Seeking Justice for Missing and Murdered Native Women

Lisa Monchalin

I present to you one woman’s testament
About acknowledging a crisis where 1181 is the new estimate

What is this number you might ask?
It’s the number of missing and murdered Native women
the government tries to mask

For some this might be a shock
For others it’s an everyday walk

Families mourning the ones who have passed
Others hoping the last time they saw them wasn’t their last

Some might have heard of the diseased pig farmer whose name does not merit mention
Yes, for many Native peoples this brings about a discomforting tension

So please remember the names of the valued women who the media insufficiently cover
Such as Brenda Wolfe a wonderful and strong Aboriginal
women and mother

Or Georgina Papin who loved her culture and was great at baking
And moccasins and dream catchers you could find her making

Or Sherry Irving who was known for her love of rock music and having fun
And whose heart so beautiful she sparkled like the sun

Or Tanya Marlo Holyk who liked basketball, and other sports
And who loved to read and enjoyed doing book reports

Or Mona Wilson the youngest of five and so very smart
And as her brother explained—she had a true love in her heart

Or Dawn Crey who loved her son so much
Whose braveness and strength—and many hearts she did touch

These are real women whose stories are not always told
Do not buy into what the media might have sold

These women are mothers, daughters, sisters, friends, and wives
People who are beautiful and deserve to live out their full lives

Violence affects our women disturbingly way too much
More likely to be stalked, raped, and unwantedly touched
Seven times more likely to become homicide prey
And much more likely to be violated against our will in some way
Three times more likely to be killed by a stranger
Yes, for Native women this exists as a true danger

We are three times more likely to become a victim of a violent crime
But let me tell you—this is not reflective of traditional time

Violence against our women was never traditional
In fact, our women were leaders in what is medicinal

Before the wrath of colonization hit
We had central roles, and on our traditional councils we would sit

Women across Turtle Island had many talents
We made major decisions and lived in balance

But it doesn’t stop there
All Native peoples have an inner drive to care

Yet Patriarchy came in like a violence disease
As soon as those deeply sick people crossed those seas

It happened right from the start
All of the explorers played a part
They arrived with an ingrained notion of superiority
Then set out to make Native peoples a minority
They did it by disease and direct killing
Then surveyed our land for the tilling

Miguel Cuneo accompanied Columbus on his second trip across the sea
Some of you might wonder—well who is he?

Well Columbus “gifted” him with a Native woman for whom he had lust
Telling him he could do whatever he must

Cuneao in his own words said he had thrashed and forced rape
And found humour in her trying to escape

And what is it hidden behind a rhetoric of excuses?
It is these people who are held as heroes—ones who have committed atrocious abuses

They claimed land that wasn’t for sale
They ripped through our communities honoring the white violent male

In the name of the church the children they did steal
Forcing them into residential schools where they would struggle to get a decent meal

Children taken right from the hands of mom and dad
Where hair was cut and they destroyed anything they had
Abuses against children reached epidemic heights
With priests and administrators who went lurking in the
nights

Although the doors of the schools are now shut
The legacy of trauma continues like an open cut

Genocidal policies and laws such as the Indian Act
Make it seem like governments have formed some sick pact

Enough putting up with the government’s ridiculous shit
Like Idle No more proclaimed we are no longer going to be on the couch and sit

The Mohawks at Tyendinaga have been protesting for an inquiry
Demanding justice and truth to be spoken in its entirety

And although you might think this does not affect you in a direct way
Remember we are all related—so what role are you willing to play?

Attend a vigil or say a prayer
But please, don’t just walk away or simply stare

Remember all these are our sisters and it’s not too late
Such as Maisy and Shannon who have been missing since 2008

Maisy Odijick is known for being helpful and sharing
And like her aunty Maria explained—she is very caring
Shannon Alexander—kindhearted and strong
But these two girls have been missing for way too long

Gone missing without a trace
And yet it took two weeks for the media to even cover their case

Families and parents struggling to get support from the police
Maisy’s Aunty Maria—started a website to find her niece

And for those who choose to turn a blind eye
What is it you tell yourself—some kind of lie?

For those that argue stories are too hard to hear?
I say, try living every day in pain and fear

I challenge you to put yourself in another’s shoes
Such as one of these women’s kids or moms—what do you have to lose?

Perhaps your own privilege you might have to face
Yes, this might be the case

But please don’t shy away
Take a stand, join and stay

Raise awareness—and justice please demand
Let everyone know in your own way—you are taking a stand
And although the government is still replying with shuns
Remember beautiful women—we miss you tons