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Responses to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Report Within the Canadian Higher Education Sector: A Scoping Review

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After years of extensive advocacy by Indigenous Peoples and human rights groups, in 2016 the Government of Canada finally launched a national inquiry into the high and disproportionate number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and people who are Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, or asexual and/or belong to additional marginalized sexual or gender identities (MMIWG2S+) (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2025). Aggravating the advocacy efforts were the perceived complacency and underreporting by the police, alongside the slow responses of government. This lack of accountability and delayed justice not only deepened public outrage but also cemented the crisis as a national tragedy and a source of international condemnation. The Inquiry's truth-gathering process comprised heartbreaking community, institutional, and expert hearings about the profound violence and Indigenous-specific racism against Indigenous women and girls (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls [MMIWG], n.d.). In 2019, the Inquiry released its report, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. The report proclaimed 231 Calls for Justice to end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2S LGBTQQIA+ people, which are legal imperatives that the Canadian government and various sectors must adhere to and implement within their spheres of influence (MMIWG, 2019).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada's Calls to Action report (2015) preceded the MMIWG2S+ report and includes 94 Calls to Action for addressing racism and working towards reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. The MMIWG2S+ report addressed concerns of the TRC as it illuminated the horrific accounts of violence specifically experienced by Indigenous women, girls, and 2S LGBTQQIA+ people. The MMIWG2S+ report revealed a race-based genocide enabled by colonial structures and perspectives, reaffirming the need for addressing colonial violence and gendered racism. As a result of the ongoing and devastating impacts of colonization and racism in Canada, Indigenous women are seven times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be victims of murder and three times more likely to experience violence (National Action Plan, 2022). To stop the systemic reproduction of gendered colonial violence, substantial changes are required for Indigenous women and girls to be safe and feel empowered and visible (Pabla, 2021). After the release of the MMIWG2S+ report, many Indigenous organizations, advocacy groups, and leaders expressed a strong hope and expectation that various sectors and levels of government would respond and implement changes to address the 231 Calls for Justice (Leddy, 2021).

Despite the report's unequivocal guidance on addressing Indigenous-specific racism and actualizing system transformation, alongside widespread calls to decolonize education (Bourque Bearskin, 2023; Kennedy et al., 2021), the response to the report has been slow in higher education. As educators and researchers, we need to take the Calls for Justice seriously and move forward in the work of reconciliation and decolonization to develop professionals who understand the devastating impact of colonization and can provide culturally safe services (MMIWG, 2019). Emerging Canadian health professionals require an understanding of Canada's violent history with Indigenous Peoples and the intersecting impacts of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples' well-being (Bourque Bearskin, 2023; Llucmetkwe et al., 2023), particularly Indigenous women and girls (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020; TRC, 2015). One way to achieve this critical understanding is to engage with and respond to the MMIWG2S+ report and Calls for Justice (MMIWG, 2019; Thorne, 2019).

Flowing from the MMIWG2S+ report, in 2021 a National Action Plan (NAP) was put forth by key stakeholders, including the National Family and Survivors Circle and the Government of Canada, as an overarching framework to end violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2S LGBTQQIA+ people. One of the NAP's overarching goals is to accomplish societal shifts in perspectives and actions to "end the root

causes of systemic racism, inequality, injustice, and violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people in Canada" (NAP, 2021, p. 25). It identifies education as a key area within which to respond to the MMIWG2S+ report. Another key area is research identifying "alignments, gaps, and preliminary recommendations" (NAP, 2021, p. 66). Education and research have clearly emerged as key priorities to stop the cycles of violence. Yet, despite the MMIWG2S+ report and the NAP, concerning numbers of Indigenous women and girls are missing and dying (CBC News, 2023; Flores & Román Alfaro, 2023). Higher education institutions have a responsibility as key sites for shaping future professionals, influencing societal attitudes, and advancing knowledge through research. By fostering inclusive and safe learning environments, these institutions can help address systemic inequities and contribute to the prevention of violence. The NAP (2021) highlights levers for change, including research and the education of professionals and service providers. Therefore, this scoping review aligns with the NAP and can contribute to understanding the current state of higher education institutions' response to the report and Calls for Justice. Understanding these initial responses and concerning gaps can inform future action and research in higher education and play a part in holding academics and educators accountable.

Positionality Statement

Our team comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, scholars, Elders, educators, and students who live and work within distinct nations, settlements, and territories in what is currently known as Canada. Team members who are Indigenous women are Lisa Bourque Bearskin, who is Cree Métis from Beaver Lake Cree Nation; Switametelót Patti Victor from Cheam First Nation; Elder Colleen Seymour from Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc; Kathleen Lounsbury from 'Nam̱gis First Nation; and Mukwa Musayett of Saulteaux and Norwegian ancestry. Settlers and newcomers on our team were those with ancestry in Jordan (Abeer Alraja), Europe (Kendra Rieger, Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham, Barbara Astle, Francine Morin, Janice Linton, Elizabeth Kreiter, and Jessica Wilson), Taiwan and Europe (Monica Friesen), and Korea (Una Chang). We brought our diverse perspectives together to engage in respectful research, deepen our analysis, and ensure our findings are relevant. Together, we situate this work in the lived experience of Indigenous Peoples, which represents the intentions set out in this work and our collaborative commitments to advance critical conversations of understanding.

Decolonizing Theoretical Perspective

Our review was guided by a decolonizing perspective, which acknowledges and counters epistemic racism in higher education (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020). A decolonizing perspective requires a critical unpacking of the ways that colonization is expressed in Canadian educational institutions. It provides insights into how universities often negate non-Western ways of knowing, being, and doing, thus legitimizing colonial practices (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020). This marginalization and erasure of Indigenous knowledge (Rieger et al., 2023, 2025; Sinclaire et al., 2021) is both implicit and explicit, including the sidelining of the MMIWG2S+ report and the heartbreaking stories that were elucidated through the rigorous inquiry. Such exclusions occur due to how Western academia defines and frames evidence as legitimate, scholarly, or worthy of response and inclusion, in every sociopolitical sense of the word *inclusion* (Rieger et al., 2023, 2025; Sinclaire et al., 2021). To prevent repetition of these same dismissals, the decolonizing aim of this review is to critically examine current responses and compel people in higher education to listen more deeply to the priorities, work, and resiliencies of Indigenous communities, and act in their sectors.

Methods

The purpose of this scoping review was to identify and examine scholarly articles that have been published in response to the MMIWG2S+ report and Calls for Justice along with institutional responses that are available on higher education websites in Canada. We employed Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) scoping review methodology as adapted by Levac et al. (2010), as well as the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist (Tricco et al., 2018). Our protocol is registered with the Open Science Framework (Alraja et al., 2022).

Search Strategy

An Academic Indigenous Health Liaison Librarian (JL) with several years' experience working with researchers and community members supporting Indigenous Peoples' health and well-being helped the team develop a search strategy that was culturally responsive and reflective of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems. This collaboration enhanced the inclusivity and relevance of the review by identifying literature that may be underrepresented in conventional academic databases but is vital to understanding Indigenous perspectives. An initial search of the CINAHL database was conducted to identify relevant articles. The subject headings of relevant articles informed the full search strategy, which was adapted for other databases. There was a lack of controlled vocabulary for the main concept (i.e., MMIWG2S+ report); thus, we developed a search strategy capturing all possible keywords used to describe this concept (see Table 2 in Appendix A, located in the supplementary file).

To select databases, we identified the relevant academic disciplines according to the MMIWG2+ report (see Table 1 in Appendix A). The research team analyzed which academic disciplines were recognized in the Calls for Justice (see Table 1 in Appendix A). Databases associated with these disciplines were searched for relevant articles on three large interdisciplinary scholarly platforms: Scopus; EBSCOhost (Canadian Reference Centre; Academic Search Complete; America: History and Life; Criminal Justice Abstracts; MLA International Bibliography; Bibliography of Indigenous Peoples in North America; Historical Abstracts); and ProQuest (Canadian Business & Current Affairs Database; Publicly Available Content Database; Sociological Abstracts; Literature Online; Worldwide Political Science Abstracts; ABI/INFORM; PAIS Index; ERIC). We searched Google Scholar and the reference lists of included articles to identify additional articles. To prevent the overlooking of scholarly articles published in Indigenous journals not indexed in online databases, we hand-searched several Indigenous journals. Initial search dates were from June 2019 to March 2022 to reflect the release of the report; we updated the search in July 2024 to ensure the inclusion of the most recent literature from March 2022 to July 2024. For our focused grey literature search, we searched U15 websites,[1] with the approach described by Stansfield et al. (2016). We located the general search bar on each university website and entered the search terms "missing and murdered," "MMIW*," and "reclaiming power and place." Two French-language websites,

[1] U15 Canada is an association of 15 prominent research universities in Canada, established to enhance research and innovation policies and programs that promote knowledge advancement, produce skilled leaders across various fields, and share knowledge for the benefit of all Canadians. These member universities, forming U15 Canada in 2012, collectively educate 64% of Canada's full-time graduate students, secure 77% of the country's sponsored research funding, and conduct $866 million worth of research for businesses (U15 Canada, n.d.). It is important to determine whether institutions with such a widespread influence in the Canadian population have responded to the MMIWG2S+ report.

the Université de Montréal and Université Laval, were searched using the search terms “disparues et assassineés,” “FFADA*,” and “reclamer notre pouvoir et notre place,” respectively.

Inclusion Criteria

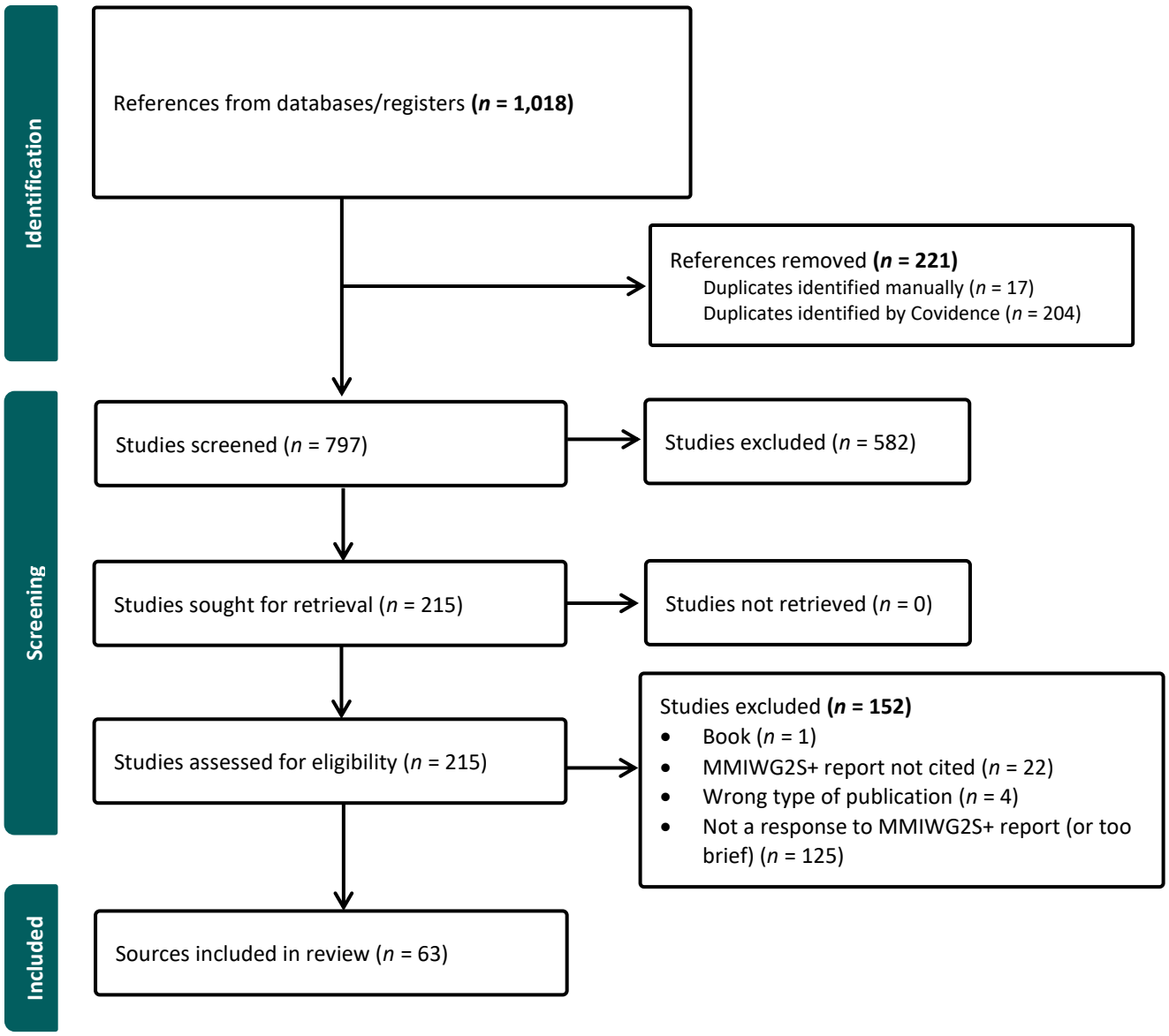
Our inclusion criteria encompassed articles written by authors from academic disciplines highlighted in the Calls for Justice, as well as U15 websites, that responded to the MMIWG2S+ report or Calls for Justice in higher education in Canada. For the academic literature, we included any type of study design or discussion article on responses to the MMIWG2S+ report or Calls for Justice written in English. Discussion articles were considered due to lack of research articles. Furthermore, we aimed to provide a thorough critical mapping of the current response; thus, it was deemed essential to include the discussion articles to present a comprehensive picture of the range of responses implemented by higher education institutions.

Study Selection

The search results were imported into Covidence and duplicates removed. Two team members independently reviewed titles/abstracts against our inclusion criteria and conducted a full read of potentially relevant articles to confirm eligibility (see Figure 1). Any disagreements were resolved in consultation with a third reviewer. The website search result numbers are not included in Figure 1 but are presented in the results section. Screening the online website results involved reviewing the first five pages of results on Google Scholar or U15 websites. The relevant websites were then screened for relevancy by one reviewer and checked by a second reviewer.

Figure 1

PRISMA Diagram for MMIWG2S+ Scoping Review



Data Extraction and Analysis

For academic literature, data were extracted by one reviewer and verified by another using a collaboratively developed standardized data extraction form (see Table 1 in Appendix B, located in the supplementary file) relevant to the review purpose (evidence type, author, year, journal, discipline, purpose of article/research, organization/population, methodology and methods, response description, discourse surrounding the report). We pilot-tested the extraction form on five included articles and revised it in consultation with team members. Then, we used content analysis with categorization and frequency analysis of key components to describe our included articles and conducted an analytical

synthesis of the extracted data to critically examine responses to the MMIWG2S+ report (Hannes & Lockwood, 2012). For the synthesis, three reviewers (AA, KR, MF) read through the extracted data and identified, coded, and charted relevant units of text, noting patterns addressing our review purpose. They met regularly throughout the data analysis process to discuss emerging themes and engaged with Indigenous research team members who shaped and refined our analytical findings and their interpretation. Thus, the content analysis was conducted by a culturally diverse research team, including members with Indigenous identities and lived experiences, prior work experience with Indigenous communities, and experience conducting scoping reviews, which contributed to the cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and methodological rigour of the review.

To assess the level of engagement with the report in the included academic articles, we developed a three-category rating system to analyze the articles' content and discourses for meaningful inclusion of the MMIWG2S+ report and Calls for Justice. Category l (*minimal*) included citing the report or Calls for Justice mainly in the introduction/background and/or discussion sections or as part of multiple in-text citations; Category 2 (*moderate*) included citing the report or Calls for Justice as a discrete in-text citation multiple times and engaging with material in certain sections of the text; and Category 3 (*extensive*) included citing the report or Calls for Justice as a discrete in-text citation and a clear focus on the report or Calls for Justice in the article as a whole.

For the grey literature in the U15 website search, a collaboratively developed data extraction form was used by one reviewer and checked by another (see Table 2 in Appendix B), and categories of engagement were identified. A *minimal* level of engagement was defined as a brief discussion of the report and a brief description of how to respond or what the university's response was. *Moderate* engagement was defined as an initiative facilitating meaningful discussion and response to the report that took a day's worth of time up to a month of time. *Extensive* engagement was defined as an initiative facilitating meaningful discussion and response to the report that took several months of time and/or represented a significant financial investment into a response to the report. Extracted data were analyzed with content analysis.

Findings for Included Academic Articles

Characteristics of Included Articles

A total of 63 academic articles were included in our final review (see Figure 1). A detailed description of included articles is presented in Table 1 and Appendix C (located in the supplementary file). Regarding focus, the articles primarily responded to the report in general (*n* = 42), while 20 responded to a specific Call for Justice. Regarding the level of engagement with the report, 25 were grouped under Category 3. We categorized the remaining articles into Category 2 (*n* = 17) and Category 1 (*n* = 21).

Table 1

Included Academic Articles (n = *63)*

Category and characteristics	***n* (%)**
Year of publication	
2019	4 (6.3%)
2020	8 (12.7%)
2021	22 (34.9%)

Category and characteristics	***n* (%)**
2022	12 (19.0%)
2023	15 (23.8%)
2024	2 (3.2%)
Discipline	
Media/journalism/communication	2 (3.2%)
Education	3 (4.8%)
Environmental, extractive, and development industries	5 (7.9%)
Health care/Indigenous health	19 (30%)
Arts and culture	2 (3%)
Justice/law/criminology	16 (25.4%)
Sociology/social work	9 (14.3%)
Gender studies	1 (1.6%)
Psychology	3 (4.8%)
Political studies	2 (3.2%)
Architecture	1 (1.6%)
Research funding	
Funded	20 (31.7%)
Not funded/did not clearly indicate funding status	43 (68.3%)
Geographic location	
Canada/national	37 (58.7%)
Canada, USA	4 (6.3%)
ON	9 (14.3%)
BC	6 (9.5%)
SK	1 (1.6%)
BC, ON, MB	1 (1.6%)
MB	2 (3.2%)
AB	2 (3.2%)
ON, SK, QC, BC	1 (1.6%)
Level of engagement	
Minimal	21 (33.3%)
Moderate	17 (27.0%)
Extensive	25 (39.7%)

Category and characteristics	*n* (%)
Evidence type	
Commentary/editorials	13 (21%)
Discussion	26 (41%)
Program evaluation	3 (4.8%)
Literature review	2 (3.2%)
Methodology paper	1 (1.6%)
Qualitative	12 (19%)
Thesis/dissertation	6 (9.5%)

Synthesis of Responses to the MMIWG2S+ Report in the Included Articles

Extending our analysis, we analyzed responses and discourses about the MMIWG2S+ report in the included articles and generated six themes that provide insights into the types and quality of responses to the MMIWG2S+ report or Calls for Justice in higher education. Most responses remain at the discussion level, with some critiquing aspects of the report and highlighting the urgency of moving towards action in higher education.

Illuminating Report Findings for Readers

At the most basic level of response, authors attempted to bring awareness of the report or Calls for Justice into the psyches and hearts of people working in academic, educational, and applied sectors. Some authors (Chiblow, 2021; Draper, 2022; Dykhuizen et al., 2022; Hiscock et al., 2022; King & Hodwitz, 2020; Luoma, 2021; Marsella, 2021; McGuire & Murdoch, 2022; Sloan Morgan et al., 2021; Vanner, 2022) simply cited the report to highlight its findings to a wider audience. Several also illustrated widespread atrocities and various disciplines' complicity (Balfour, 2021; Chiblow, 2021; Dykhuizen et al., 2022; Harrison, 2020; Hiscock et al., 2022; Hoogeveen et al., 2021; Johnstone & Lee, 2021; King & Hodwitz, 2020; Luoma, 2021; Marsella, 2021; McGuire & Murdoch, 2022; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022; Nagy et al., 2020; Pabla, 2021; Parsloe & Campbell, 2021; Restall et al., 2019; Sherman, 2022; Sloan Morgan et al., 2021; Vanner, 2022). For example, authors briefly highlighted the role of the justice system (Harrison, 2020; McGuire & Murdoch, 2022) and social workers (Johnstone & Lee, 2021) in creating structures that enabled women to become missing or murdered, and confirmed gendered and racialized violence in the extractive industries (Hoogeveen et al., 2021; Marsella, 2021; Sloan Morgan et al., 2021). One article critiqued the mainstream media response to the MMIWG2S+ as presenting a biased, colonial perspective and being complicit in reproducing colonial discourses and ongoing violence in their response (Pabla, 2021). Other articles highlighted pertinent Calls for Justice as a way to address root causes of violence (Campbell & Lawford, 2021; Dykhuizen et al., 2022; Hall, 2020; Laboucan, 2023; Littlechild et al., 2021; Luoma, 2021; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022; Nagy et al., 2020).

We Must Act and This Is How

Some authors moved beyond simply highlighting the report and demanded accountability for action from the government and academic, educational, and applied sectors. Many authors observed insufficient awareness of the MMIWG2S+ crisis and reiterated the urgency to respond (Fields, 2023; Johnson, 2019; Koggel, 2019; McGuire & Murdoch, 2022; Mussell, 2020; Pabla, 2021). Authors identified the need for political involvement, for governments to be held accountable, and for using the report in advocacy for change (Brown, 2022; Campbell & Lawford, 2021; Grant, 2024; Harrison, 2020; Koggel, 2019; McGuire & Murdoch, 2022; Ryan et al., 2020). Sector-specific recommendations for action were identified in various disciplines, including education (Ferguson, 2022; Graham et al., 2023; Vanner, 2022; Vanner et al., 2024); environmental conservation (Littlechild et al., 2021); health care (Dykhuizen et al., 2022; Stein et al., 2023); clinical and counselling psychology (Ansloos et al., 2022); Indigenous-based initiatives (Chartrand, 2022); and medicine, nursing, and occupational therapy (Angelino et al., 2023; Campbell & Lawford, 2021; Gibbon, 2023; Krabbe, 2021; Rame et al., 2023; Restall et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2023). Some sources offered practical action steps in response to the report (Akca & Jewell, 2022; Campbell & Lawford, 2021; Littlechild et al., 2021; Restall et al., 2019), whereas other sources were more theoretical (Dykhuizen et al., 2022; Hall, 2020; Koggel, 2019; Krabbe, 2021). For example, Akca and Jewell (2022) recommended developing "specialized and trauma-informed questioning techniques" (p. 2) for police who conduct interviews with Indigenous people as a practical action. One theoretical response was a call to "non-Indigenous Canadians to participate in projects of understanding, relearning, and rewriting Canada's history" (Koggel, 2019, p. 17).

Many articles focused on justice system reform (Akca & Jewell, 2022; Balfour, 2021; Draper, 2022; Luoma, 2021; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022; Pabla, 2021; Sanderson et al., 2021; Wakeham, 2022). Articles put forth various recommendations to increase safety and reorient incarceration services for Indigenous women (Sanderson et al., 2021) and discussed the benefits of transitional justice approaches to support Indigenous women and gender-diverse people (Luoma, 2021). Several sources recommended Canadian policing and criminal justice system reforms, including a shift to trauma-informed services, the decriminalization of sex work, and changes to the criminal code (Akca & Jewell, 2022; Balfour, 2021; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022; Pabla, 2021). Another notable sub-theme was reclaiming the place of Indigenous women as strong and influential people in Canada. Several authors emphasized the direct involvement of Indigenous women in the creation of the report and demanded that Indigenous women be actively involved in guiding responses to the Calls for Justice (Grant, 2024; McGuire & Murdoch, 2022; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2020). Authors also emphasized the need for involvement of Indigenous women in healing programs and in re-establishing Indigenous forms of self-determination and justice (McGuire & Murdoch, 2022).

Discourses About Genocide

The articles included divergent views on the definitions and legal implications of the use of the word *genocide* in the report, and discussions of contributing components to genocide. Several authors cited definitions of the concept of genocide (Harrison, 2020; Hughes, 2022; Koggel, 2019; McGuire & Murdoch, 2022; Thorne, 2019; Weiss et al., 2022) and discussed its roots in Canadian legislation (Ramnarine, 2023) and the implications of its "systemic, recurrent, and large-scale nature" (Özsu, 2020, p. 63). Thorne (2019) defined genocide as "the sustained and perpetuated structural and attitudinal injustices that have become entrenched within our various social systems" (p. 2), and Harrison (2020) framed the MMIWG2S+ crisis as "part of the larger, ongoing colonial race-based genocide of Indigenous people" (p. 26). Several authors confirmed Canada's role in genocide (Bell & van Daalen-Smith, 2021; Campbell & Lawford, 2021; Hall, 2020; Johnstone & Lee, 2021; Krabbe, 2021; Mussell, 2020; Nagy et al.,

2020; Smith et al., 2023) and examined how their discipline had contributed to it. For example, Thorne (2019) argues that "nurses too have been, and continue to be, vulnerable to serving as agents of discriminatory and unjust regimes," which is akin to "genocide by a million paper cuts" (p. 2). Moreover, in medicine, Campbell and Lawford (2021) argued that "the continued over-representation and targeting of Indigenous women for sterilization through coercive methods by physicians thus demonstrated an act of genocide because the practice prevents the births of Indigenous Peoples" (p. 4). Authors also discussed the direct link "between the dehumanization of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people within settler colonialism and the genocide" (Krabbe, 2021, p. 1) and its devastating consequences.

In contrast, echoing media reports, five articles contained in-depth discussion regarding the legitimacy of the word *genocide* (Brown, 2022; Murphy-Oikonen et al., 2022; Özsu, 2020; Pabla, 2021; Thorne, 2019). Thorne (2019) argued that the use of the term was an "intriguing way to spark conversation and provoke the moral outrage that seems needed to initiate a constructive societal response" and "individual and collective moral outrage" (p. 2). Others raised concerns about the use of this term, with one author stating, "I suggest that Canada's genocide 'debate' turns on the relation between 'law' and 'society'—the question, that is, of how precisely a legal definition is to be interpreted and applied under different, and often rapidly changing, social conditions" (Özsu, 2020, p. 64).

Seeing the Bigger Picture

Authors situated the report within the larger context of societal structures, policy development and enactment, and public discourse on truth and reconciliation. Hughes (2022) identified root social, economic, cultural, institutional, and historical causes of the systemic violence against Indigenous women and girls. Some articles contained calls for policy change and development (Hughes, 2022; Jongbloed et al., 2023; Shawanda, 2023), such as justice system reform (Koggel, 2019; Thorne, 2019). Shawanda (2023) called for reformed health care policies for Indigenous Peoples. Hughes (2022) argued for the merit of a rights-based approach to the violent victimization of Indigenous women and girls by anchoring the rights of culture, health, security, and justice in the foundational Indigenous right of self-determination. Authors also extended dialogue on MMIWG2S+ to examine underlying structures of settler colonialism (Browne et al., 2021; Dean & Granzow, 2023; Hoogeveen et al., 2021; Koggel, 2019; Nagy et al., 2020; Parsloe & Campbell, 2021; Thorne, 2019). For example, Dean and Granzow (2023) found that settler colonial perspectives underpinned extractivism and cultural practices of placemaking, which are deeply implicated in the MMIWG2S+ crisis. Others linked the report to a broader societal expression of gendered and racialized violence (Harrison, 2020; Hoogeveen et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2023; Weiss et al., 2022). Articles generally called for increasing public discourse on these issues, advocating for policy changes within governments, and considering the bigger picture and roots of violence against MMIWG2S+ in our society (Snow, 2021). For example, Koggel (2019) challenged "non-Indigenous Canadians to engage in a collective project of sharing, recording, and acquiring a more accurate account of Canada's history as a settler nation and the damaged trust and relationships emerging from this history" (p. 15) to understand how this history enabled the violence against MMIWG2S+.

Some authors situated the MMIWG2S+ report in relation to other reports to confirm conclusions and strengthen calls for change. The TRC Calls to Action report (2015) was the most common report discussed in tandem with the MMIWG2S+ report (Browne et al., 2021; Campbell & Lawford, 2021; Hiscock et al., 2022; Koggel, 2019; Littlechild et al., 2021; Mussell, 2020; Nagy et al., 2020; Ryan et al, 2021; Ryan et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2023). Some sources also connected the report to the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (Grant, 2024; Hiscock et al., 2022; Ryan et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2023) and various localized reports or data, including the Government of British Columbia's (2020) *In Plain Sight* report (Hiscock et al., 2022), the Government of British Columbia's (2012) *Forsaken* report

(Balfour, 2021), the Ontario Human Rights Commission's (2018) *Interrupted Childhoods* report, data from the Urban Indian Health Institute in the USA (Weiss et al., 2022), and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Women's Centre (2019) *Red Women Rising* report (Grant, 2024).

A Guiding Framework for Research and Practice

Authors drew on the report and Calls for Justice as a lens to inform research (Jumah et al., 2021; Nagy et al., 2020) and to guide practice (Bernett et al., 2023; Draper, 2022; Grant, 2024; Koggel, 2019; Ricciardelli et al., 2021). Regarding research, Sanderson et al. (2021) noted that their research results echoed the report's findings of needing to reassemble the justice system "from punishment and oppression to healing and wellbeing for all Indigenous women living with HIV" (p. 267). Regarding practice, the report provided guided action for incorporating the Calls for Justice into future interventions (Allary et al., 2023; Draper, 2022; Graham et al., 2023; Grant, 2024; Koggel, 2019; Krabbe, 2021; Ricciardelli et al., 2021). Authors discussed how the report could inform nurses' social justice initiatives in resisting atrocities and investigating ways to combine anti-racist and anti-oppressive practices (Bell & van Daalen-Smith, 2021). As an example of guiding programming, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) representatives created the Circle of Change program to shape policies and programming. This initiative offers recommendations and direction to the RCMP, focusing on resources, training, policies, policing tools, and communication strategies to investigate, prevent, and respond to violence against Indigenous women and girls (Draper, 2022).

Critique of the Report and Challenges

The literature also placed the National Inquiry process and the report and Calls for Justice under scrutiny. The National Inquiry process was slow and flawed, and the report focused solely on gender, ignoring colonial policies and practices (Chiblow, 2020). Some argued that the National Inquiry used a colonial model and legalistic approach, such as hearing processes, yet was not legally binding. Sherman (2022) argued that the MMIWG2S+ report was launched by the Canadian government for optics but has not truly improved the lives of Indigenous Peoples. Some argued that the report disregarded the Indian Act and Indigenous women's relationship to water and land (Chiblow, 2020; Johnson, 2019; King & Hodwitz, 2020). Harrison (2020) expressed concern about the challenge of responding to the report's many recommendations and their actionability. Some authors also identified a lack of committed funding for adequate responses (Allary et al., 2023) and used the pandemic as an excuse for stalled action (Sherman, 2022). Hoogeveen et al. (2021) noted the lack of response to the MMIWG2S+ report in academia, with little published work engaging with the report.

Grey Literature Findings

The grey literature search of the U15 websites yielded 94 included results analyzed using content analysis. The three universities with the highest number of results (see Table 2) were the University of British Columbia (*n* = 24), Université Laval (*n* = 13), and Dalhousie University (*n* = 13). Regarding the time frame, 19 results were published in 2019, 30 in 2020, 34 in 2021, and five in 2022. Six results had no date but demonstrated response to the report (i.e., presumed publication after June 2019).

Table 2

Number of Grey Literature Results for Each U15

University	Date initially searched	Number of included results
University of Alberta	March 30, 2022	3
Université Laval	April 6, 2022	13
Dalhousie University	April 5, 2022	13
University of Calgary	April 5, 2022	1
University of British Columbia	April 8, 11, and 20, 2022	24
Université de Montréal	April 20, 2022	5
McMaster University	April 21, 2022	8
McGill University	Apr 27, 2022	10
University of Manitoba	Apr 27, 2022	9
Western University	April 21, 2022	1
University of Waterloo	April 21, 2022	0
University of Toronto	April 14, 2022	1
University of Saskatchewan	April 13, 2022	4
Queen's University	March 30, 2022	1
University of Ottawa	March 29, 2022	1
Total		**94**

Note. U15 = 15 prominent research universities in Canada.

Table 3 displays the types of responses found in the U15 website search. Webinars and events were the most common. One example was an online expert panel discussion on the Calls for Justice hosted by Dalhousie University's MacEachen Institute for Public Policy and Governance (Dalhousie University, 2021). The second most common response category was internal news and opinion articles, such as the announcement and description of a series of sessions on the Calls for Justice for faculty and students at the Indigenous Centre at the University of Toronto Mississauga campus (Martin, 2021). The third most

common response type was course outlines. In most of these outlines, one lecture was planned to cover content from the report, or a guest lecturer was scheduled to teach the class about the report.

Table 3

Types of Responses to the MMIWG2S+ Report on University Websites

Response type	**Number of results**
Webinars and events (announcements, records, and recordings of events created in response to the report)	20
Internal news/opinion articles (commentaries and news features responding to the report)	18
Course outlines (course outlines that incorporated the report into assigned readings and taught content of the report and/or required students to respond to the report)	16
Strategic planning (documents from universities' strategic plans that indicated how they would respond to the report, and news announcements that informed their community of how their strategic plans would respond to the report)	10
Process/information reports (working documents, professional competency lists, and community reports that engaged with the report)	10
Researcher features/hires (special highlights of Indigenous researchers that were conducting research in response to the report, and new job positions created and filled in response to the report and/or Calls for Justice)	5
Faculty statements (formal statements released by various faculties and other university group entities that mentioned responding to the report)	3
Research awards (financial scholarships or special awards given to researchers who were responding to the report)	2
Miscellaneous (all other results)	10
Total	**94**

The English-language results were also categorized by the level of engagement assigned as *minimal*, *moderate*, or *extensive*. Due to limited resources for translation, French-language results were not categorized in this manner. Of the English results, 30 were categorized as minimal, 31 as moderate, and 14 as extensive. Most types of results had a spread of levels of engagement from minimal to moderate. The types that had results with extensive engagement of the report included strategic planning, process/information reports, research awards, and researcher hires. These results represented significant investments of finances (at least several thousand dollars) and time (at least several months) in responding to the report. In the English-language strategic planning documents, extensive engagement involved both multiple actions taken by the universities and higher amounts of financial investment than most other types of responses to the report.

Discussion and Implications

This scoping review examined diverse sources of evidence on responses to the MMIWG2S+ report and Calls for Justice in higher education in English in Canada. Findings revealed that institutional responses remain limited and largely underdeveloped, indicating a journey that is far from complete and requires intentional action. Consideration of and stated commitment to action were much more prevalent than tangible initiatives, as few academic sources outlined specific measures that had been implemented as responses. Records of substantive action were also infrequent in the grey literature despite the urgency of this crisis. These findings echo the CBC News (2023) evaluation of the Calls for Justice more broadly, which indicated a stark reality: Of 231 Calls for Justice, only two had been fully addressed by June 2024, while more than half remained without any noticeable response or action (Assembly of First Nations, 2024; CBC News, 2023). Indigenous communities have expressed frustration with the lack of progress since the report was published in 2019 (CBC News, 2023; Zimonjic, 2022). Much work remains (NAP, 2021), and the report highlights that intentionality and collaboration with Indigenous Peoples is crucial for meaningful, impactful responses.

Some authors of articles included in this scoping review interrogated societal structures, examined policies, and situated the response to the report within the broader framework of truth and reconciliation. This direction is important in higher education. In-depth examination of the complex societal and historical contexts that have enabled the persistent violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2S LGBTQQIA+ people should be included in educational initiatives and can inform more effective responses, addressing the root causes of the problem. Furthermore, in some cases the discourse about definitions and legal implications of genocide detracted from the key messages of the report. Higher education institutions are responsible for responding to the report, and the debate regarding genocide should not prevent us from acting. Engaging with and responding to the MMIWG2S+ report and Calls for Justice is a crucial component of understanding the intersecting impacts of colonialism on Indigenous Peoples' well-being for both students and faculty and should remain a high priority.

The MMIWG2S+ crisis serves as a clear illustration of the difficulties in implementing the Calls for Justice, especially within resistant Canadian systems and colonial histories. The colonial structures and policies, gendered racism, and indifference that created the conditions for the ongoing MMIWG2S+ genocide (McDiarmid, 2019; Reimer-Kirkham & Browne, 2006) continue to hinder efforts to bring about systemic and policy changes in response to the MMIWG2S+ report (Pictou, 2020). The report pinpoints 18 areas in need of reform, including education, justice, and health care (CBC News, 2023; MMIWG, 2019). As a first step, individuals and organizations, including academics and post-secondary institutions, need to become aware of required policy reforms and implementation strategies relevant to their specific roles and responsibilities, such as curriculum development, faculty recruitment, support for Indigenous students, and institutional governance. Nationally, for example, NAP (2021) outlines the changes needed in Canada to respond to the Calls for Justice and ensure the safety of Indigenous women and girls, and includes guidance on education and addressing anti-Indigenous racism in public institutions. An organization-specific policy response is the NWAC, whose initial aim was to counter the role of violence on Indigenous women in the early 1970s (NWAC, 2023a). The NWAC developed its own action plan, prioritizing Calls for Justice and providing 65 concrete actions to act upon quickly, along with the associated budget, responsible party, and measurable landmarks (NWAC, 2021). At the provincial level, several provinces have developed action plans, such as the Government of Ontario's (2021) Pathways to Safety plan, though this plan lacks associated timelines and budget commitments. In addition to the NAP, in 2021 the federal government committed $2.2 billion over 5 years and $160.9 million per year to respond to the Calls for Justice (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2023). However, the

2022–23 NWAC report card criticized the government's response as inadequate, attributing this failure to the absence of meaningful action, accountability mechanisms, and the worsening state of the crisis (NWAC, 2023b, 2023c). Meaningful systems change must involve viewing the Calls for Justice as legal imperatives rather than optional recommendations, creating partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, developing actionable and measurable action plans, and holding entities accountable to these plans (MMIWG, 2019). Effective catalysts for policy change also encompass forming coalitions with like-minded partners spanning diverse sectors, using media and grassroots advocacy, and engaging with government and policy makers (Bryant et al., 2019; Townsend et al., 2020).

Our findings revealed a call for Indigenous women to be actively involved in guiding responses to the Calls for Justice. Indigenous women have been involved in responses to the MMIWG2S+ crisis long before the report's publication, and their leadership is crucial for achieving comprehensive, culturally relevant, and responsive policies and programs (MMIWG, 2019). One example is for post-secondary institutions to engage with the NWAC and its initiatives. The involvement of Indigenous men is also an often-overlooked element of responding to the MMIWG2S+ crisis. The Moose Hide Campaign, for example, involves men in responses to the crisis, where both Indigenous and non-Indigenous men are encouraged to participate in community events and make meaningful commitments to honour and respect Indigenous women (Moose Hide Campaign Development Society, n.d.). Commitments are represented by pins of moose hide worn by the men (Moose Hide Campaign Development Society, n.d.). Academic institutions must engage with organizations and initiatives like the NWAC and the Moose Hide Campaign; otherwise, they risk losing opportunities for meaningful connection with affected communities and addressing everyday violence against women.

Epistemic racism is reified in academia through processes of excluding Indigenous Peoples' ways of knowing, expressing, and responding that do not easily fit Western perspectives of academia. For example, the lack of Indigenous governance in health workforce planning has profound consequences, reinforcing epistemic injustices, systemic racism, inequitable policies, and workforce disparities that directly affect Indigenous health care professionals and communities (Llucmetkwe et al., 2023). Considering that much of the challenge lies in the inability of colonized institutions to communicate and collaborate with Indigenous communities, how can Western academics step out of their "ivory towers" and honour multiple ways of knowing and being? Creative educational strategies that honour First Peoples principles of teaching and learning (First Nations Education Steering Committee, 2007) demonstrate potential, and engaging strategies such as experiential learning, storytelling, and arts-based pedagogy promote transformative learning. Academics must join Indigenous communities in the communities' work rather than waiting for Indigenous people to enter academia and join academics' work (Rieger et al., 2021). Interventions that involve direct collaboration between higher education institutions and Indigenous communities show the most promise as meaningful responses to the report. One example of this community engagement was the collaborative creation of a new maternal support worker program that trained and employed Indigenous women (Jumah et al., 2021). Higher education institutions can also find guidance in other reviews (Bourque Bearskin, 2023) and reports put forth by Indigenous Peoples, including the TRC response, the NAP (2021, 2022), and the NWAC (n.d.).

Future Research and Curriculum Development

Indigenous people possess and maintain rigorous bodies of knowledge (Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association & Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing, 2022), and many are highly engaged in creating responses to the report. Researchers should consider initiatives beyond the boundaries of what is often defined as "academically rigorous" knowledge by Western institutions. Future research could

involve a grey literature search of Indigenous grassroots initiatives, including community websites, Indigenous social media posts, and various creative arts and multimedia to better capture responses to the report led by Indigenous people. As well, a review of the French-language literature is needed. In curriculum development and research, educators need to facilitate and evaluate innovative learning experiences about the MMIWG2S+ report in which students engage with Indigenous communities and build meaningful and lasting relationships with Indigenous Peoples (Littlechild et al., 2021; NAP, 2021). One important step is advocating for mandatory Indigenous cultural awareness courses that address anti-Indigenous racism and evaluating their impact (NAP, 2021; Webb et al., 2023). Universities should also review policies that prevent Indigenous students from being accepted to higher education and thriving in their studies, such as restrictive grade point average cutoffs and high school prerequisite courses that do not recognize differences in the current quality and availability of high school education for Indigenous students, and inadequate cultural and social supports in higher education programs (Gallop & Bastien, 2016).

Limitations

The search strategy had limitations concerning Indigenous perspectives and sources of knowledge. A scoping review of academic literature such as this one creates omissions by not comprehensively searching in the spaces in which Indigenous responses are being produced. The quality of search engine software used for the grey literature search also varied widely among universities and may have resulted in the inability to retrieve relevant results. Further, due to time and resource constraints, no translation services were available for included articles or websites. The reviewer conducting content analysis of the grey literature search (MF) had sufficient French comprehension to identify relevant results and sort them by type but not to perform deeper content analysis. Lastly, the lack of progress due to slow responses to the MMIWG2S+ report in academic literature may also be related to the lag in publication and will need to be monitored over time.

Conclusion

This review of the current state of higher education institutions' responses to the MMIWG2S+ report and Calls for Justice reveals that the response is still in its infancy. In considering responses to the report, we need a thoughtful critique of the colonized settler mindset that has the potential to re-marginalize actions and dialogues generated by Indigenous Peoples. We recommend that higher education institutions across Canada take seriously their mandate for civic education and give more recognition to the MMIWG2S+ crisis. Further research guided by the MMIWG2S+ report is also needed, such as this project, to respond authentically in academic spaces. All initiatives responding to the report must actively engage Indigenous organizations and people. This collaborative approach and sense of dialogue are essential for achieving reconciliation and effectively addressing the entrenched systemic issues of gendered racism and violence perpetrated against Indigenous women, girls, and 2S LGBTQQIA+ people.

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