

A Broken Path: Contact, conquest,  
and the sexualization of Indigenous  
Women's identity

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*'Um it, it isn't really high on our radar, to be honest ... Our ministers will continue to dialogue with those who are concerned about this.'*

- Prime Minister Stephen Harper on a public inquiry into missing aboriginal women

Why is this issue of Indigenous women who have gone missing or have been murdered not an important one until now?

# Contrasts in World Views

## Aboriginal

- Circle – interconnectedness of all things
- Collectivity & community
- Relationship with environment
- Interconnectedness of all living things
- Caretakers of land
- Male/female unity
- Time as circular

## Euro-centric

- Linear
- Individuality
- Hierarchy
- Fear of unknown
- Environment as discreet entity
- Domination of environment
- Land ownership
- Male/female binary
- Linear time

*Aboriginal worldviews are characterized by a belief that all objectivity is subjectivity—that is, the only thing that humans can really know is themselves.*

*<http://dragonflycanada.ca/resources/aboriginal-worldviews/>*

Let's go way back to first contact....



# Early Images of Contact





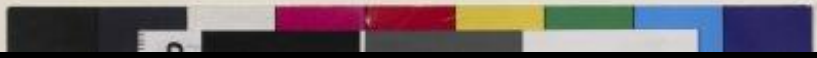
*Is this a Peace, when Loyalists must bleed?*

The SAVAGES let loose, OR  
The Cruel FATE of the LOYALISTS.

*It is a Bloody Piece of work indeed.*

*Sold by William Philip N. of New York.*

July 1782



2024 6122





**Noble Savage**

# Early Representations of Women



*Illæ quidem nos tress dudum non cognita terris,  
Eratia brevi auroferis latè celeberrima venis.*

*Uisceribus scelerata suis humana recandens  
Viscera fratrem præstendit AMERICA clavam.*

# 1575 Amazon Queen

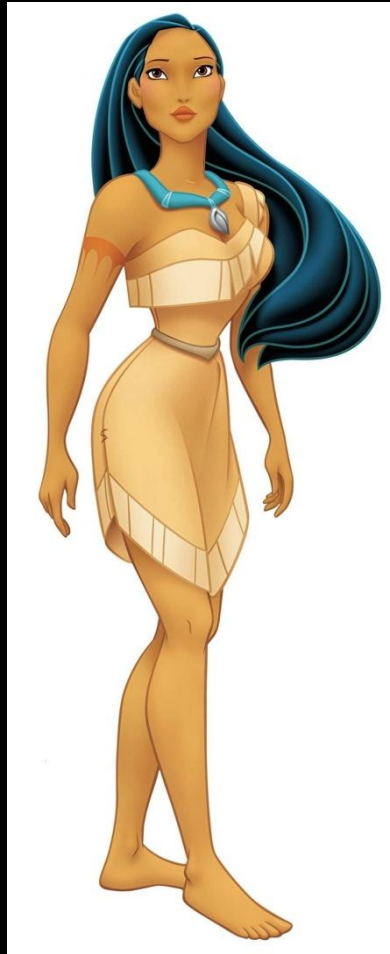




# 1700 Indian Princess



# Pocahontas

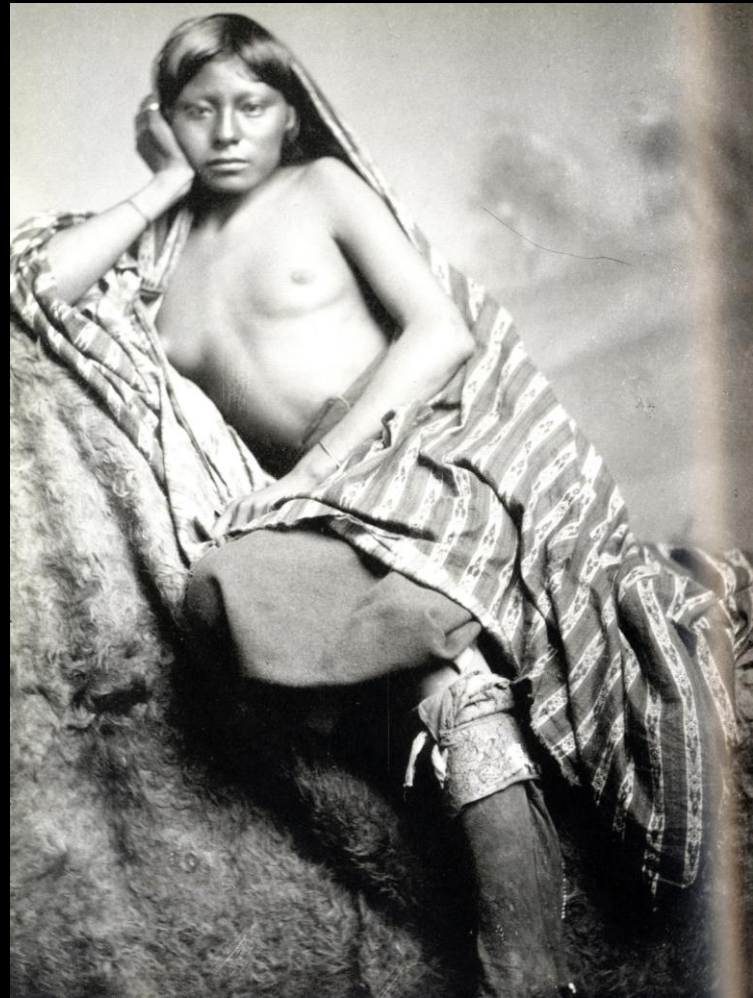




In reality...



# The Squaw

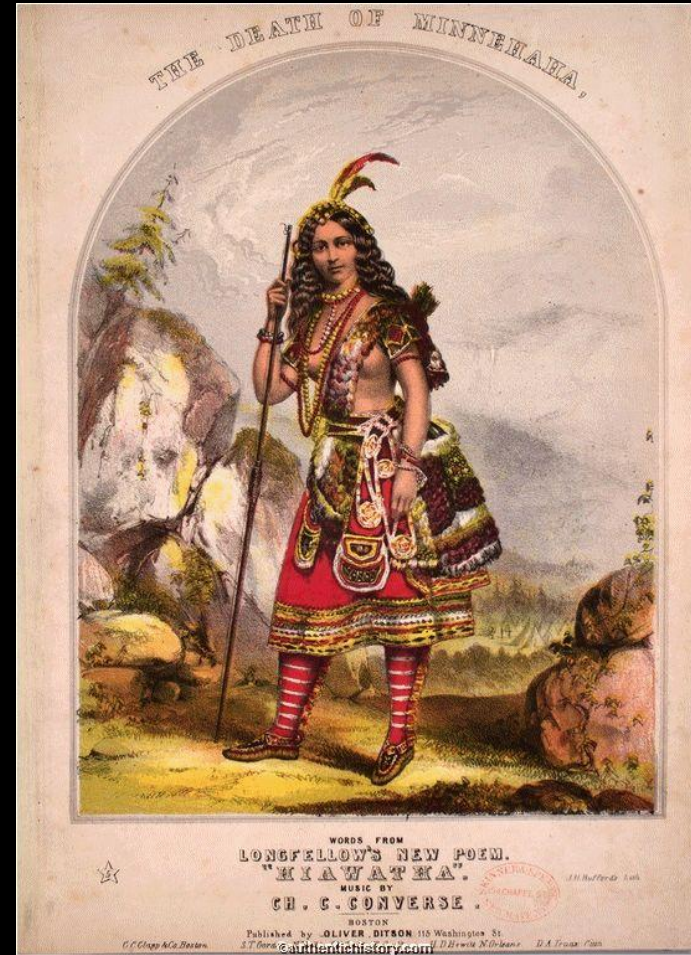
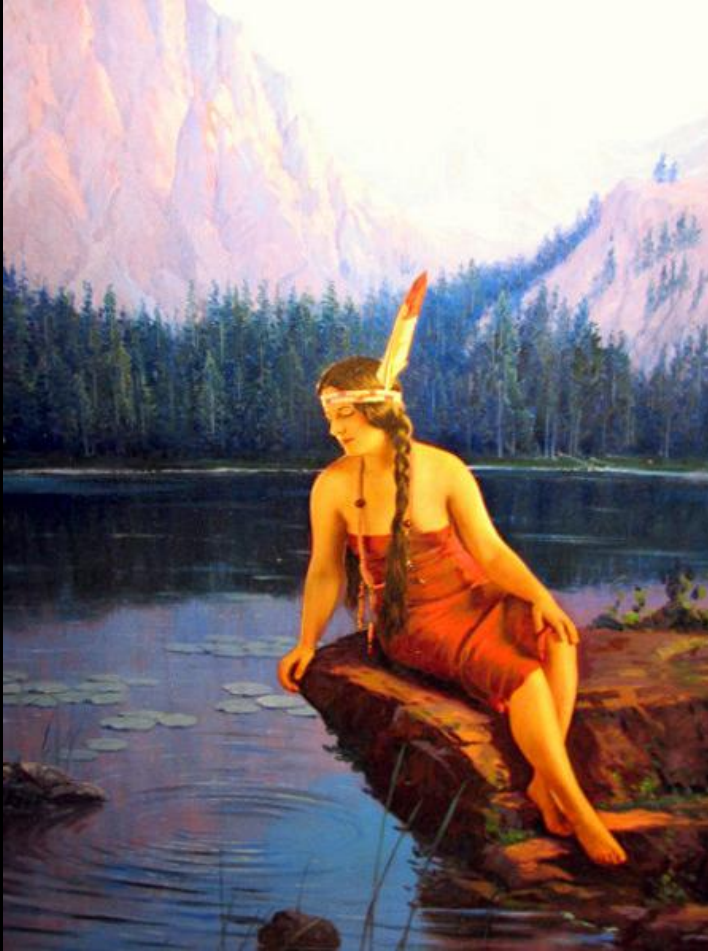




# Indian Princesses For Sale



# 1915-1940s





# Stereotypes

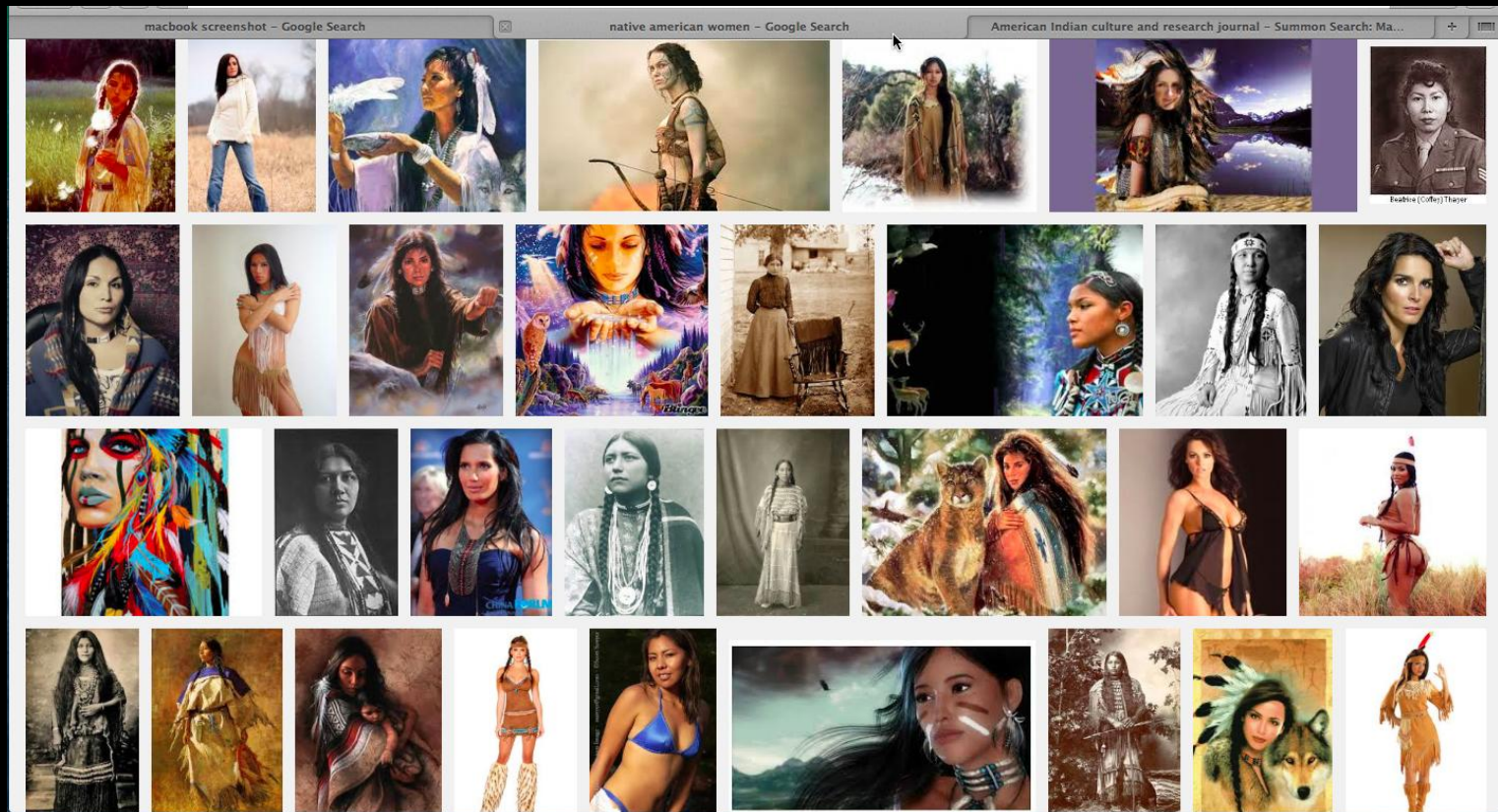




# Pocahotties



# “Native American Women





# Mascots



# Impacts of History and Canadian Legislation

- Marginalization of women and traditional roles in history and through history
- Residential Schooling impacts on women and families
- Female Indian identity under the Indian Act

Our women have remained voiceless and faceless.

**How does the sexualization of Indigenous women relate to the issue of women who have gone missing or have been murdered?**



1,181 cases involving aboriginal women since 1980. Aboriginal women made up 4.3 per cent of the Canadian population, but accounted for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women.

- A learned behavior
- Aboriginal women remain nameless & faceless
- Systemic inequalities
- Women perceived to be invaluable
- “they won’t be missed”
- Combination of impacts from colonization and learned behaviors places women in a dangerous spaces

Reinvigoration of our traditions and ways of being provide a framework that ensures Indigenous women's relationship to the land and their human right to **body sovereignty** remain intact and free from violation.

# Are there solutions?

- Perhaps there's a middle ground between doing nothing and another full factual inquiry
- fairer funding models for health and education
- policing organizations — across the country — need to be held to account for ignoring cases regarding missing Aboriginal women
- a national inquiry that takes us to a place where we can come up with a **national strategy**

# What would we learn through an inquiry that we don't already know?

- Where did we dropped the ball with these cases up until now?
- There should be a positive, collaborative, respectful response to what is a deep-rooted social issue.
- An inquiry might identify instances in which Indigenous women were treated differently by the authorities
- We need legal clout to gain access to files
- To force people to come forward if they are subpoenaed and testify