigades field commander in Jabaliya. “New leaders were named in the movement, and they are more senior than the government leaders, even Haniya,” he said, referring to the Palestinian prime minister, Ismail Haniya.

The Qassam Brigades is the Palestinians’ largest & best organized militant group but it is not the only militia operating in the area under Palestinian control. At least six other armed groups field soldiers to fight Israeli occupation. There have been frequent clashes between some.

In the early morning hours of Thursday, April 20, 2006, over 150 officers from the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) raided a Native blockade on the Six Nations reservation, located 20 km southwest of Hamilton, Ontario. They violently arrested 16 Natives, using physical assaults, pepper spray, and tasers. The police were quickly forced to withdraw, however, as hundreds of Six Nations members & allies converged on the site. More blockades were erected around the area, including on Highway 6, consisting of burning tires, vehicles, dismantled electrical pylons, and piles of gravel. A small bridge was also burned down.

The next day, Mohawks on the Tyendinaga reservation, 200 km east of Toronto, blocked a Canadian National (CN) rail line, cutting off freight & passenger service in a major travel corridor. This action stranded thousands of commuters who had to be transported by bus, and cost CN over $100 million a day in lost cargo shipments. The train blockade was removed the next day, but it was a sharp & powerful warning against any further police violence at Six Nations. In Kalamkawice, traffic was disrupted on the Mercer Bridge as warriors hung Unity flags. At the Seaway International bridge, traffic was also disrupted by Akwesasne Mohawks. Many other solidarity protests occurred across the country in the days & weeks that followed, including one on April 26 in Vancouver, during which several hundred people blocked the Lion’s Gate bridge during rush hour.

Six Nations members claimed that a planned $6– million, 600-house subdivision being built by Henco Industries was on unceded Six Nations land, part of a tract that had been provided to them in 1784 by the British for their military alliance during the American colonial revolution. The land had never been surrendered or sold by the Six Nations, but over the years had been cut off & bought & sold to various parties by the government.

Six Nations is one of the largest reserves in Canada, with a population of approximately 20,000. It is comprised of members from all six nations in the Haendersonanee (People of the Longhouse, the 6 Nations Iroquois Confederacy consisting of the Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayugas, and Tuscarora). After the US revolution, British loyalist forces & their allies crossed the border into present-day Canada.

In the spring of 2006, as Henco began construction, members of the Six Nations set up a camp blockading the entrance to the site (February 28). In March, Henco obtained a court injunction ordering the protesters off the site. A deadline was set for March 22, which came & went as the land reclamation continued. On April 19, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty publicly stated that the dispute would be settled in a “peaceful manner.” Within 24 hours, however, the OPP had launched their violent pre-dawn assault.

As negotiations continued following the April 20 raid, regular rallies were held by residents of Caledonia, demanding police dismantle the Native blockades & reopen the highway. Clashes between settler residents & Natives would continue through the spring & into summer, reminiscent of white mob violence during the 1990 Oka Crisis.

On May 22, just hours after dismantling blockades on Highway 6 as an act of goodwill, barricades were re-built & fortified following
hands... As soon as they went for it I just grabbed it dragging me into the police station and they had a Native cop, his wasn't co-operating with them. I was saying "I shall neither peaceful." So I had them carry me everywhere. You could just A: Well, pretty much they had to drag me everywhere cuz 1 that we were peaceful.

Q: What happened once you got to the jail?

A: For sure. The people have maintained that we are not going & that's how they're making it seem, like would be no discussion unless it was on Canada's terms.

Q: You talk a bit about that?

A: That night it was about 4 AM or so, there were 3 of us at the front gate tending the sacred fire and keeping a lookout. That was when the OPP rolled up and about 30 of them swarmed out and then just started arresting people. And what I did, as soon as they put their hands on me, I dropped down to the ground & exercised the right to s— "peaceful resistance" as I'd been taught by you guys in Montreal and that would be a good way to peacefully continue the protest, to show I wasn't gonna leave there willingly but also that I wasn't—seen as we were totally outnumbered—I wasn't gonna fight them back, you know, live and fight another day, and at that point we were still prioring that we were peaceful.

Q: What happened once you got to the jail?

A: Well, pretty much they had to drag me everywhere cuz I wasn't co-operating with them. I was saying "I shall neither resist nor comply with your foreign laws. I shall remain peaceful." So I had them carry me everywhere. You could just tell they were highly pissed off that they had to do that. So they dragged me into the police station and they had a Native cop, his name's Monty, they had him rip my medicine bag from my hands...things got a little rough and violent and we'd had him just let it tear away and they all tried to pry my fingers off but they couldn't. I was even amazed they couldn't...but conducting surveillance. Although released shortly after, OPP claim the incident resulted in serious injury to an officer struck by the vehicle. We estimate 40 corporals to have been involved, murder, dangerous driving, and assault on police were issued for several individuals.

On June 22, it was revealed that the Ontario government had purchased the land & agreed to compensate Hencos Industries as part of its ongoing negotiations with Six Nations. It is estimated that the potential revenue from the project would be $4 million, although the amount paid by the government to Henco has been kept secret. Costs of the dispute itself are estimated at over $12 million, including policing, repairs, & compensation to businesses.

For updates, see: www.mohawknationnews.com

www.sisis.nativeweb.org

For updates, see:

Interview with Kaheheti:io, Mohawk Youth from Kahnawake

Kaheheti:io (He makes a beautiful garden) identifies himself as a 20-year old member of the Bear clan from Kahnawake. Originally one of 16 arrested on April 20, Kaheheti:io was held for 5 days due to a mix-up with police & courts. From Native Solidarity News, CKUT radio in Montreal.

Question: Why did you go to 6 Nations?

Answer: Well, originally we had gone to check on the status of another issue—Red Hill—where they're building a highway through what was found to be our ancestral land...and that's where we found out there was another protest going on near Caledonia, where land had been peacefully occupied.

Q: How long were you there for?

A: I was there for a rough month, a month and a half, at the end, we moved to another location.

Q: Could you talk a bit about that?

A: That night it was about 4 AM or so, there were 3 of us at the front gate tending the sacred fire and keeping a lookout. That was when the OPP rolled up and about 30 of them swarmed out and then just started arresting people. And what I did, as soon as they put their hands on me, I dropped down to the ground & exercised the right to s— "peaceful resistance" as I'd been taught by you guys in Montreal and that would be a good way to peacefully continue the protest, to show I wasn't gonna leave there willingly but also that I wasn't—seen as we were totally outnumbered—I wasn't gonna fight them back, you know, live and fight another day, and at that point we were still prioring that we were peaceful.

Q: What should we be doing?

A: Yeah, that's pretty much how we're making it seem, like they don't wanna reward people for doing something, even though the blockades—like they're trying to say it's all militants & fighters—this was peaceful from the beginning. There was children, elders, there were no weapons whatsoever, and they still want to portray us as a military force & invade us & abducted us from our lands that's when they crossed that line and they turned it up a notch, so we had to follow suit.

Q: And you're from Kahnawake? There was a solidarity action in Kahnawake when the invasion occurred, right?

A: Yeah, that's pretty much how we were making it happen. It happens to our people, if anyone is killed or seriously injured, Canada will have a price to pay. But the fact is, my people are awakening and I think Canada is afraid of that. And I think that as we awake, live, other people will awaken to the oppression, and we who are as a people. We have a rich culture, we still have a lot to contribute in the ways of peace and love and understanding. And these are the things once my people awaken we gonna reclaim—which is the principles of the Gaganerakwah, the Great Law of Peace (Six Nations constitution).

Q: Do you think Canada's afraid that this type of reclamation could happen everywhere?

A: Yeah, in my opinion. I see Canada as being scared, if they say "Ok, you can have your land back," since they stole it, that's gonna be like—boom—game over. They're worried about that. But they gotta realize that the people in Six Nations reclamation aren't going anywhere, so they just gotta deal with that...

largest such Corps in Canada. The first CCO was established in Saskatchewan by RCMP Constable Rick Sanderson and native leader Mike Stash. Sanderson also conducts courses for trainers, many of whom are also police officers. As a result, the RCMP have a strong presence in the Community Cadet Corps program.

Unlike other Cadet Corps, these CCOs are established with the collaboration of local band councils, who provide infrastructure & other resources. According to press reports, a major goal of the program is to enlist the support of the police department as a way to deter their children from becoming involved in gangs, drugs & parties.

While this is understandable, it is not entirely correct. Instead of joining street gangs such as Indian Posse or Red Alert, these youth have joined another, even larger & more deadly gang: the Canadian Armed Forces. This gang is tasked with enforcing the will of the gang leaders (the government & corporations), who continue to loot & plunder not only indigenous lands here, but also those of tribal peoples in Afghanistan & Haiti.

In regards to the image of a more 'positive' lifestyle, it should be noted that alcohol is a major part of military culture, from mass halls to the completion of training exercises, when crates of beer are routinely distributed. In addition, European military culture indoctrinates soldiers with imperialist ideology & blind obedience to authority. If deployed into combat, veterans are often traumatized upon their return and have difficulty reintegrating back into community life. As a result, many turn to alcohol & drugs in order to cope. Overall, there is little positive value in the military for indigenous peoples, which is also a means of assimilation.

An Anti-Military Recruitment Strategy

We will begin in regards to military recruitment of Native youth? There are two approaches which we should consider: co-optation & opposition.

Co-optation involves those who have already undergone such training but who have not joined the regular forces. For the most part, they are naive, misinformed, and colonized. They require education that exposes them to the reality of the United Nations & the existence of an Indigenous resistance movement, a movement where their warrior spirit is both validated & strengthened. These state-military recruits are potential recruits into our resistance movement but who require some level of decolonization.

Secondly, we must implement anti-recruiting measures to stop vulnerable Native youth from being recruited in the first place. This should involve not only educational materials & propaganda, but also the establishment of warrior societies capable of recruiting, training, and organizing indigenous youth. This would involve not only the military movement and provide an alternative to both state-military service & gangsterism (both of which exploit traditional warrior culture).

Aboriginal Military Training Recruits bound for Bold Eagle Militia

by Kerry Bonje

Leader-Post, July 8, 2006

A new list of recruits will be marching out on Sunday. Fifty-two aboriginal youth from northwest Ontario & the western provinces will be arriving in Wainwright, Alta., for six weeks of intensive military training.

The Bold Eagle Militia Training Program—a partnership between various First Nations organizations, the Department of National Defense and Indian & Northern Affairs Canada—was established in 1988 to introduce aboriginal youth to military training.

"It is one of the success stories that has not been talked about," said Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) vice-Chief Lawrence Joseph, adding the program has been a huge success because "it's an example of what First Nations can do." The program has evolved over its 18-year history, like moving from its original location at CFB Dundurn to Wainwright. It has also expanded to include all western provinces and northwest Ontario. Prior to 2005 the program was only available to status First Nations youth, but has since opened up to include all aboriginal youth including Metis & Inuit.

Despite the changes, the FSIN has retained the "mother" organization and is responsible for all the administrative work because Bold Eagle was developed in Saskatchewan.

Bold Eagle provides select youth with "meaningful summer employment" that they can use to launch any career, explained the vice-chief. Many graduates of the program have opted to start a career in the military. Bold Eagle's six-week course emphasizes culture, self-discipline, teamwork skills, physical fitness, and self-confidence.

Prior to the military training, candidates participate in a week-long cultural camp conducted by First Nations elders. The military training is conducted by military personnel.

Bold Eagle is popular among youth and FSIN receives a large volume of applicants each year, but due to space limitations only a select few are chosen.
The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) was first established in 1980 in Ottawa. It claims to be the national representative of Indigenous peoples across Canada, one that fights for our title & rights. In reality, it is a state-funded organization comprised of Indian Act band council chiefs, who act as neocolonial agents in the interests of government & corporations.

In order to understand the role of organizations such as the AFN & band councils, we need to know our history & be aware of current government strategies in regards to Indigenous peoples.

**Indian Act**

The Indian Act was first passed in 1876 by Canada. It was, and is, a separate set of laws for Indigenous peoples covering virtually all aspects of daily life (apartheid). It was through the Indian Act that reservations, band councils, and status were imposed. It was also used to ban ceremonies such as the Potlatch & Sundance, as well as fund-raising for land claims.

Following the defeat of Indigenous military resistance (by 1890), the Indian Act became the basis for government control of Natives. Despite this, it was always intended as a temporary set of laws, to be used only until Natives had been successfully assimilated into Canadian society.

**The ‘White Paper’**

In 1969, Canada revealed a plan for abolishing the Indian Act & phasing out reserved lands. Known as the ‘White Paper’, it ignited protests by Natives across the country. Many band chiefs & councils also opposed it. Opposition was so strong not because Natives wanted the Indian Act, but because its removal would so clearly mean their assimilation into Canadian society.

Abolishing the Indian Act would have removed the special legal status for Natives & reservation land. Many feared dispossession of their last remaining land base: the reserves. Removing their special legal status would mean the land could then be bought & sold on the free market. Band councils also opposed the White Paper because it would mean cutting them off direct state funding, & shifting the financial burden for governance onto them. Some were also forced to oppose the White Paper due to grassroots community pressure. Canada withdrew the ‘White Paper’ & claimed it would not be official policy. Despite this, the assimilation of Indigenous peoples remains Canada’s goal.

**The Role of Collaborator Chiefs**

Canada’s control over Natives has taken many forms, including police & military violence, churches, Residential Schools, & Indian Agents. Today, chiefs & councils acting as collaborators have become a vital part of the colonial regime’s ability to control Native peoples.

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**Resist the Assimilation of First Nations**

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**All Hail The New Chief!**

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**Chief Executive Officer, that is!**
Colonialism always prefers to deal with collaborator chiefs, who can more effectively control their people than can direct government agencies. This is most often done by setting up puppet governments comprised of Native collaborators. The state gives its full support and recognizes only them as the legitimate representatives of the colonized. It is a common practice of colonial powers historically and in Asia, Africa & South America. It is sometimes referred to as neocolonialism (see text box below).

These chiefs serve to pacify & confuse Natives, appearing to fight for ‘rights & title’ when in reality they are working right along with the government & corporations. Many are themselves politicians, businessmen, and lawyers, who gain wealth, status & power from the colonial system. This involves acting as a legal agent (i.e., as a band council or political organization) on behalf of Natives, legalizing the theft & exploitation of our ancestral territories. By helping government impose its policies & strategies on Natives, these types of collaborators aid in the assimilation of their own people.

Assimilation of First Nations

In 1969, many chiefs & councilors opposed abolishing the Indian Act; they helped mobilize thousands of Natives into struggle against the ‘White Paper’. Today, many claim it is an obstacle to economic development and should be scrapped. Already, bands have signed agreements that remove them from the authority of the Indian Act (i.e., self-government & modern-day treaties). What’s changed?

Since the 1960s, tens of thousands of Natives have passed through colleges & universities. Many were trained in business, administration, or law, skills which were useful for their careers in the Indian Act system as chiefs, councilors, or clerks. During the same time, Indian Agents were phased out and control over local governance was transferred to the band council itself.

Today, band councils handle multi-million dollar budgets & are involved in many diverse businesses, including logging, fishing, mining, airlines, garbage dumps, oil & gas, etc. In many cases, they have entered into partnerships with transnational corporations. This development has only been possible through their assimilation into the colonial society (which they seek to perpetuate upon their own people).

The assimilation of chiefs & councilors is not hard to see: business suits, transmonts, fancy hotels, etc., are all signs of corporate culture & reflect the real interests of the Aboriginal business elite. In order for them to achieve ever-greater wealth, status & power, they promote the assimilation of their own people into the capitalist economic system as slaves for the corporations.

Self-Government

Today, band councils & their political organizations (i.e., the AFN, First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, etc.) are selling away our lands & resources as part of self-government or modern-day treaty negotiations. They are surrendering our rights & title through their constant erosion in these negotiations & agreements (which always recognize the ultimate power & authority of Canada, its provinces, and its constitution).

Portrayed as some form of sovereignty & nationhood, self-government is the exact opposite. It transforms band councils into municipal governments under provincial & federal control. Reserve lands become fee simple property that can be bought & sold on the free market. As part of self-government, bands are expected to attain economic independence & the ability to raise their own revenue. This is accomplished by giving them greater legal & economic capacity to sell or lease land, set up partnerships with corporations (i.e., logging, oil & gas, mining), exploit natural resources, impose taxation, etc.

All of this involves significant changes in legal codes & political administration. For this reason, new laws on First Nations governance, financial accountability, etc. are now being enacted, which are designed to facilitate the expansion of band councils to municipal governments.

Sound familiar? It should. It’s the same goal as the 1876 Indian Act and the 1969 White Paper: the legal, political & economic assimilation of Indigenous peoples into Canada. Some bands are already well advanced in their self-government deals, including the Nux’a, Sooche, Westbank, Nunavut, James Bay Cree & Inuit, as well as the Gwich’in & other Yukon bands.

Money & Economic Development

High levels of poverty, unemployment, & social dysfunction among Indigenous peoples are used by the state, corporations, & the Aboriginal business elite to promote ever-greater corporate invasion of our territories under the guise of ‘economic development’. The solution, we are told, is money. The more the better. But is that really true? In Alberta during the 1970s, large deposits of oil & gas began to be exploited by energy corporations. In some cases, they made deals with chiefs to drill on reserve lands, providing royalties to bands. By the early 1980s, some bands were receiving millions of dollars annually from the corporations.

Conclusion

It is our duty as warriors to defend & protect our people, territory & way of life. Abuse & violence against women & children, whether in the form of attitudes or actions, must be challenged. The traditional role & status of women in Indigenous society must be reaffirmed & strengthened. The church & state have a long history of institutionalized violence & sexual abuse against our people, which has resulted in intergenerational patterns of abuse within our communities. The criminal justice system has proven itself incompetent & incapable of protecting Indigenous women & children. This struggle will necessitate confronting both abusers in the community and the source of systemic abuse itself: the colonial system.

Sources


Conquest; Sexual Violence & American Indian Genocide, by Andrea Smith, Smith, South End Press, Cambridge, MA, 2005


Sexual Assault in Indian Country, a report by the US-based National Sexual Violence Resource Center (available from www.nsvrc.org)

Speaking of Abuse, pamphlet by BC Legal Services Society, January 2004

Stolen Sisters, Amnesty International Canada, 2004

Also, Check Out these Resources:

Websites

www.sistersinprint.ca (Native Women’s Association of Canada web-site on Missing/Murdered Women)

www.nsvrc.org (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, US)

www.justiceforgirls.com (focus on children & youth)

www.prostitutionresearch.com (focus on prostitution with other info)

Video

• Stolen Lives, by Shona Miko, National Film Board of Canada, 1999. Video documentary on child prostitution in Vancouver. 45 min.


Books


• Behind Closed Doors; Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, Kamloops, BC, 2000

• Conquest; Sexual Violence & American Indian Genocide, by Andrea Smith, South End Press, Cambridge, MA, 2005


• Behind Closed Doors; Stories from the Kamloops Indian Residential School, Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, Kamloops, BC, 2000

• Conquest; Sexual Violence & American Indian Genocide, by Andrea Smith, South End Press, Cambridge, MA, 2005
DIA: Domestic Internal Abuse

"Domestic violence & sexual abuse among Native Americans have become a problem of epidemic proportions that effects both old & young..."

Charon Asetoyer, Seminole Tribune, June 17, 1999

"It is commonly known throughout Indian Country that 90% of Indian women in chemical dependency treatment are victims of rape & childhood sexual abuse."

Terri Henry (Cherokee, quoted in Sexual Assault in Indian Country)

It would be a grave mistake to see violence & abuse against Native women only at the level of serial killers & unknown predatory males stalking sex-trade workers. In its 1989 survey, the Ontario Native Women's Association found that 80% of Indigenous women had experienced some form of family violence, with 53% reporting they had been physically abused. According to most data, the vast majority of abuse & violence against women & children in general is perpetrated by male partners or family members (with most of this going unreported).

The European family structure, in which the man is traditionally the head of the family ("His home is his castle"), itself enables patriarchal violence & abuse to occur, while at the same time concealing it behind closed doors. Every household then becomes a separate kingdom, in which the levels of abuse rest entirely on the nature of the individual male in command. Community division & social isolation enable this abuse to continue, along with tolerance, indifference, or outright denial, by family & community members.

In regards to violence & abuse against Native women & children, it is in the family & community structures where real change must be made, for it is also here that the vast majority of abuse occurs. It is from the home that many Indigenous children & youth attempt to escape in the first place, through gangs, drugs, alcohol, & urbanization. Along with poverty, it is this domestic violence & abuse that propels so many Indigenous women & children into drugs & prostitution.

Identifying Abusive Relationships

Domestic violence & abuse is based on power & control; usually, it results from the efforts of a male to control & assert power over women &/or children. Alcohol & drugs are often a part of this abuse, and are seen as contributing factors to the loss of self-control associated with violent & abusive acts. This power & control is manifested in different ways:

- Psychological Abuse includes intimidation, controlling behavior, isolation from family & friends, possessiveness & intense jealousy, control of money & other resources, as well as verbal abuse such as threats, degrading language or constant criticism.
- Physical Abuse includes acts such as slapping, punching, kicking, shoving, etc. It can result in assaults & death.
- Sexual Abuse involves forced sexual acts such as molesting & rape, or violent & degrading sex.

Safety Plan

For women or youth in a violent & abusive relationship or situation, they must devise a safety & escape plan for themselves and their children (if any). These might include:

- Talk to others that you trust so that they are aware of your situation.
- Telling trusted friends & neighbors to intervene or alert others if they hear or see violent assaults occurring.
- Plan a safe location to go to if you decide to leave. It may be a local transition house/women's shelter, a relative or friend, where your partner cannot locate or approach you.
- Acquire money & resources to aid in transportation, food, etc.
- Packing bag for yourself & children and storing at friend's.
- Putting ID or important documents (i.e., custody papers) in a safe place, both your own and child (if any).

Take Action Against Abusers!

- Men who abuse women and/or children must be exposed. Take or acquire photographs of individuals confirmed to be abusers and anonymously make posters revealing their actions. Share information & knowledge, both within & between communities. This alerts others to the problem and enables them to better protect themselves and/or children. It may also result in more severe consequences for abusers, so every effort should be made to confirm charges against specific individuals.
- Form a group of trusted friends to take direct action against violence & abuse when necessary.
- Challenge patriarchal attitudes & beliefs in the family, at school, at work, and in the community. This includes beliefs that men are inherently smarter, stronger, better, etc., and that women are naturally inferior, stupid, weak, etc. It also includes views that women are sexual objects to be exploited by men (i.e., the glamorization of prostitution & pimping as promoted through corporate entertainment).
- Whether you are male or female, work to promote women's leadership & participation in the resistance movement. In Chiapas, Mexico, many commanders in the Zapatista Army of National Liberation are Mayan women.

Far from alleviating the problems in these communities, this money served to create new problems. In Edmonton, a rash of suicides made this area known for having the country’s highest suicide rates in the mid-80s. Drugs & alcoholism, division and internal violence increased; by the late 1990s, Hobobema was known for its gang violence, including robberies, drug dealing, assaults & killings.

On the other hand, the Lubicon Cree in northern Alberta were, until the 1970s, largely self-sufficient. Some 80-90% of the community were self-reliant, relying largely on hunting, trapping & fishing. This all changed in the 70s, when energy corporations built roads into the north & began operations.

By the mid-80s, the Lubicon were 90% dependent on social assistance. They were unable to rely on traditional food gathering methods as most of the wildlife had been forced out of their hunting areas by industrial logging, oil & gas drilling, road-building, etc. They were also sick & dying, with high rates of disease & suicide.

Clearly, economic development is not the solution. Based largely on resource exploitation or some form of industrial activity, economic development always has a negative social & ecological impact. Money can’t solve problems that don’t arise from poverty. The severe social dysfunction affecting our communities—drug & alcohol abuse, suicide, imprisonment, disease, etc.—may be compounded by poverty, but are not simply the result of a lack of money. Instead, they are the direct result of colonialism & genocide. This includes not only the Indian Act & Indian Residential Schools, but also the ongoing dispossession of our ancestral lands & their destruction through economic development. These factors lead to loss of culture & identity, which contributes to social dysfunction & makes Natives vulnerable to assimilation.

Conclusion

In the context of colonialism, there are no legitimate representatives of our peoples on any regional, national or international level. The AFN & band councils are illegitimate entities, existing only through the Indian Act and state funding, both of which are the result of colonization (a crime under international law). The main function of the AFN is to assist in developing & implementing government policies on a national level. Without groups such as the AFN, Canada would have far greater difficulty organizing its colonial system. Without the band councils, it would have far greater trouble maintaining its colonial system.
**Neocolonialism**

Another term for collaborator chiefs is *neocolonialism*, which literally means a 'new colonialism'. It involves the use of state-funded Native organizations, governance & business to indirectly control Indigenous peoples. The state (through Canada) has always been involved in Native affairs. To this day, Canada provides billions of dollars annually to literally buy off, co-opt & corrupt our communities, organizations & movements. The late Howard Adams, a Metis militant & writer, explains neocolonialism in his book *Tortured People*:

"Neocolonialism involves the use of Natives to control their own people. In general, it means giving some of the benefits of the dominant society to a small, privileged minority, in return for their help in making sure that the state controls the colonized people. Neocolonialism is a system in which the colonized people have no control over their lives—economically, socially, politically, or culturally. The power to make decisions in these important areas of daily life is almost totally in the hands of others, either the state or corporations & business. The state is willing to share some of the wealth of a racist system with a few Natives in return for a more effective method of controlling the majority."

The most threatening & effective form of neocolonialism devised by the state has been its efforts to intervene & control popular Native organizations which had been previously independent. They began with core grants to help the organizations; then the elected leaders of the organizations got larger & larger salaries—making them dependent on the state just as the Native bureaucrats in government were. As the years went by more money was provided to organizations—money for housing, economic development & service programs, etc.

"The most important effect of government funding, or state intervention, is that the state, by making grants, can determine to a large extent what strategy the organizations will use. It is no coincidence that when organizations were independent of government money in the mid-sixties, they followed a militant strategy which confronted government. Now, after twenty years of grants, they are following a strategy that requires subservience to the state." Howard Adams, *Tortured People; the Politics of Colonization*, p. 56-57 (*Theutys Books 1999*)

**AFN Collaborators Take Trip to Israel**

In February & March, 2006, an AFN delegation traveled to Israel on a "solidarity trip." According to Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, "Indigenous people in Canada have much in common with the people of Israel, including a respect of the land & their languages... This mission is an excellent opportunity for us to share our values & our traditional ways of life." Among the participants were Fontaine; Bev Jacobs of the Native Women's Association of Canada; Rick O'Brien, Yukon AFN regional chief; Donna Wattunee of Industry Canada/Aboriginal Business Canada; band chiefs Peter Barlow (New Brunswick), Kelly Bird (Saskatchewan), Tina Levesque (Manitoba), and others. No mention was made of Israel's own apartheid regime it has imposed over Palestinians, or the ongoing military attacks & violence in the Occupied Territories.

**Systemic Social Problems Require Systemic Social Change**

Considering the nature & extent of the problem, are the solutions offered by groups such as Amnesty International, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, and other organizations, really viable? Will more money & police adequately protect Indigenous women & children? As violence & abuse against Indigenous women & children continues at an extreme rate, the answer appears to be no. Violence against Indigenous women & children is not a new phenomenon. Although we would be naive to suggest it never existed in pre-colonial societies, its expansion to a social & systemic problem most certainly has its roots in the violent colonization of the Americas by Europeans, beginning in 1492. European colonization was fueled by racial & patriarchal ideology that was legally & morally sanctioned by the Christian church.

These beliefs served to dehumanize Indigenous people & instill in colonial settlers a profound fear & hatred. Indigenous women were seen as 'squares' & whores, sexually available for deprived Europeans away from their homes & families. Now, after twenty years of grants, they are following a militant strategy which confronted government. Prior to colonization, most Indigenous nations were matrilineal, with women having far greater autonomy & power than their European counterparts. Indigenous women were frequently in positions of leadership in family, community, trade, military & ceremonial life. Under colonization, all this changed as European culture was imposed, including patriarchal forms of social organization. Christian missionaries played an important part in this process. Patrarchy was institutionalized under laws such as the Indian Act, which recognized only male leaders and placed the most assimilated of these into positions of power & authority through the band councils. Native women, in fact, were not even considered legal persons and were not allowed to own land or participate in band councils or even elections. In addition, Native women who married a non-band member (Native or non-Native) lost their status, a measure designed to further undermine their position & influence in Indigenous society. Combined, these measures disempowered women politically, socially, culturally & economically, making them increasingly dependent on men & the colonial system.

By the late 1800s, Residential Schools had been established in both the US and Canada to forcibly assimilate Indigenous children into European society. Run by the churches, where staff had absolute control & were accountable to no one, the results were widespread sexual, physical & mental abuse of these children. Parents were not allowed to visit their children, and were not even considered legal persons, so they were not even allowed to visit. The result was widespread intergenerational patterns of physical & sexual abuse in Indigenous communities that continue to this day.

If we agree the problem is a systemic & social one, this means that there must be systemic & social changes made. Not only must we raise awareness & understanding in an effort to change individual views & practices, we must also address ourselves to making the necessary systemic change. This must involve not only our communities, but also the entire colonial system that maintains oppression & exploitation. It is here that the result is not simply violence against Indigenous women & children originate. More money & programs, more police, will not help to make these changes. Instead, they retard our ability as a people to come to grips with this phenomenon, even if they are able to capture some of the perpetrators & provide shelter for a few women. Ultimately, they will increase our dependence on the colonial regime while perpetuating division within our communities, at the same time disenabling us of our ability to self-organize & take action.

INCITE!, a US-based women's organization, has stated that, "Law enforcement approaches to violence against women may deter some acts of violence in the short term. However, as an overall strategy for ending violence against women criminalization has not worked. The reliance on state-funding... has increased the professionalization of the anti-violence movement & alienated it from its community-organization, social justice roots..."

The reliance on the criminal justice system has taken power away from women's ability to organize collectively to stop violence & has invested this power within the state. The result is that women who seek redress in the criminal justice system feel disempowered & alienated. It has also promoted an individualistic approach... Such that the only way people think they can intervene in stopping violence is to call the police. This reliance has shifted our focus from developing ways communities can collectively respond to violence.

(Conquest, *Sexual Violence & American Indian Genocide*, pp. 171-72)

In the past, before colonialism, our peoples had the ability to protect ourselves from both external & internal threats. People were held accountable for anti-social crimes and could seek refuge behind closed doors or culturally. Under colonialism, this ability to define ourselves has been dismantled along with the breakdown of family & community structure.

Fall/Winter 2006 WARRIOR 16
Commenting on the potential for self-government, Sharon McVor, spokeswoman for the Native Women's Association of Canada stated "It's really scary to know that these guys are going to be in complete control, they are going to be able to do whatever they want" ("Indians fear justice..." The Vancouver Sun, July 31, 1992).

Other reports on sexual violence & abuse in Indigenous communities reached similar conclusions: "Today, there are northern communities in which the entire female population has been sexually assaulted by males who are living in the community with them. These men are their brothers, cousins, uncles, fathers & grandfathers. Some of these abusers hold powerful positions in band councils—most of them are held unaccountable for their assaults... Often, women feel powerless to effect change, and are threatened with further violence if they attempt to stop the abuse." (Jackie Lynn, Colonialism & the Sexual Exploitation of First Nation's Women, August 1998).

"A mental health worker for Indian Health Service reported, "It is the expert opinion of this writer after a records review & talking to many other health care providers, that rape, sexual assault & incest occur at a much higher incidence than generally thought. Sexual abuse at a young age is quite frequent and almost always involves a relative such as a father, brother, cousin, uncle, or grandfather.""

Phyllis Old Cross Dog (Sexual Assault in Indian Country)

In his 1995 sentencing of dormitory supervisor Arthur Plint, who abused many Native children in the Port Alberni Residential School, BC Supreme Court Justice Douglas Hogarth used the term "institutionalized pedophilia" to describe the Residential School system overall, and the systemic sexual abuse by school staff & church officials. That this would continue well after the last such schools were closed, and as many survivors gained positions of power & authority in their communities, appears logical considering how widespread patterns of intergenerational abuse have been.

The Case of Renate Auger & Jack Cram

One of the first ‘official’ allegations of such a pedophile ring surfaced in 1994 when Renate Auger, a Cree lawyer living in Vancouver, filed a writ in the BC Supreme Court charging judges, lawyers & officials of the BC Law Society with aiding & protecting pedophiles, including a teacher, doctor, other lawyers & judges. Auger named the prestigious Vancouver Club (a private businessmen’s club) as a major site for this activity. Auger had also challenged the BC courts regarding errors & irregularities in the 1991 Delgamuukw land title case, specifically that judge McClellan, several lawyers & members of the crown council all had associations with the same law firm and had conspired to fix the outcome of the case.

All of Auger’s allegations were dismissed and she was subsequently disbarred from practicing law, the pretext being that her accounts were not in order. Auger retained the services of lawyer Jack Cram, who was subsequently assaulted & arrested by sheriffs in court while defending her, in April 1994. During one exchange with judge Howard Callaghan, Cram, referring to a chief justice that had protected an accused charged with sex crimes against children, stated: "They should put him in jail right now. The chief justice should be in jail. Aiding & abetting an alleged pedophile." "I don’t want to hear that," Callaghan shot back, unable to restrain himself any longer. "It’s preposterous."

"Let’s try this one in front of a jury and see what they think," replied Cram... "You may not mind the chief justice aiding and abetting pedophiles. I can only think of one reason that may be..." ("Jack Cram Crazy?") by Marc Edge, Georgia Straight, May 27, 1994)

Bill Lightbown, a Kwantlen elder present in court during the sheriff’s assault & arrest of Cram, stated to the sheriffs: "You should be ashamed of yourselves because you know as well as anyone else in there that what happened there was a disgrace..." ("Ts’Peten Defense Committee press release, March 17, 1997).

After, Cram was arrested while returning from a radio show interview about the case. Although police claim he was arrested without incident, Cram has stated he was assaulted, forced into an unmarked van, and drugged. He was placed in a psychiatric ward at Vancouver General Hospital and was released after 1 week, only to find himself disbarred as well (this also occurred to lawyer Bruce Clark during a court appearance following the 1995 standoff at Gustafsen Lake/Ts’Peten). While under arrest, Cram’s office was taken over by members of the Law Society, who also took evidence implicating two judges, according to Cram.

Cram himself had first become well-known in 1986 after winning damages for a client who alleged that WAC Bennet—a former BC premier—had forced him to sell property after having him thrown into a psychiatric ward. This case brought Lightbown and was the peak in a highly successful 25-year career, with most of it cashed in involving lawsuits against the government. According to Cram’s law firm partner at the time of his disbarment, Ellayne Crompton, ‘Jack was stumped on big time because he had proof that could put away Supreme Court judges, and the powerful men they protect. This goes to the highest levels of power’ (Appendix VI, Hidden from History).

Sell-Out Chiefs Sign Deals with RCMP

In the last couple of years, sell-out chiefs have signed policing agreements with Canada’s national police force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Known as Public Safety Cooperation Protocols, the first was a national deal between the Assembly of First Nations & the RCMP, signed in 2004. The second was a similar deal inked between the RCMP & three BC organizations: the First Nations Summit, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, & the BC-AFN, in 2005.

The agreements are more or less identical & establish a working relationship between the RCMP & the organizations that signed on. In the first section it is stated that "The purpose of this Protocol is to establish trusting & reciprocal relationships... with the goal of either preventing situations involving conflict... or resolving disputes which do develop at the earliest possible opportunity." This is to be achieved, in part, by establishing "ongoing communications by exchanging information... so as to strengthen local, regional, national policing, agencies, & organizations... and the establishment of a Joint AFN/RCMP Crisis Response Team..." (quotes from AFN-RCMP 2004 Protocol).

In the BC deal (signed by Ed John, Doug Kelly, Dave Porter, Stewart Phillip, Robert Shintah, Mike Retasket, & Shawn Atleo), it is stated that the role of First Nations/band councils in BC will be to "strengthen the shared partnership at a regional & local level of ongoing communication with the RCMP, in particular to identify point persons to liaise with the RCMP... to provide information & suggestions to the RCMP... on conflict prevention, crisis management & resolution; to assist in the identification of mutually beneficial solutions... and to establish a Working Group comprised of First Nations in BC representatives to facilitate a conflict or crisis management process, cross-cultural training, awareness, & communication..."

In a section on Operational Objectives, the first is to "identify situations that could lead to crisis." The second is to "Exchange information & advice on how to prevent crisis from occurring." If a conflict does occur, the objectives are to identify solutions, to provide advice & recommendations, as well as "timely responses." If intervention occurs, the agreement sets guidelines for more information gathering through debriefings in order to "acquire skills & knowledge to address lessons learned from past incidents, as well as to manage crisis more effectively."

In a section on Operational Arrangements, it is stated that "the Parties will establish & maintain a network of contact/resource people who are able to act promptly when a crisis arises... The Parties will develop such tools as will effectively address issues related to public & community safety such as a) the development of collaborative & working relationships; b) the development of training tools such as orientation manuals & workshops including Aboriginal culture, practices & traditions; c) the sharing of lessons learned/best practices of dispute resolutions... The Parties will enhance communications between First Nations Government, local, regional & national community policing agencies & organizations to strengthen shared partnerships.

What kind of conflict or crisis are the RCMP most concerned about? Clearly, it is Indigenous resistance that represents the greatest type of crisis that could confront a colonial regime & its security forces. We can see this in the largest deployments of police in recent history: Oka, Gustafsen Lake, Ipperwash, Burnt Church, Six Nations... The basis of any counter-insurgency campaign is intelligence gathered from informants & collaborators. These protocols formalize the role of Native political organizations & band councils in providing intelligence to police, as well as assisting in developing strategies, tactics & techniques for police repression..."
Violence & Abuse Against Indigenous Women & Children: A Legacy of Colonialism & Apartheid

"Sexual abuse of First Nation’s children is at crisis proportions. This form of violence is a legacy of colonialism." Jackie Lynn, Colonialism & the Sexual Exploitation of Canada’s First Nations Women

"Discrimination & violence against Indigenous women is Canada’s untold human rights issue." Alex Neve, Amnesty International Canada

Like European society itself, scratch the surface of violence and abuse against Indigenous women & children, and you will quickly find a dark world of corruption, exploitation, perversion & depravity. One that exists at a broad social level as well as in the family household. Sexual violence & abuse against Indigenous women & children has reached proportions that some describe as epidemic. The vast majority of this occurs in the family home, with most of it never being reported. This problem is especially prevalent in Indigenous communities due to the legacy of colonialism.

Sexual abuse of women & children is also part of a multi-billion dollar global industry, involving organized crime groups, prostitution, sex tourism, pedophile rings, massage parlors, escort services, pornography, human trafficking & slavery, etc. Due to impoverishment, family & community dysfunction, trauma, & subsequent drug addiction, many Indigenous women & children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation through prostitution.

Yet, whatever form this violence & abuse takes, the most terrible acts occur behind closed doors, out of sight & out of mind. It’s easy to ignore, or rationalize that it doesn’t “appear” very widespread. When it is talked about, people don’t want to hear about it. Many don’t even want to think about it.

As disturbing as this phenomenon is, we must confront it. There is no doubt that violence & abuse against Indigenous women & children is a primary factor in the crisis of social dysfunction gripping our communities, both urban & rural, including alcohol & drugs, suicide, gangs, prostitution, imprisonment, mental & physical health problems, etc. This dysfunction has a negative impact on our resistance movement & seriously undermines our ability to organize & fight. If our struggle is ever to advance, it must come to terms with violence & abuse against women & children at the family & community level.

The cases of judge David Ramsey, bishop O’Connor and the RCMP officers in Kitimat & Prince George area are especially disturbing considering the murders & disappearances along Highway 16. The very authorities that the people turn to for protection are morally corrupted and directly involved in the sexual exploitation of young Indigenous women & children. Lamken’s comment that this is just the “tip of the iceberg” indicates that the problem is far greater than has been reported by the corporate media.

Chief Justices & Corrupt Chiefs: Partners in Crime?

In 1999, one independent BC interior newspaper, The Radical, did report on allegations of an organized trade in sex in the Prince George area involving judges, doctors, lawyers, police, and even band councils. The paper was forced to close down after one of the accused—Ed John, a long-time chief of the Tl’etinqox band (near Prince George) and head of the First Nations Summit—launched a lawsuit. Ironically, Ed John was named minister of Child & Family Services in November 2000, just as the allegations against him were becoming more public. For those involved in exposing Ed John & others, his appointment as an unelected minister “brought to light the extent of official protection for pedophiles in public office, and the systemic nature of this crime” (see Appendix VI: Evidence of crimes against aboriginal children, including pedophilia, Hidden from History). These allegations have been echoed by others over the years, including Squamish elder Harriet Nahane, who has stated that she saw young Native girls being removed from the reserve to serve as prostitutes for wealthy businessmen connected to the Vancouver Club. James Craven, a Blackfoot & constitutional lawyer, has corroborated this story & stated: “It has been alleged with considerable supporting evidence, that some of the same forces involved in trafficking young Indian boys & girls for the rich & powerful pedophiles are also involved in key aspects of the BC Treaty Commission as well as being involved in using isolated reserves for the landing & distribution of drugs...” ("Reprisals due to exposure of pedophile ring," Statement by James Craven, August 3, 1998)

In 1994, two elders of the Tsahltat band on Vancouver Island stated that “Edward John & Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council members Ron Hamilton & Charlie Thompson have... embezzled money from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs & the federal Department of Indian Affairs to finance an extensive drug trafficking & pedophile network” that sells drugs on Native reserves & supplies Native children to wealthy clients in Vancouver, Victoria, Whistler, and other areas (quoted in Appendix VI, Hidden from History). Similar claims were made in Vancouver by speakers at a public tribunal on Residential Schools held in 1998, organized by the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities (IHRAAM, a United Nations NGO with the Economic & Social Council), including Frank Martin & Helen Michel, Harriet Nahane, and four others.

According to Martin, “Ed John sponsors drug trafficking on northern reserves using Treaty Commission & Indian Affairs money. He’s the power up there... but for Ed John to keep power he needs to manipulate drugs & the cops” (Appendix VI, Hidden from History).

Allegations of an organized drug & sex-trade involving government, business, as well as band chiefs, are not so far fetched and fit within systemic & intergenerational patterns of abuse. Many current chiefs & councilors are survivors of Residential Schools, and some have been convicted of sexual crimes, yet still remained in power. In reality, however, most sexual abuse in Native communities goes unreported, with perpetrators rarely being charged & convicted.

In 1992, for example, Native women on reserves around Victoria spoke out about concerns that sentencing circles, proposed as an alternative to imprisonment & comprised of selected elders, would be co-opted by band councils to protect male family members accused of sex crimes: “Sanich Indians fear an experiment in native justice... will turn into a cover-up of sex abuse. Native social workers, elders, women & court workers worry their leaders will use a BC government project to keep assault charges within the community.

“Native women from Saanich Peninsula reserves say they live in fear of powerful band members who pressure & intimidate women not to report instances of assault & sexual abuse. They say crimes such as rape & child molestation are covered up by sexual favors, most victims have yet to speak publicly because they live in fear of telephone threats, of their doors being kicked in and of their children being molested, says Mills Henry, a Paqashinig band member. The evidence points to widespread corruption, says Rhonda Bowie, a Tsawout native who has laid sexual assault charges against her uncle, considered an elder and leader in the native Shaker church. “I don’t believe this justice system helps anyone. All it does is protect the offenders.”” ("Indians fair justice experiment will hush sex abuse charges," The Vancouver Sun, July 31, 1992)
Amnesty recommended that more research be done, that police receive culture-sensitive training, that more Native police be hired, and that the government ensure adequate social & health services for Aboriginals, and especially Native women. Also in 2004, the Native Women’s Association of Canada began its Sisters in Spirit Campaign to “raise awareness of alarming high rates of violence against Aboriginal women in Canada.” The group subsequently received $5-million from the federal government to carry out this work.

Overall, the main recommendations for dealing with this phenomenon have been to increase government funding for services & programs for Native women (including shelters & crisis lines), to increase policing, and to raise public awareness. None of these deal with the fundamental causes of violence against Indigenous women, however. The problem is systemic & social, deeply rooted in European history (see "Roots of Patriarchal Violence" article). It is also deeply rooted within our own communities. To better understand how institutionalized the problem is, consider the following cases:

- In 2005, former RCMP officer Gary Stevens plead guilty to sexual assault of an underage girl. The allegations were first made in April 2004 while Stevens was a member of the RCMP’s Kitimat, BC, detachment.

- In 2005, two RCMP officers were suspended during an investigation into allegations they were buying sex from young prostitutes in Prince George, BC. Lee Lakman, a spokeswomen for the Canadian Association of Sexual AssaultCounselors (CASAC) stated that this was "just the tip of the iceberg," referring also to the case of judge David Ramsey ("2 Mouties suspended in "misconduct" probe," by Jared Shuffio, The Province, May 22, 2005).

- In May 2004, David William Ramsey, a BC Provincial Court judge in Prince George, pleaded guilty to buying sex from and assaulting 4 Indigenous girls & youth aged 12, 14, 15, & 16, who had him in court. These attacks had occurred between 1992 & 2001. As part of a plea bargain, Ramsey was sentenced to just 7 years and became eligible for parole in 2006. Despite the first complaint being made in 1999, when the RCMP began an investigation, Ramsey was not removed from his official position until 2002.

- On February 17, 2000, two sisters, Doreen LeClair & Corrine McKeown, both Aboriginal, repeatedly called Winnipeg’s 911 emergency number to request police protection from an estranged boyfriend. Although they called 5 times throughout the day, both were killed.

- In a 1996 trial for two white men charged with beating to death Pamela Jean George, a Salteaux mother of two whose deaths were related to alcohol poisoning.

- In 1988 Jordan was convicted. of manslaughter in the death of Vanessa Lee Buckner, 27, who was found naked in a Vancouver hotel room with a blood alcohol level 11 times the legal limit for driving. Jordan has also been convicted of rape, indecent assault, abduction, hit & run, drunk driving, and car theft.

- In June 2000, he was charged with sexual assault, negligence causing bodily harm & administering a noxious substance—alcohol—while drinking with a woman in a Victoria hotel. All charges were dropped in October of that year due to lack of evidence. Then, in November, police found Jordan trying to drink with a woman in another Victoria hotel, a breach of his court-imposed conditions. In May 2001, he was sentenced to 15 months in jail and was out in 2002 on probation.

- In 1992, charges of sexual assault were stayed against Prince George Catholic Church bishop Hubert O’Connor. He had been accused by former students at the St. Joseph’s Residential School near Williams Lake of molesting them in the 1960s. The charges were dropped after Crown prosecutors failed to fully disclose all evidence to the defense. Complaints also stated that the Crown had failed to notify them or witnesses about important developments in the case and were generally negligent in prosecuting the case. O’Connor was the highest ranking official in the Catholic church to ever be charged with sex crimes.

These cases, along with those in Vancouver, illustrate a number of important points. They show the targeted abuse & exploitation of primarily Indigenous women, as well as the extent to which this abuse permeates all levels of colonial society (from downtown losers to cops, judges & priests). Not only are government officials & police incompetent in their investigation & punishment of these anti-social crimes, there is a clear pattern of their involvement as perpetrators.

Highway of Tears

Since the 1980s, some 32 women, mostly Aboriginal, have disappeared along Highway 16 between Prince Rupert & Prince George, in northern BC. Officially, 9 of these, aged 14-25, are under investigation. All but one were Aboriginal. In 2005, a Take Back the Highway march was held to draw attention to the issue. In 2006, the killings & disappearances along Hwy. 16—dubbed the “Highway of Tears”—received national & international media attention following the most recent case, that of 14-year old Aieah Saric-Augur. The young Native women went missing on February 2, 2006, and her body was found 10 days later. Community members began to organize. A walk was held along the highway, and calls for action began to sound. This prompted the government, along with RCMP, local municipalities, and band councils, to organize a public symposium in Prince George in March 2006.

In June 2006, a report was released based on recommendations made at the public symposium held in March. It cited poverty & a lack of social activities in isolated reserves as the “root causes” of the disappearances & murders. It noted that many of the reserves have no essential business or recreation centers, and are several kilometers from nearby town centers. Combined with poverty & lack of transportation, many young women end up hitchhiking. The report saw these factors as making young Native women particularly vulnerable to sexual predators, and recommended shuttle buses between communities, a network of safe-houses along the highway for women to stay at, a series of emergency phone booths, increased police patrols, and a 1-800 phone line to report hitchhikers, be implemented. Government officials promised tens of thousands of dollars, and the RCMP assigned more investigators.

Along the Highway of Tears

From Prince Rupert to Prince George, a trail of tragedy

Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside

There is little doubt that the response from government officials & police to the Highway of Tears was due to the ongoing criticisms of police for their handling of the missing & murdered women of Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside. Since the early 1990s, some 68 women, many Aboriginal, have disappeared and/or been found murdered. Beginning in 1991, Native women’s groups in Vancouver began holding an annual Women’s Memorial March every February 14 (Valentine’s Day) to remember the missing and/or dead women. The march passes through the Downtown Eastside, stopping at locations where women’s bodies have been found, or where they had last been seen. Songs & ceremonies are carried out. In addition, the march always stops outside the Vancouver Police Department building located at Main & Hastings (in the heart of the DTES).
women were Aboriginal, and many were involved in the drug trade or other addictions.

In September 2001, the RCMP were called in to assist the VPD, and a joint task force was established to investigate these cases. Despite the formal investigation, there was a strong possibility that a serial killer was involved. The task force was disbanded in 2003.

Following Pickton’s 2002 arrest, more revelations of Vancouver police & RCMP incompentence came to light. Despite assertions that a serial killer was involved, police & city officials had vehemently denied this. In 1998, Kim Rosso, a geographic profiler in the Vancouver Police department, had won an award for his work. However, there was a strong possibility that a serial killer was involved. The task force was disbanded in 2003. In 1999, the mayor even suggested offering a $5,000 reward for any of the women on the list of disappeared who stepped forward, implying that they weren’t really ‘missing’ (later offering a $100,000 reward for tips).

In a 2003 report on violence against Aboriginal women, Amnesty International found that in Vancouver, “Police & city officials had long denied that there was any pattern to the disappearances or that women were in any particular danger.”

Pickton himself had been charged with attempted murder in 1997 after he repeatedly stabbed a woman working as a prostitute. The charges included unlawful confinement & assault with a weapon, but were later stayed when the victim would not testify against him. Then, in July 1998, police received a tip regarding a woman who had been at Pickton’s property and who had left bags of bloody clothing as well as ID from various women. Another tip came from Bill Hickeys, an employee of Pickton’s at the time. (“Informant in Pickton case falls in bid to claim reward,” The Province, June 26, 2003). At this time Pickton was considered a ‘person of interest’ in the case and was even placed on Canada’s Most Wanted, a popular US television show, but a feature article on the missing women. Public pressure was building for a full investigation, and in 2003 Pickton was considered a 'person of interest' in the case. A tip came from Bill Hiscox, an employee of Pickton's at the pig farm, leading to a warrant for his arrest.

In 2004, Amnesty International released a report entitled Stolen Sisters, documenting violence against Aboriginal women in urban areas of Western Canada. It cited several factors in the high rates of violence against urban Native females, including the legacy of Residential School abuses, fostering out of Native children, racism & sexism, as well as economic marginalization. The result was that many urban Native women were impoverished, homeless, and living in the margins of society. Many had experienced a loss of culture and identity, dysfunctional families & communities, as well as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. All these factors contributed to making young Native women especially vulnerable to sexual exploitation & violence. Another study reached similar conclusions:

“We interviewed 100 women prostituting in Vancouver, Canada. We found an extremely high prevalence of lifetime violence & post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Fifty-five percent of our interviewees were women from Canada’s First Nations, a significant overrepresentation in prostitution compared with their representation in Vancouver generally (1.7 – 7%). Eighty-two percent reported a history of childhood sexual abuse, by an average of four perpetrators. Seventy-two percent reported physical abuse, 78% had been physically assaulted in prostitution, and 90% had been raped in prostitution. Seventy-two percent percent said that they wanted to leave prostitution. Eighty-six percent reported current or past homelessness with housing as one of their most urgent needs. Eighty-six percent expressed a need for treatment for drug or alcohol addictions.”

(Abtract from Prostitution in Vancouver: Violence & the Colonization of First Nations Women)

The 2004 Amnesty International report also found that police officers had responded with indifference when informed of Natives of missing family members. There was also a failure to report missing persons due to lack of trust in the police, an observation common in many analyses of sexual assault (and seen as a major contributing factor in the massive underreporting of sex abuse). This mistrust is based on fears that complainants will be criminalized by police, that police will fail to provide protection if a report is made, and/or that the justice system itself will fail to prosecute, convict, and/or punish the offender.