ISSUES OF ACCESSIBILITY IN THE NORTH: AN ANALYSIS OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE HIGHWAY OF TEARS

by

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ABSTRACT

The Highway of Tears is a term that is known across northern British Columbia. Since 1969, women and girls have gone missing and been found murdered along the 724 km stretch of Highway 16 between Prince Rupert and Prince George, British Columba. Many of these women were trying to get from one destination to another when their safety was compromised. These individuals were from communities with few transportation options available and where hitchhiking is a common form of transportation. Using an interdisciplinary perspective including northern studies, political science, and women's studies I will analyze the issues of transportation in the north in connection to the Highway of Tears case. In particular I will examine how the Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan developed in order to determine what happened and why it took ten years for a policy response to emerge that addressed safety concerns and transportation gaps in the north.

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Glossary

BC- British Columbia

CEDAW- Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CSFS- Carrier Sekani Family Services

FAFI- Feminist Alliance for International Action

FIFO- Fly-in Fly-out

FNDEP- First Nations Driver Education Program

FNHA- First Nations Health Authority

LDLC- Long-distance labour commuting

MLA- Member of Legislative Assembly

MP- Member of Parliament

MOTI- Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure

NDP- New Democratic Party

NWAC- Native Women's Association

OIPC- Office of Information and Privacy

PTB- Passenger Transportation Board

RCMP- Royal Canadian Mounted Police

REB- Research Ethics Board

TAP- Transportation Action Plan

UBCM- Union of British Columbia Municipalities

VICLAS- Victim Crime Linkage System

Acknowledgement & Dedication

This work is dedicated to all the women and girls who have gone missing and been murdered along the Highway of Tears. This work is also dedicated to the incredibly resilient women that I have had the honour of supporting and being supported by on a daily basis including family, friends, co-workers, and acquaintances.

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Story

Imagine you live in northern British Columbia, where you're embraced by forests at every turn and in awe by the mountains in every view. You may live anywhere along a 724 kilometre stretch of Highway 16, from Prince Rupert, British Columbia to Prince George, British Columbia. Maybe you live in the larger city of Terrace (11,500) or the smaller town of Burns Lake (1,800). Imagine yourself, sitting at your kitchen table constructing a travel plan to go from your home town to the next community or larger city centre. Maybe you are feeling sick and need to go to the doctor or you need to go to a certain store that sells the product you cannot find anywhere else. Maybe you want to visit family and friends or spend the day in new surroundings because some days you feel isolated and just want to visit somewhere new. You soon come to the realization that getting from point A to point B is not so easy. Even if you are lucky enough to have access to a vehicle, the road and weather conditions can sometimes be questionable. If you do not have access to a vehicle, which is common for yourself and fellow community members, you need to check the bus routes. But what if there are no buses travelling from your community to other cities and towns in the region? Or when they do run, they stop at 1 am? And once you get to point B how will you get back home again? Will you be able to afford the travel costs or potential hotel costs if you are not able to go back home in the same day? Perhaps it would be better to walk the distance and hitchhike to the next community? It is also important for you to consider the dangers of traveling along the highway, the weather conditions and the limited cell phone service which cuts off your connection to family and friends, the wildlife, but also most importantly others who are traveling along the highway. The reality is you live along a highway that is also known as the Highway of Tears where many women, most of whom are Indigenous, have gone missing or have been murdered since 1969. So when traveling you must not only

consider how and when you will travel and the costs you could incur but also your safety. The reality is that the need for transportation for yourself and other community members does not stop whether it's night or day, dark or light, snowy or sunny, safe or dangerous, and most importantly whether there are transportation services or not. So ask yourself, how will you get from point A to point B?

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

In northern British Columbia, a lack of transportation options has compromised the personal safety of women living in remote and northern communities. Since 1969, an estimated 18 women, many of whom are Indigenous women, have gone missing or been murdered along Highway 16 which has become known as the Highway of Tears (see image in Appendix A). The Highway of Tears is a stretch of road that runs from Prince Rupert on British Columbia's west coast through numerous communities to Prince George in north-central British Columbia (Highway of Tears Symposium: 2006, 7).

The north is an incredibly unique part of Canada. There are many challenges facing northern communities, regardless of whether they are located in the territorial or provincial north. One of these challenges is limited accessibility to transportation. In particular, there is a lack of transportation options (public and private) outside and between major centres in the north. Factors such as geography, weather, remoteness, colonialism and poverty all contribute to this problem.

In March 2006, the Highway of Tears Symposium was held in Prince George to address countless issues regarding safety and transportation along Highway 16 (see Appendix B). In June of that year, a report was released which detailed a list of 33 recommendations to address the various concerns throughout the communities. The report's first recommendation was to establish a bus shuttle system to connect communities in a more efficient way and create a safer transportation option to address the high rates of hitchhiking along the highway. However, it was not until almost a decade later, on December 14, 2015, that the government announced the Transportation Action Plan (TAP).

This thesis examines two aspects of this incredibly complex topic. First, I will explore the issue of transportation and how inaccessible transportation connects to issues relating to safety and, in particular, safety for women in the north. Second, I will examine the policy community and the various actors and organizations that have played a role in the development of the TAP. In this chapter, I outline my research questions, the reasons why I believe this research is important, my theoretical framework and the methods I have used to conduct my research. The chapter ends with an overview of the thesis.

1.2 Research Questions

The questions that guide my research include:

1. What are the challenges associated with transportation accessibility in northern British Columbia? How does this issue affect the safety of women, and in particular Indigenous women, in this region?

2. What factors led to the development of the Transportation Action Plan in 2015? Why did this plan take over a decade to develop following the call for action at the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium?

The following research questions break up my thesis into two parts. The first set of questions looks at the problem of safe and accessible transportation. I argue that characteristics of the north, including political, geographic and socio-economic factors, serve as barriers for communities in terms of addressing the issue of safe and accessible transportation in northern British Columbia. In addition to these factors, our colonial history makes Indigenous women more vulnerable to systemic issues like poverty, sexism and racism. These barriers make Indigenous women more susceptible to safety risks while traveling along the Highway 16 corridor. I suggest that safe and accessible transportation is

limited to non-existent to the north which makes hitchhiking one of the few options available for marginalized individuals living in northern, rural and remote communities. I argue that the issues of transportation in the region are symptoms of a greater systemic problem that is facing the north.

The second group of questions looks at the solution to the problem of inaccessible safe transportation in the north. I argue that there were multiple barriers to the development of the TAP policy including: lack of political autonomy in the north; conflictual relationships between the north and the south; and, lastly, the policy orientations of the provincial government in power during this time period. Finally, I suggest that the degree of power that each policy actor had in the development was crucial and that those who had more power played a role in holding back the TAP. In the face of such intransigence, however, northern communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, showed remarkable resilience and worked together with external organizations to put pressure on the government to act.

1.3 Research Fields

This interdisciplinary research project encompasses insights from three distinct disciplines: Northern Studies; Political Science; and Women's Studies. The discipline of Northern Studies examines the various issues and challenges facing northern regions around the world including those of a geographic, political and socio-cultural nature. These challenges are incredibly unique and Northern Studies analyzes them in terms of their impacts on community development.

Political Science involves the analysis of the political system including government, society, law, culture and power. This perspective is a critical piece to integrate into this research project as it outlines how the political system functions and affects people and

communities on a daily basis. This includes the study of public policy which involves action or inaction taken by a group of policy actors in a community. Policy is more than just a new piece of legislation; it includes a process that brings together individuals from government and society. This procedure is known as the policy cycle. The policy cycle, policy actors and policy communities are important pieces from political science literature for this thesis.

Lastly the discipline of Women's Studies explores the social and cultural constructs of gender in society and how they evolved over time in connection to institutions in society. In addition, Women's Studies looks at systems of power including patriarchy and how individuals navigate these systems by applying various lenses such as feminist theory, queer theory and others. Women's Studies is important to integrate into this thesis as it delves deeper into the questions of how systems work, whom they benefit and how this affects society in general.

While each of these lenses is used individually to analyze and unpack specific topics in their respective disciplinary fields, they can also be used in conjunction with each other. Bringing these different disciplines together can also be referred to as an interdisciplinary approach. In Interdisciplinary Studies, researchers combine, collaborate and explore boundaries of various disciplines (Nelson, 2011). Therefore, Interdisciplinary Studies is the practice of taking a cross disciplinary approach to research. In this research project, I believe it is absolutely necessary to use an interdisciplinary lens for two reasons. First, Interdisciplinary Studies gives freedom to researchers to step outside of disciplinary boxes or silos and inspires creativity by collaborating or integrating new perspectives, theories and methods into the research. Second, stepping outside of the box leads to new opportunities for research and benefits the research, as it acknowledges the bigger picture of the research topic being addressed.

1.4 Positionality

At the outset, it is important to recognize that the main problem is that the perpetrators of violence against women are allowed to commit acts of violence, not that women are putting themselves at risk by engaging in "unsafe" practices such as hitchhiking. Sexist and racist notions thriving in society underlie this violence that then make women and marginalized and Indigenous women in particular, the targets of such behaviour. It is not just an issue regarding the safety of women, but also the society as a whole, as these perpetrators live amongst us and can be strangers, trusted loved ones or people of authority.

Human Rights Watch released an article in 2013 entitled *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia Canada,* which outlines the systematic failures in our society when it comes to acknowledging and responding to the high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. Through its research, Human Rights Watch found disturbing accounts "of rape and sexual assault by RCMP officers, including from a woman who described how in July 2012 police officers took her outside of town, raped her, and threatened to kill her if she told anyone" (2013). Indigenous women and girls do not feel protected by the systems in our society that are supposed to protect all. While statistics and the RCMP E-PANA investigation, which focuses on the cases of the women from the Highway of Tears, may have *confirmed* numbers of missing and murdered women, they do not take into account those individuals who do not feel safe or heard if they were to come forward with reports of missing loved ones. The report states that even though we do have policy to address these issues at both the federal and provincial levels "the persistence of the violence indicates a need for deeper, coordinated interventions to address the systemic nature of the problem" (2013).

Why am I conducting this research? Safety is an issue that concerns us all. I have had countless conversations with female friends about our fears of taking a cab alone or even walking home alone at night, because if you are not with a friend you are suddenly *putting yourself at risk.* We recognize this should not be the case. Our behaviour is not the risk; rather, it is the society in which we live that makes it a risk. I do want to recognize here that I am in a place of privilege, being Caucasian and living in financial security, but I still have personal stories where I have felt unsafe, a feeling that is too common and varies among all women in society. It is not always easy for individuals to come forward when they feel their safety is threatened. Trust within society is affected by past and present experiences with authorities and a person's ability to overcome sexist and racist stereotypes. If more women were able to share and come forward with community support perhaps we could address these issues of safety earlier before it is too late. Unfortunately, we are left with unfinished stories of the women who have been murdered along the Highway of Tears. For those lost voices, families and communities we need to take concrete steps to make our society a safer place to live. The steps we need to make include policies and working together with those who are most impacted by these issues to inform better policy for the north.

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks

Policy Cycle and Policy Communities

I intend to use the policy cycle and policy community approaches to help explain the ten-year development of the Transportation Action Plan. As outlined in Inwood (2012), the policy cycle approach provides a framework for examining the development of policy which includes problem definition and agenda setting, policy formulation, policy implementation, and evaluation. The problem definition and agenda setting stage involves looking at how the

problem is identified, if it commands attention and how it gets onto the political agenda. Policy formulation includes the "design and drafting of policy goals and strategies for achieving them" (Inwood, 2012: 224). Policy implementation is the process of enforcing programs and policies in response to the defined problem at hand. Lastly, policy evaluation involves reviewing the effectiveness of the new programs and policies and providing feedback to the actors responsible for the implementation. The Transportation Action Plan that is the focus of this thesis is currently in the implementation stage. Therefore, I will concentrate primarily on the policy cycle aspects of problem definition, agenda setting and policy formulation.

In addition to understanding how policies develop through the various stages, it is important to identify the key actors and how they influence the process. To map the collection of actors, political scientists use the concept of policy community. A policy community is a group of organizations, political actors, and stakeholders with shared interests on a particular policy agenda (Wallner, 2008: 425). By analyzing the policy community, I can determine who was involved in the development of the TAP, the degree and scope of their involvement, and how northern actors and perspectives influenced the development of the policy.

Empowerment and Decolonization Perspectives

While I will be using a policy cycle framework in order to discuss the response to accessibility issues and safety for women in the north, I think it is also important to recognize the research perspectives I will integrate when conducting my research including feminist empowerment and decolonization perspectives. These perspectives not only guide the research process but keep researchers themselves accountable in conducting their research in

a respectful manner. It is imperative to integrate these perspectives within research as power and control are integral to the functioning of patriarchal and colonial systems.

In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) critiques western academia and the colonization practices that predominate in western societies. Tuhiwai Smith highlights the need for systemic change and argues that such "change requires capability, leadership, support, time, courage, reflexivity, determination and compassion" (xiii). For example, she recognizes that "research has been an encounter between the West and the Other" and that "much more is known about the one side of those encounters than is known about the other side" (8). When it comes to approaching research involving Indigenous communities, I believe it is critical, especially coming from an outsider perspective, to evaluate how power is used. A researcher becomes accountable for their power through reflexivity, which is the process of including oneself in the research process (Ristock and Pennell, 1996: 12). How does one's position in society affect the research? What preconceived notions of knowledge and power does the researcher bring to the process? Questions like these are critical to ask, so that one can address power inequalities in all areas of the research process and work to decolonize the research process.

In their book *Community Research as Empowerment*, Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell (1996) address the many challenges of conducting research from a feminist perspective. Ristock and Pennell outline the difficulties that feminist researchers face in their attempt to deconstruct, analyze and interpret information with the goal of empowering individuals in a fair, inclusive and responsible manner. To empower oneself is to enhance one's ability to control one's life (Ristock and Pennell, 1996: 1). The process of turning empowerment into a framework forces one to approach research with a mindset that breaks down and critically analyzes power relations, cultural contexts and social action (2). The authors state that an

empowerment framework is "an approach to research that seeks to affect empowerment at all stages of the research process through critical analysis of power and responsible use of power" (9). It is therefore critical to break down power in the research process.

In examining the policy process, considerations of power relations will be a key part of evaluating how governments and organizations with different degrees of power influenced the policy outcome. Also it is imperative to explore what is defined as power within these organizations. Does power mean more financial resources, personnel or community trust? Were there also barriers that influenced outcomes because certain actors lacked these resources? Power relations therefore do not only exist between the researcher and the research but also within the research itself.

1.6 Methodology

To research this case study, I drew on both primary and secondary resources. For my primary resources, I conducted interviews with individual actors who were involved in the development of the TAP. In order to complete these interviews, I submitted a Research Ethics Protocol for Research with Human Participants application to the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the University of Northern British Columbia (see Appendix C for REB Approval Letters). A consent letter and informed consent document were submitted in addition to the application (See Appendix D for Information Letter). These two documents outlined information regarding the research project and the potential risks associated with the interview process. The research project was given a low risk rating as there was a minimal risk to those participating in the interviews. A potential risk that was identified was the issue of anonymity. This issue was discussed with the interviewee in advance of the interview and participants were given the choice to have their name included or not in the study. Initially

the REB application included only in-person interviews. After further consideration of the location of interviewees and the researcher's ability to conduct in-person interviews, the application was amended to include telephone interviews (See Appendix E for Interview Questions).

Potential interview participants were selected based on a timeline of events created to outline the development of the TAP. I wanted to interview specific individuals who were involved in the development of the TAP such as: a representative from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, a Mayor from a community along the Highway 16 corridor, a representative from Carrier Sekani Family Services, a former Highway of Tears Coordinator, the former Commissioner of the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry and lastly a representative from BC Transit. In the end, due to time and availability, not all the individuals above were able to participate. Interviews were conducted with the Mayor of Smithers Taylor Bachrach, BC Transit's Chris Fudge and two provincial government officials (who chose to remain anonymous).

Interviews were conducted in order to get further information on the consultation process of the TAP. Interviews also made space to allow for different perspectives on the TAP as well as the current state of transportation in the north. Interviewees were asked what they saw as challenges to accessibility of transportation and how they saw the TAP impacting communities. They were also asked what their role was in the development of the TAP. Further questions regarding social trust and relationships between communities were also included in the interviews. Through these questions I wanted to delve deeper into why it took ten years after the Symposium's recommendation to establish a new public transportation system for northern British Columbia.

Few scholarly publications have been written in connection to the Highway of Tears. For my secondary sources, my literature review analyzes various arguments and perspectives on the policy cycle, in the north and within women's studies. In addition to my secondary literature review, I conducted a media study on the coverage of the Highway of Tears which has revealed important moments in the Transportation Action Plan's development. This media study helped identify turning points in the development of the TAP and the actors who were involved. I have also drawn on government documents and publications from non-governmental organizations to highlight the different phases of policy development.

1.7 Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 will elaborate the literature on the various topics I have introduced in this chapter, including the characteristics of the north, safety for women and the policy cycle. Chapter 3 will outline the development of the Transportation Action Plan from 2005 until 2015, when the TAP was announced. Chapter 4 will reflect on the key findings from the research and show how the literature helps us to understand the case study presented in chapter 3. Lastly chapter 5 will summarize the main findings of the thesis and make recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will examine three main themes covered in this thesis and how they have been discussed in academic literature. Section one will focus on the characteristics of northern regions, with a particular emphasis on geographic, socio-economic and political characteristics. Section two on the safety for women will review key concepts such as patriarchy, colonialism and institutionalized racism by integrating Indigenous, feminist and ecofeminist perspectives into the discussion. Lastly, section three will examine the public policy process through a discussion of policy communities, policy actors and other concepts tied to the policy cycle that have been highlighted in literature on this topic.

2.2 Characteristics of the North

Geographical Characteristics

This section will review various geographical characteristics of northern British Columbia including; climate, geography, remoteness and the population of the region. These characteristics will give a greater context of the barriers to transportation in the north and the impacts at the community level.

Climate and Geographical Features

Northern British Columbia has an incredibly distinctive landscape which serves as both a gateway to adventure and a barrier to connectivity. Geographically speaking, Young (2016: 41) notes that northern British Columbia contains 5 mountain chains, as well as a diversity of river systems, landscapes "and at least ten different biogeoclimatic ecosystems". British Columbia's climate is heavily influenced by the mountain ranges and the Pacific

Ocean (WelcomeBC, 2020). The northern region of British Columbia faces long winters that are cold with much snow (WelcomeBC, 2020). Summers in the north are relatively short, and along the north coast of the region there is heavy precipitation throughout all seasons of the year (WelcomeBC, 2020). Due to the wealth of natural resources in the region, the economy of northern British Columbia is dependent on resource-based industries. In addition to forestry the economy is also based on "mining, power-generation, and tourism" (Markey et al., 2008: 412).

Population

While the northern region covers a large portion of the provincial land mass (70 percent) it contains a very small part of the provincial population (7 percent) (Young, 2016: 4). There are no urban centres in northern British Columbia with a population over 100,000 (Young, 2016: 43). The largest city in the north is the City of Prince George, which in 2016 had a population of 74,003 (Statistics Canada, 2016). Smaller towns in the region range from 5,000 to 20,000 people (Markey et al., 2008: 412). Rural communities usually have fewer than 1000 people (412). There is a high concentration of Indigenous peoples residing on reserves in these rural and remote regions, as well as significant Indigenous populations in urban areas (Weller, 1994: 129). In the province as a whole, Indigenous peoples comprise 4.4 percent of the population, whereas in northern British Columbia the Indigenous portion of the population is 16 percent (Young, 2016: 43). According to the First Nations Health Council, the northern region of British Columbia contains approximately 54 First Nations communities (First Nations Health Council, 2020).

Northern British Columbia has a younger population compared to the rest of the province with 60 percent of the population being 44 years and younger (Destination BC, 2013). However, according to Ryser and Halseth (2012) the population in northern British

Columbia is aging faster than that in the rest of the province (329). Resource communities in northern British Columbia are facing the challenge of the "resource frontier aging". This is where the aging baby boomer generation chooses to stay and retire in the region, while there is an out-migration of younger people (Ryser and Halseth, 2012: 330). This is a challenge for resource communities as they do not have developed services in place to serve and support an aging population.

Remoteness

In addition to having a unique demographic composition, northern regions are often far removed from major urban centres. Young (2016) identifies two characteristics of northern British Columbia which are relevant to the idea of remoteness: hinterland and isolation. He argues that the hinterland is often a place that is "defined and understood by outsiders as a frontier, and even a place of adventure" (Young, 2016: 40).   Despite the fact that what is seen by some as a hinterland is a homeland to others, hinterlands or frontiers are often on the periphery and remote. Remoteness has been characterized, from a settler perspective, as a battle between people and the environment (Coates, 1994: 35). Therefore, the challenge is how each individual or community may come together to overcome and face this battle (1994: 35). Some may feel isolated as a result of the environment because important services may be farther away and require transportation to access them. This isolation goes further when the individual may not have access to any transportation networks. Social isolation is also a symptom of the barriers to transportation in remote communities, especially when individuals are unable to connect with family, friends and neighbors. These informal networks are critical supports for some individuals in remote areas, especially when they do not have access to formal services (Ryser and Halseth, 2012:

330). As a result of limited transportation options, an individual may rarely engage in their community or surrounding communities which results in further isolation.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

In this section I will describe the social and economic characteristics of northern British Columbia. This will entail a discussion of conflictual relationships that characterize the north and how they contribute to a culture of opposition within the region. Lastly, the impact of socio-economic characteristics on accessibility to transportation in the region will be reviewed including a discussion of poverty and Indigenous peoples in the north.

Culture of Opposition

In his work on the historical and contemporary challenges facing the provincial norths, Coates notes that a central component of northern life is a "culture of opposition" (1994: 40). A culture of opposition is marked by a series of conflicts, both political and social, that characterize the north in terms of how it sees itself. At the heart of this culture of opposition is colonialism, the process of subjugating Indigenous peoples to the dominant institutions of political, cultural and social power. To this day, colonialism continues to impact the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. For example, the way Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples connect with the land and see its future in terms of development or sustainability is a source of conflict (38).

The alienation of Indigenous peoples from economic discussions connects to the argument that Indigenous peoples have been marginalized from economic development in Canada (McDonald, 2016: 144). Not only were Indigenous peoples left out of the decision-making process but the capitalist focus of the economy has contributed to the hardships that many Indigenous communities face (2016: 144). For instance, Indigenous communities in

Canada experience higher rates of "poverty, suicide, and drug and alcohol use, unsanitary housing conditions, lack of access to clean water", as well as lower life expectancies than the Canadian average (2016: 144). McDonald argues that these are outcomes of colonial policies in the past (2016: 144).

It is important to note that this conflict between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is not only about the land, but also about the lack of political autonomy of Indigenous communities. Control over many Indigenous communities in Canada has been and continues to be maintained by government through the Indian Act. McDonald (2016) argues that through the increase of economic development projects in northern British Columbia, Indigenous peoples "struggle to assert title and to keep control of their own social and cultural projects" (143). Lastly, the social and cultural effects of colonial assimilation have and continue to foster relationships of mistrust and misunderstanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (Coates, 1994: 38).

Another conflict Coates (1994: 29) recognizes is between permanent residents and the transient work population. There are two ways in which the north has become a magnet for transient workers. First, people often come to the north for job opportunities in fields that are in need of specialized workers, in areas like education, resource development and medicine (1994: 29). Workers are drawn to these positions based on the high-wages and opportunity to build experience (1994: 29). This work is often undertaken for a "short-term benefit" because if wages drop and the harsh climate becomes too much to handle, newcomers will look to the south for new work and an ideal place to live (1994: 29). Second, the north is an attraction for seasonal work (tree planting and resource development) that lasts for only a few months at a time or when there is a market demand for particular resources. This work often attracts individuals from outside communities or even provinces. Temporary work for those in

industries such as construction, tourism, and resource development also attracts transient workers. This work tends to boom during the summer as the harsh climate does not allow for it to take place all year long (1994: 29). As Coates wryly states: "many northern workers define their commitment to the region in terms of the length of the summer season" (1994: 29). With this transient work, there is not only a lack of commitment to the region but the financial proceeds from employment are taken with the workers when they leave the region.

Transient work can also be characterized as long-distance labour commuting (LDLC) and fly in fly out (FIFO) work. Ryser et al. (2016) have researched how LDLC and FIFO work in the north have impacted workers and social relationships. According to their research, there has been a shift towards LDLC and FIFO work in the north since the 1980's (596). The authors found there have been more observed physical and mental health impacts on workers in the resource industry as a result of transient work conditions. In particular, they found that LDLC work may result in "less sleep, fitness, relaxation or social participation" (596). In addition, the work rotation of LDLC may contribute to increased substance abuse which can "impact worker performance, as well as family and community relationships" (596). Positive impacts were also identified by the research in that workers are challenged in their personal development by building new skills and practices (597). What is important to note is not only the impact of the work on the worker but how this may foster a toxic environment that can translate beyond the work camp and into neighbouring communities. An increase in the number of transient individuals in the northern region leaves permanent residents feeling helpless in terms of their influence in the future development of the area in which they live (Coates, 1994: 38).

Fort St. John, British Columbia, where the controversial Site C dam is being constructed, is a community that has felt the effects of the increase in transient workers.

Workers come from all over the country and world to work there. The work camps where they live are often referred to as "man camps" because of the disproportionate number of men who live there (Edwards, 2019). According to Edwards, in 2017 Fort St. John "had a sexual assault rate of 100.01 incidences per 100,000 people", a figure that was almost double the national average (2019). In Site C's first year of development, RCMP data showed a 38.9 percent increase in reported sexual assaults in the region (Edwards, 2019). This is believed to be linked to the "hyper-masculine" and substance abuse culture of work camps where men work long hours away from home. This often leads to workers needing to 'blow off steam' in ways that become uncontrollable when alcohol and drugs are mixed in (Edwards, 2019).

While the research links resource extraction work camps to violence against women, it is also important to look at how the industry is gendered. Maureen Reed (2003: 87) states that "women's work had been largely invisible" within the resource industry because it has been viewed as secondary to the employment of men. Reed's work focuses on forestry communities and how women's roles have been largely misunderstood. She notes that many women support the industry in ways that reinforce traditional gender roles: for example, staying at home with the children (2003: 97). However, there were also some women in Reed's study who stated they do participate directly in the industry. These women have had varied experiences of sexism which make them feel "(in)visible for new training and promotional opportunities" (99). What is important to note here is that the gendering of the resource industry adds to the existing culture of opposition in the north.

Transiency of Government and Industry

Like the workers who are employed in the resource sector, governments and corporations that want to invest in the area are also transient individuals (Coates, 1994: 38). Government and corporate officials will often come into the area with a political or economic

agenda. These actors can exert influence in two critical ways. First, regardless of whether the political control comes from the provincial or federal government, constitutional authority allows for these powers to pick and choose how resources will be used and what economic development will look like (1994: 25). An example of this can be the abovementioned Site C dam development, which went ahead despite considerable backlash from northern communities and, in particular, Indigenous communities due to a lack of consultation.

The influence that outside actors have in the region can result in further internal conflict in communities. Halseth and Ryser (2017) argue that resource dependent rural and small communities have economies that are characterized by conflict and power (221). The authors suggest that what is unique about these conflicts is that they are grounded in the "local collective memory and foundation" (222). This means that the small space in which changes are taking place makes the conflicts that more personal to community members (222). When it comes to accessibility and the ability to access power and create change, Halseth and Ryser (2017) argue that local governments are often caught in the middle between the diverging views of the local community and external actors such as investors or government (223). In addition, centralized policy making by senior governments in resource dependent communities has become less informed by what is happening in those communities and more focused on what is the benefit to the health of the province or broader economy (Halseth & Ryser, 2017: 248). When it comes to accessibility of power in the north, there is a constant struggle between the political agendas of the north and the south. As mentioned above this external struggle can also fuel internal conflicts.

Coates adds that internal politics contribute to isolation and compromise the "regions' ability to present and protect their interests against outside forces" (1994: 24). Coates further states that "intense localism", the prioritization or bias towards one's town, has been to blame

for this situation (27). This internal conflict is fueled by the competition for resource development which is further stoked by outside interests looking to invest. Many communities along Highway 16 in particular Kitimat, Prince Rupert and Prince George are hubs for this development. These towns are often the focus for resource development which leaves other communities in the region on the sidelines, or fighting amongst themselves for investment. This battle for scarce resources fosters further animosity between communities in the north and, as noted above, contributes to the culture of opposition in the region (Weller, 1994).

Poverty and Indigenous Communities

It is important to understand the socio-economic characteristics of the north and, in particular, how poverty plays a role in safety and accessibility. Higher rates of poverty in the north are mainly due to the higher proportion of Indigenous peoples. According to statistics from 2011, 8.8 percent of Canadians had low incomes and were considered to be living in poverty (Ross & Lochhead, 2015). The rates of Indigenous communities living at or below the poverty line are higher than other communities in Canada (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 16). According to the Canadian Poverty Institute, 1 in 4 Indigenous peoples are living in poverty (2020). Wilson and Macdonald state that not only are Indigenous peoples among the poorest in the country but also experience greater income inequality and unemployment (2013: 6). According to a report released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) "50 percent of status First Nations children live below the poverty line" (Wilson & Macdonald, 2013: 6). Poverty affects accessibility to transportation and, therefore, its roots and impacts should be evaluated in connection to the highway and safety.

Why do Canada's Indigenous people experience higher rates of poverty in comparison to other groups? According to Morton (2016) "colonization has continued to have devastating social consequences for Indigenous peoples such as high rates of poverty, overrepresentation in the corrections system, child welfare issues, educational inequalities and high unemployment" (303). Canada's colonial past is marked by the enforcement of Eurocentric and patriarchal ideals that forever changed the landscape, physically and socially, in which Indigenous peoples lived. Residential schools were one of the institutions where this enforcement and assimilation took place. An example was the Lejac Residential School near Fraser Lake on Highway 16, an institution which was known for the horrific impacts it had on multiple generations of Indigenous families in northern British Columbia (Michalko, 2016: 43). The long-term effects of this school were not temporary and still exist today.

Many other institutions of state authority, like the judicial system and the RCMP, also carried out various assimilatory policies. The impact of colonial policies on Indigenous communities still persists. Wilson and Macdonald found that the reason for the social differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities was linked to policy decisions by the government (27). Policies that situated Indigenous peoples on remote reserves limited their access to health and education services but more importantly contributed to feelings of isolation in connection to Indigenous culture. The authors further note the need to decolonize policy and policy development processes and that working alongside rather than over Indigenous communities is critical (29).

With regards to poverty and safety, the Highway of Tears Symposium report shows that "some predators know that profound poverty exists within First Nation family units and they have actually used the offer of employment as a lure to position themselves for opportunity" (2006: 17). An example of this was Ronald Jack and his family who

disappeared in 1989 from Prince George after a promise of work in a remote work camp (2006: 17). The report also notes that many university and college students tend to live near or at the poverty line due to the high costs in rent, textbooks and tuition (2006: 17). This, they argue, can explain the increase in hitchhiking along Highway 16 for many students who travel to British Columbia for tree planting in the summer (2006: 17). This was the case for Nicole Hoar who was a student tree planter in the area when she disappeared in 2002 (2006: 17). Living a life in poverty increases one's safety risk because access to transportation is limited or non-existent, forcing individuals to hitchhike between the distant communities along the highway.

Accessibility to Transportation

There are multiple barriers in the north that continue to make it difficult for individuals to access transportation in the region. Transportation infrastructure is a crucial aspect of society that establishes connections between communities and services. Frischmann (2012: xi) states that "transportation and communication infrastructures…enable economic and cultural engagement between communities, expanding the scope of markets and communities by enabling people, goods and ideas to travel more easily." Access to transportation can affect a community's economy and quality of life in many ways (Tumlin 2012: 4). When the government invests in transportation networks it is investing in accessibility for society. However, there are barriers in the north that make it challenging to invest in transportation networks, including small population numbers and great distances, which Coates refers to as the "twin tyrannies" of the north (1994: 33). Economically it is difficult to rationalize investment in transportation networks because of the small populations which yield a smaller financial return than an investment would in southern, urban communities (1994: 33). Moreover, while populations can grow and change, the challenges

of the harsh climate, geography and distance are not so easily changed and also not appealing to governments or private investors.

Ryser and Halseth (2012) argue that the ageing population of northern British Columbia is particularly impacted by a lack of access to sustainable transportation. I mentioned earlier that one of the demographic trends in northern British Columbia is an ageing population. With the dominance of neoliberal policies guiding government at the federal and provincial level, service supports have been reduced and regionalized for communities. Rural community members are then left without adequate supports and access to health care, clinics, social agencies and many other services. The reduction of essential services in rural areas has "profound impacts on residents who are low income who may not have access to transportation" (Ryser & Halseth, 2017: 122). Even if residents do have access to a vehicle there are still barriers such as fear of driving at night, during peak hours of highway traffic, and in poor weather conditions (Ryser & Halseth, 2012: 330). While these barriers to transportation impact the elderly population they also affect many other residents across the northern part of the province. A lack of accessible transportation further exacerbates the isolation of rural communities which are already struggling to cope with great distances, harsh climates and minimal services.

With limited or no access to transportation, many individuals who live along the Highway 16 corridor have no choice but to hitchhike. The remoteness of communities and the challenging geography and climate of northern British Columbia make hitchhiking incredibly dangerous. According to Morton (2016) "this remote and underserviced highway is a critical case of violence against Indigenous women" (300). Hitchhiking between communities is a common mode of transportation and is often a last resort choice (2016: 301). It is a result of a lack of crucial services and opportunities in communities along the

highway and impoverished living standards. Morton argues that the Highway of Tears is a space where "mobility, space, gender and race" intersect in dangerous ways which directly link to the "violence that is being perpetuated against Indigenous women" (2016: 300).

Hitchhiking involves a great deal of trust between the hitchhiker and the driver to get from the pickup location to the destination safely. Even though many hitchhikers arrive safely at their destinations, "hitchhiking in the contemporary setting has a reputation as being dangerous and undesirable as a mode of mobility" (Morton, 2016: 301). According to the Safe Streets Act (2004) in British Columbia it is illegal to "solicit" a ride while on a roadway (Government of British Columbia, 2004). This means that with the lack of transportation options, individuals are forced to choose illegal forms of transportation. Hitchhiking in combination with many other issues concerning race and gender contribute to the increased prevalence of safety issues along Highway 16.

Political Characteristics

In this section I will review the government structures that make up the northern jurisdictions and how these structures influence the politics of northern and remote regions. Much of the focus will be on the various levels of government in northern British Columbia, including provincial, local, First Nations reserves and regional districts. I will outline how these multiple layers of government create an environment that the literature characterizes as being "hyperfractionalized" (Young, 2016: 47). I will also unpack the term neoliberalism and discuss why it is relevant to this thesis. Lastly, I will explore how the issue of powerlessness and lack of autonomy impact northern politics and access to government.

Structures

Government and power in Canada are based on federalism, a system of government where there is a division of powers between the federal, provincial and territorial governments (Poelzer & Wilson, 2014: 189). The Canadian north includes the territories and the provincial norths. The territorial north consists of the Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut. It is important to note that territories do not have "the equivalent status of provinces within the Canadian federal system and are dependent on the federal government for much of their funding" (189). In contrast, the provincial norths are under provincial jurisdiction and most provincial governments are based in the southern part of the provinces. This is a challenge for the population that lives in the provincial north who may not feel like their voices are heard.

Constitutionally speaking, local governments fall under the jurisdiction of provincial governments. Under provincial legislation, local government powers in British Columbia are allocated through the Local Government Act (2015) and the Community Charter (2003) (Government of British Columbia, 2019b). These two acts provide a legal framework through which a local government may be established and what powers it holds in a community. Local governments have regulatory (creation of by-laws) and taxation powers. In addition, they have authority over services like snow removal, garbage collection and road maintenance (Government of British Columbia, 2019b). In order to fund these powers, local revenue is primarily dependent on property taxation and provincial and federal grants (Government of British Columbia, 2019b).

First Nations reserves contain another form of governance that exists at the local level in addition to local governments. First Nations reserves are governed by the Indian Act (1876), one of the most controversial pieces of federal legislation in Canada's history. The

use and administration of reserves is outlined in section 18 of the Indian Act. Section 81 of

the Act delegates Band Councils with the authority to create by-laws that address a wide

range of issues including but not limited to infrastructure maintenance, the health and

wellness of residents and the construction of local works (Government of Canada, 1985).

Therefore, First Nations communities are allocated some freedom by the federal government

to have authority in particular places as designated by the Indian Act. This autonomy,

however, does come with challenges as First Nations communities struggle financially to be

able to provide services. For the purposes of this thesis, the important point is that local

governments and First Nations governments in British Columbia are not autonomous; they

fall under the jurisdiction of other levels of government and this reality constrains their

ability to legislate.

The province of British Columbia also has regional districts. Regional districts are

comprised of municipalities, unincorporated municipalities and even Indigenous

communities (Government of British Columbia, 2019c). Elected representatives from each

local government are appointed to sit on the regional district board (2019c). Regional district

boards also include elected representatives from unincorporated areas that fall outside

incorporated municipal boundaries. There are 27 regional districts in British Columbia and

three that make up the Highway 16 corridor. These include the North Coast, Bulkley-

Nechako and Fraser-Fort George regional districts. Like municipalities, regional districts

have limited powers that include "emergency management, planning for regional solid waste

management and governance for electoral areas" (2019c).

In addition to these levels of government, the province of British Columbia is further

divided and organized into various school districts, provincial electoral districts, federal

electoral districts and health authorities that often overlap (Young, 2016: 47). Young (2016)

uses Canadian political scientist J. Stefan Dupré's term "hyperfractionalized quasi subordination" to characterize the political administration of northern British Columbia (46). This hyperfractionalization is in part due to the vertical and horizontal multi-layering of government. While local and First Nation governments attempt to cohesively bring communities together, divisions still exist not only within the communities but between communities and levels of government. The hyperfractionalization within the region often makes it difficult for communities in the north to speak with one unified voice to the provincial government. This is especially relevant when the government's political agenda is a barrier to creating meaningful solutions for northern communities. This hyperfractionalization is exacerbated by the fact that communities in northern British Columbia are "quasi-subordinate" because they fall under the jurisdiction of senior (federal and provincial) governments and thus lack decision-making authority, and legislative and financial autonomy.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is the practice of rolling back the "influence of the state and government in the economy and society" and rolling out "new decision-making structures and processes that involved both public and private actors" (Summerville & Wilson, 2016: 109). It is particularly relevant in the discussion of this thesis because the impact it has had on the political and economic direction of northern British Columbia over the past two decades (113). Summerville and Wilson (2016) argue that neoliberalism changed the political and economic landscape of northern British Columbia by forcing actors like local governments, First Nations governments and the private sector to play a more prominent role in decision making and administration (113). These local actors stepped up when the federal and provincial governments reduced their involvement in many policy areas (113).

These changes contributed to the hyperfractionalization of governance and the vulnerability of local communities through the off-loading of responsibilities to local entities such as local governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Neoliberal policies placed greater dependence on the private sector which made local communities more vulnerable to the changes in the economy, especially when those communities depend on public services that are being reduced or cut by government. If a private company is not making profit they can pull their services without feeling the negative impact it will have on communities. A case in point is Greyhound's decision to reduce and ultimately cancel its bus services in northern British Columbia, an issue that will be discussed later in this thesis. One of the results is that northern regions feel powerless due to their lack of access to government and control over the policy-making process.

Powerlessness and Lack of Autonomy

The provincial norths face the challenge of regional alienation and sometimes have to find alternative means of influence in order to get northern concerns brought to the forefront of the provincial political agenda. Access to political decision making is an issue that characterizes the north. Coates (1994) argues that northern regions feel powerless due to the concentration of political power in the south which often dictates the economic, social and cultural destiny of the north (39). This is the case for both the territorial and provincial norths. The territories, however, are able to form governments and make decisions based on powers devolved to them from the federal government through legislated acts. Although these powers are different from those of provincial governments whose powers are constitutionally guaranteed and can only be changed if amendments to the constitution are made, they still afford the territorial governments autonomy and decision-making authority.

In contrast to the territorial norths, the provincial norths do not have their own governments. They do have representation in the provincial legislature through Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who are elected in the various northern constituencies (Malloy, 2006: 64). These MLAs bring a regional voice to the legislature. This point, however, can be contested as party discipline may require MLAs to vote along party lines that may not align with regional values (Malloy, 2006: 65). This leaves MLAs themselves feeling powerless to represent their constituencies. Because the population of the north is so small compared to other parts of the province, the number of northern MLAs is also small.

Local governments also struggle with feelings of powerlessness due to their lack of autonomy and capacity to be able to address all local issues. In particular, local governments are often faced with unfunded mandates from the provincial level and competition with other local governments in order to sustain services and population. Unfunded mandates are the continued devolution of responsibilities to the local level by the provincial level without the necessary financial support (Ross, 2018: 92). They have increased significantly under neoliberalism as senior governments seek ways to reduce spending. In their research on unfunded mandates, Ryser et al. (2018) have found that there is a significant impact on a community when a large-scale resource investment is made (29). This includes an increase in demand for services like housing, medical and other essential amenities (29). In addition to this, infrastructure investments are sometimes required in order to make space for the investment, like roads or public work buildings (30). Ryser et al. (2018) argue that local governments take on the costs of the investments despite the stress they place on their financial capacity (30).

This section looked at various government structures that exist in northern British Columbia. While the sheer number and types of actors contributes to the

hyperfractionalization in the north, they are also outlets for northern communities to translate their concerns from the local to the provincial level. Local governments face countless barriers that impact their financial and legislated capacity to address local issues. Most importantly, the role of local actors within the policy arena can be influenced by the provincial government's political agenda and whether it is addressing the unique issues in the north that need to be solved. The north is different from the southern part of the province in many ways, and it is often the responsibility of northern institutions to translate northern demands to the provincial government.

2.3 Safety for Women in Northern British Columbia

Building on the previous overview of the characteristics of the north, this section will review various factors that contribute to safety concerns for women in the north. I will discuss patriarchy, colonialism and feminism in order to understand the systemic structures that continue to perpetuate racist and sexist notions that compromise the safety of women. Furthermore, I will examine feminist approaches including eco-feminist theories in order to incorporate different perspectives on the issue of safety for women and Indigenous women in particular.

Canada is facing a national crisis in regards to the high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women across the country. In 2014 the RCMP revealed that approximately 1,200 Indigenous women went missing or were murdered from 1980 to 2012 (Brant, 2019). In 2015 the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a body of independent experts from around the world, released a report evaluating Canada's adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (United Nations, 2015). This report was written in response to letters from the

Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA) and the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) that both claimed Canada was not fulfilling its duty of overseeing the investigation of the disproportionately high amount of violence towards Indigenous women (United Nations, 2015: 3). The committee noted that in Canada "aboriginal women are exposed to all forms of violence, including sexual violence and murders, committed by different types of perpetrators, from within or outside the Aboriginal community" (21). While safety for all women is a real concern that our country faces, the disproportionately higher levels of violence against Indigenous women need to be addressed.

Patriarchy

Before moving forward, it is important to understand a term that is often used in discussions of safety for women: patriarchy. Patriarchy essentially is "the institutionalized male dominance over women and children" (Mann, 2012: 421). The institutionalized aspects of this dominance are often observed economically, politically and psychologically. Throughout history, men have benefited from and used systematic power to advance in different areas, largely at the expense of women who have been subjected to that power. For example, we can look at our system of governance in Canada, which for so long has been persistently dominated by older white men. In response to requests for an Inquiry into the missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper admitted that "it isn't really high on our radar, to be honest" (CBC, Dec 2014). It is important to think about how those who are in power are able to influence people's lives by either responding or not responding to key issues in society. For the purpose of this thesis, analyzing the role of patriarchy will be crucial to understanding if and where this influence halted the development of the transportation plan.

Colonialism and Institutionalized Racism and Sexism

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) argues in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* that an "indigenous world view, the land and the people, have been radically transformed in the spatial image of the west" (53). This division and labeling of space in western society is different from the Indigenous world view of space, which reworks and renames spaces in other ways. Tuhiwai Smith argues that Indigenous land has been colonized through western ideals of space (51). This colonization occurs not only through theoretical conceptions of space but also its physical delineation in maps, boundaries and borders.

Adele Perry (2001: 175) argues that gender stereotypes were used in the colonization process of British Columbia in the 19th century. For example, she states that "critics seized on the use of gender as a justification for white supremacy by arguing that First Nations people would have to be removed" before white women and children would arrive (175). White women's femininity was used as a moral regulation in the colonization of British Columbia (185). Perry argues that "white women rarely overtly or systematically challenged the politics of colonialism or racial separation and hierarchy" (185). While white men still engaged in relationships with Indigenous women, often for economic reasons, it was frowned upon for white women to engage in relationships with Indigenous men (177). This reinforced the social organization within British Columbia which separated white women from Indigenous women (198). This organization in many ways persists today through stereotypes which reinforce the privilege of white women and the oppression of Indigenous women.

In accordance with colonial and patriarchal beliefs, Indigenous women are placed at the margin of privileged white and feminine ideals (Morton, 2016: 303). Indigenous women are then relegated as a stereotype that frames them as women who are "promiscuous, prone to deviance and incapable of controlling impulses" (304). This construction of female

indigeneity is then labeled and seen as perverse to the colonial 'norm'. As a result of these stereotypes, Indigenous women "experience poverty, unemployment and inadequate education opportunities" (304). This marginalization is reinforced with colonial notions that create a false image of women who are placing themselves at risk in accordance with stereotyped 'deviant behaviour'. For example, Morton argues that "hitchhiking frames Indigenous women as wrong-doers, and in doing so conflates their morality with their mobility" (304). As a result of these stereotypes and discriminatory understandings of indigeneity, sexism and racism play out through interactions and institutions in society.

According to Andrea Smith, cases involving Indigenous women tend to be neglected because "many women were homeless or sex workers" (2005: 30). Smith argues that human rights organizations have noted that Indigenous women do not experience the same response from the justice system compared to non-Indigenous people when it comes to police investigations because victims in these circumstances are often blamed for placing themselves at risk (30). The point here is that Indigenous people and most importantly Indigenous women have not found justice in a society that does not fully address the persisting colonial effects in important institutions that are supposed to protect them.

Andrea Smith also looks at how sexual violence is a tool of colonialism and patriarchy (2005: 2). While Smith does not look explicitly at northern Canada, her framework can be used to analyze what is happening in northern British Columbia. In Canada, the colonization of Indigenous peoples continues to have a profound effect on the way interpersonal connections are made in society. Smith argues that "native peoples, in the eyes of the colonizers, are marked by their sexual perversity…[therefore] they are considered sexually violable and 'rapable'" (2005: 10). Smith equates this sexual control over Indigenous people to the "rape of the land" (57). Colonizers aimed to control and manipulate

the land, but also the people on the land. According to Smith, now it is capitalists that seek to 'extract' and 'develop' not only the land but the people in terms of their participation in the resource economy.

Smith argues that the "connection between the colonization of Native people's bodies – particularly Native women's bodies – and Native lands is not simply metaphorical" (2005: 55). There is a connection between society's manipulation and control of the land and of women. Smith makes an interesting observation about how we normalize violence in society and how the victims of this normalization are both the land and women (2005: 66). For example, she states that for a patriarchal society to succeed it must "normalize" violence by "attacking alternative systems that might challenge its legitimacy" (66). Smith equates this with environmental degradation and the general notion that harm to the environment either does not exist or is necessary (66). Harm to women is also rationalized as a non-existent or necessary measure to keep the individual in place. This connection shows how violence is used to control.

Institutionalized racism is a key factor in understanding why higher rates of violence occur for Indigenous women. Jones (2002) states that institutionalized racism is a way in which the system, through "structures, policies, practices and norms", allots varying degrees of opportunities or restrictions in society based on an individual's race (10). For example, systemic racism exists in various ways, including the denial of access to resources and information and a lack of culturally specific resources or assistance. The lack of response to the Highway of Tears is an example of institutionalized racism. While Indigenous women have gone missing since 1969 along the Highway of Tears, it was not until 2002, when Nicole Hoar, the only Caucasian victim, went missing that the general public and media became more aware of the multiple disappearances and the severity of the issue (Highway of

Tears Symposium, 2006: 7). According to Michalko (2016: 59) "Nicole's disappearance was followed by the first and only high-profile police investigation into the Tears case which left not only First Nations people along Highway 16 whispering about racial priorities when it comes to the RCMP."

In 2013, Human Rights Watch released an article entitled *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia Canada,* which outlined the systematic failures in our society when it comes to acknowledging and responding to the high rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada. It was clear from this report that Indigenous women and girls do not feel protected by the systems in our society that are supposed to protect all. While statistics and police investigations may have *confirmed* the numbers of missing and murdered women, they do not take into account those individuals who do not feel safe or heard if they were to come forward to disclose violence or report a missing loved one. Even though we do have changes in policy at both the federal and provincial level "the persistence of the violence indicates a need for deeper, coordinated interventions to address the systemic nature of the problem" (2013). More needs to be done to challenge institutionalized racism and the ways in which it leaves individuals feeling treated differently based on sex, gender, race and culture.

As noted above the media is incredibly influential in raising community awareness of issues. At the same time, the media may also distort the reality of understanding of the situation. Rebecca Tallman (2014) argues that media discourse can influence our understandings of security, insecurity and who vulnerable peoples are. For example, she points out that media combined the Highway of Tears victims alongside with the missing and murdered women from Vancouver's East Side and the larger issue of missing and murdered

Indigenous women in Canada (2014: 83). While there are similarities between all three cases she points out that women who are identified as vulnerable in connection to the Highway of Tears are often grouped in with other Indigenous women who have gone missing. This marginalizes the Highway of Tears cases as they are not as high profile as other victims[1] (84). Tallman also found that the media often only named Nicole Hoar in reference to the Highway of Tears and referred to the other women collectively as 'victims', thereby marginalizing and anonymizing missing and murdered Indigenous women (102). These other Indigenous women were not only referred to as victims but were also labeled as partaking in high-risk behaviour like drugs and hitchhiking (102).

Tallman also found two broadly shared understandings of security and insecurity in reference to the media discourse surrounding the Highway of Tears. The first common understanding of security is among families, communities and advocates who found security also meant "closure, healing, advocacy and accountability from the police and government" (106). Common understandings of insecurity were "violence and victim blaming" (106). Tallman recognized that these shared meanings are holistically based and human centered rather than based on the borders and lines which are commonly associated with ideas of security and insecurity (106). The second common understanding comes from the perspective of the police and government (107). These two actors "framed security as improving services, infrastructure, policies and spending" (107). Insecurity was understood as "a lack of services, infrastructure, police and funding" (107). Tallman found these understandings stood in opposition; the shared understandings from the families, communities and advocates represented more of a decolonization worldview whereas the police and the government

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[1] For example, the victims in the high-profile Robert Pickton case in Vancouver.

characterized security and insecurity in compartmentalized and traditional ways reflective of colonial worldviews (107). It is interesting to see how these two shared meanings shape how we see policy development for the communities we live in.

Feminist and Eco-Feminist Approaches

According to Mann (2012: 3), feminism is a term that can be defined and broken down in different ways for different people. Feminism recognizes the patriarchal systems in place in society and how we can work towards creating a better or new system which benefits all. Feminists often highlight freedom of choice, expression, and equality without systematic barriers as critical areas that need change. Feminism also recognizes that there is not one experience of 'women' and that social constructions of sex and gender influence societal values and reinforce patriarchal systems of power. Most importantly, feminist perspectives or debates regarding feminism bring awareness to the issues and flaws of the patriarchal system that we live and work in every day.

Feminist discourses are a critical part of the discussion of the issues of accessibility of transportation. Feminism highlights the struggles of women more deeply through an intersectional lens which explores the layers of oppression that women face including race, gender, class, religion and culture. By integrating a feminist lens, I will review how these multiple layers impact women and more particularly Indigenous women and accessibility issues.

Ecofeminism is "a term used to describe a diverse range of women's efforts to save the earth. It also involves a transformation in feminist thought that has resulted in new conceptualizations of the relationship between the domination of women and the domination of nature" (Mann, 2012: 413). Lee Maracle, an Indigenous activist and writer, argues that there is a direct connection between the violence committed against the earth and violence

against women (Maracle, 2012). She speaks of the strong connection that Indigenous peoples have with the land. When colonizers came, this connection was disrupted and this created tension within Indigenous society. According to Maracle, settler people do not have a strong connection to land or sense of place because the land where they live and work is not as connected to their ancestors as it is for Indigenous peoples. As a result, the exploitation of the land comes easily for non-Indigenous people. Maracle states "if you are disconnected from the earth you will be disconnected from each other" (Maracle, 2012). The disconnection in northern society is prevalent as communities clash over how they characterize the future of northern development. This can be linked to Coates' idea of culture of opposition which emphasizes the social and political tensions that shape the north.

Maracle explains that the disconnection between people occurs because the landscape is disappearing beneath us, and that when this happens it creates a tension in your body that builds up and makes the body and mind angry (Maracle, 2012). Violence is then a channel to express this tension, and this violence is targeted at women, who are often associated with the creator. Maracle states that "women are creators so they are first to be violated" (Maracle, 2012). She challenges us to consider where violence occurs most in society, noting that it happens in "those forest areas that are clear cut…along that highway of tears…along that west coast of Vancouver Island" (Maracle, 2012).

The violence Maracle speaks about is towards women in general, but she also acknowledges the epidemic of violence towards Indigenous women who are targets for many reasons. This perspective is critical to integrate into my research as it recognizes how colonialism and the effects of colonialism persist today in ways that disproportionately affect the safety of Indigenous women. It also reveals a disconnect in the relationship to the environment which in turn correlates with a disconnect to the relationship with Indigenous

peoples in the north. Maracle states that in order to move forward, we need to heal our relationships not only with the land but also with each other.

This section revealed how patriarchy and colonialism are frameworks that reinforce inequalities within society. Feminist perspectives show how sexist and racist notions persist and influence how we define and respond to safety concerns for women in the north. The following section on public policy and the policy process will address how communities come together to move past these barriers.

2.4 Public Policy

The high rates of missing and murdered women are not acceptable and warrant a response. Solutions or new policies have the potential to develop when people, communities and governments come together. Policy is something that shapes our lives whether we choose to acknowledge it or not. Policies not only exist in government but everywhere, whether it is at work or our very own home. A policy lays out an understanding and/or action based on a need that is presented and agreed upon. Dunn (2018) argues that policy analysis is critical as it helps us to "improve policymaking" (54). He further states that the policy system is incredibly rigid and that changes do not come easy (54). This means that it is essential to reflect on how policy is made in order to rework how we can improve policy in the future.

Thomas Dye defines public policy as "anything a government chooses to do or not to do" (as cited in Howlett and Ramesh, 2003: 5). Howlett and Ramesh (2003) acknowledge that while this definition is short, it highlights two important aspects about public policy. First, governments are the agent of policy making (2003: 5). They state that while interest groups, non-governmental organizations and private companies can influence policy they do

not make public policy (5). Second, the authors argue that "public policies involve a fundamental choice on the part of governments to do something or to do nothing" (5)

Needless to say, Dye's definition of public policy emphasizes the important role that government has in the public policy process. However, I believe it underestimates the role that communities and other organizations have. First, while government plays a role in the development of public policy, it is important to note that in a democracy, the government is chosen by the people in a particular political community. In a democracy, a government will only be in power as long as the majority of people support it. At election time, if a government has lost trust from the majority in society it may be replaced by a new government and agenda. Ultimately, government is supposed to be a reflection of the will of the people; whether or not that may be true is something that has and continues to be an ongoing discussion. The main point here is that in a democracy, government cannot exist without support from society and this makes government accountable to the people.

William Jenkins defines public policy as "a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principal be within the power of those actors to achieve" (as cited in Howlett and Ramesh, 2003: 6). This definition underscores the multitude of actors that can be involved in the public policy process beyond Dye's narrow definition. It recognizes the influence that non-governmental organizations or private actors such as citizens or corporations may have on policy.

As such, public policy involves a range of actors with different degrees of influence. While some actors may not have as much authority over the creation of a policy they are just as important in the policy process, especially if they are impacted directly by a new policy.

Once action is taken by a government, a policy will enter into the policy cycle to be developed.

The Policy Cycle

The policy cycle approach provides a framework for examining the development of policy by dividing the process into stages (Inwood, 2012: 222). This approach allows us to show how policy develops at each stage and which actors were involved. The policy cycle includes: problem definition and agenda setting; policy formulation; policy implementation; and evaluation (222). The problem definition and agenda setting stage involves looking at how the problem is identified, if it commands attention and how it gets onto the political agenda (224). Policy formulation includes the "design and drafting of policy goals and strategies for achieving them" (224). Policy implementation is the process of enforcing programs and policies in response to the defined problem at hand. Evaluation involves reviewing the effectiveness of the new programs and policies and providing feedback to the actors responsible for the implementation.

Dunn (2018: 7) expands further on the question of the policy cycle, stating that policy analysis "is designed to provide policy-relevant knowledge about five types of questions." Dunn's five questions are encompassed under the headings of: *policy problems; expected policy outcomes; preferred policies; observed policy outcomes;* and *policy performance* (7). In my analysis, I will focus on the first two questions as my policy study does not include reviewing the performance of the policy or future impacts of the TAP as it is currently in the implementation stage. *Policy problems* refer to the actual problem itself that is being observed and whether it is persistent or temporary (5). For example, how long have transportation issues been affecting the north? Has this been long-term or a more recent phenomenon? *Expected policy outcomes* question whether the potential policy developed will

actually respond to the issue presented. For example, will a new bus route directly impact the rates of hitchhiking along the corridor? Dunn argues that by having a better understanding of a policy problem, which he refers to as "Policy Knowledge", one can then create effective policy (6). He states that "knowledge about policy problems plays a critical role in policy analysis, because the way a problem is defined shapes the identification of available solutions. Inadequate or faulty knowledge may result in serious or even fatal errors: defining the wrong problem" (6). In the development of the TAP, the issue of safety for women in the north and accessibility of transportation are the problems that needed to be addressed. Through policy analysis one can see how and if these two issues were identified and whether they were both addressed throughout the policy process.

Policy Communities

Policy communities are crucial in bringing together policy actors with similar interests in order to inform the policy making process and to ensure the right problems are being addressed. Policy communities or networks are ways in which organizations come together to influence, give feedback, and work together to develop or change policy. Bhatia (2006: 201) states that a policy network is "a small group of people who are specialists in the policy issue—including government officials, policy experts and representatives of key interest groups or community organizations – who interact together on a regular and ongoing basis to influence policy". There are various ways in which policy community analysis or network analysis can help provide a framework to understand how different actors influence the policy process and how communication between the actors is facilitated. In chapter three, I will use this concept to map out the different connections that were made between governmental and non-governmental organizations, and individuals in regards to the TAP.

Adam and Kriesi (as cited in Leifeld and Schneider, 2012) state that the "policy network approach assumes that policy making is affected by a variety of organized governmental and non-governmental actors". The links established between these organizations create a pathway for communication by means of information and resource sharing (Leifeld and Schneider, 2012: 731). There are many reasons why organizations may or may not come together and share information. Leifeld and Schneider identify a series of factors that may influence the relationships being built by these interactions. These include: ideology; preference similarity or dissimilarity; institutional interdependence; influence; and lastly social trust (731). These aspects are critical to relationship building as they help to identify why networks include certain actors and not others. For example, two organizations may have similar goals, however they might have dissimilar approaches to achieving those goals and may not work together based on their varying methods. It could also be argued that some organizations may not want to work with other actors (for example, government) due to a lack of social trust. Social trust is the degree to which an individual or people can place their trust in another person or an institution.

Policy Actors

Policy actors are individuals with a vested interest in the problem that is being addressed and the solution being developed through a policy response. Policy actors can be government officials, corporate leaders, or community members. These actors are key players in the discussion and development of policy and may influence it at various stages and in different ways. In a study conducted by Koduah et.al (2015), which analyzed how policy actors played a role in the development of health policy in Ghana, policy actors are classified into four groups. These groups include: policy agenda directors; policy agenda approvers; policy agenda advisors; and lastly policy agenda advocates (4).

Policy agenda directors are senior politicians at the national or regional levels of government. These individuals often give directions as to how the agenda should be set or if an existing policy should be changed (Koduah et al, 2015: 4). The second group, policy agenda approvers, includes ministers in government who hold the cabinet positions closely linked to the policy development or change (4). These individuals set the agenda and the stage for policy discussions to follow. The third group, policy agenda advisors, includes government and non-governmental actors who advise the senior politicians (4). Policy advisors not only share information and provide feedback they may also contribute financial resources in support of certain ideas that may help maintain them on the agenda (4). Lastly policy agenda advocates are individuals or organizations that benefit from the policy development and may wish to influence it either directly or indirectly (4). While the last two groups may not be identified with having as much power as the previous two, they can strategically use their influence to raise policy issues or change the direction in which a policy is going. Each of these policy actors has their own functions within the policy process. The manner in which they come together within their policy community and share resources and information are a crucial part of this process. Throughout the development of the TAP these groups will be identified in terms of how significant of a role they played in influencing the development of the policy.

2.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review has shown how different disciplines, including Northern Studies, Women's Studies and Political Science can inform our understanding of the north and the development of policies designed to address the specific problems faced by northern and remote regions such as northern British Columbia. An interdisciplinary lens is critical in

order to understand not only the specific issues regarding the accessibility of transportation but also the broader systematic problems that exist in society that prevent transportation from being accessible to everyone.

CHAPTER 3: CASE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

Over the past 45 years a portion of Highway 16 in northern British Columbia has become known as the Highway of Tears. Since 1969, when Gloria Moody from Williams Lake disappeared, many women and young girls have gone missing or have been found murdered along this stretch of highway. Many of these women were attempting to get from point A to point B by hitchhiking because of the lack of a comprehensive public transportation system in this part of the province. The focus of this thesis, the Transportation Action Plan (TAP), is seen by many as part of the solution to this problem. This chapter provides an overview of a series of events that led up to the announcement of the TAP in 2015. The key period on which I will focus is 2005-2015, beginning with the RCMP E-PANA investigation in 2005 and the Highway of Tears Symposium in 2006 and ending with the announcement of the Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan by the BC Liberal government in 2015. I will highlight changes in the social and political landscape of British Columbia and how the issue of safety for women and problems of accessibility of transportation are critical challenges within the region. I will describe how these issues got on the policy agenda for the provincial government as the TAP developed.

This chapter will review the timeline of events in chronological order focusing on particular stages of development through the policy cycle. First, it will outline the efforts that brought attention to the issue of safety for women in the north at the Highway of Tears Symposium in 2006. It will review how earlier parts of the development focused on problem solving and advocacy. Further, the chapter will dig deeper into problem definition and how the issues of safety for women and accessibility of transportation were defined by different

policy actors throughout the policy process. This chapter will explore how these two issues are connected and what community members, leaders and organizations did to raise awareness of them. Lastly the chapter will pinpoint when and why the provincial government officially responded with the TAP.

3.2 Political and Social Context

As earlier chapters have noted, northern British Columbia is unique due to the region's resource wealth but also its lack of political autonomy. What is important to note is not only how power is divided but also what the prevailing political ideology has been in British Columbia that has directed policy making for the past few decades. In particular, it is important to emphasize how the provincial government has benefited from northern resources while minimizing the region's role in the greater policy making process. In addition, the social context of this region is critical to review, especially with regards to the issues of violence against women. The north has had a significant history of violent incidences toward Indigenous and marginalized women that go beyond the Highway of Tears. I believe it is important to recognize and acknowledge these various cases as they indicate a pattern of behaviours that exist and continue to persist in our northern communities.

Political Context

While it may be correct to label transportation as a provincial responsibility it is not entirely true. In 1996 the Canada Transportation Act was established which consolidated the National Transportation Act of 1987 and the Railway Act. This act outlined the shared responsibility of governments and the private sector to "work together for an integrated transportation system" (Government of Canada, 2019). According to the Canadian

Constitution, transportation is a shared responsibility among the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government (Government of Canada, 2019). These responsibilities are outlined in the Constitution Act of 1867 which states that the federal government has authority to administer international and inter-provincial transportation (2019). Meanwhile provinces are responsible for the intra-provincial transportation including everything within the provincial borders. From time to time, the province devolves powers and responsibilities to municipal governments to allow them to implement and oversee transportation adjustments (2019).

In the period under examination (2005-2015), the BC Liberal Party was in power at the provincial level. During this time, there was a significant ideological shift in the province from when the NDP was in power in the 1990s (Bowles, 2016: 31). In 2001, "the new government introduced a wave of neoliberal policy prescriptions covering many areas of provincial policy" (31). This included an evaluation of what should and should not be included as a government service, as well as substantial government cuts to services (31). In 2003, a strategy was announced by the provincial government which looked to invest in infrastructure development in the provincial north in order to open up the resource sector to further investments from Asian and American markets (31). This neoliberal approach persisted even in the change of party leadership from Gordon Campbell (2001 to 2011) to Christy Clark (2011 to 2017).

Social Context

As noted in previous chapters, the social landscape along the Highway of Tears is incredibly complex and each community is unique in terms of the different challenges they face. In addition to the Highway of Tears, there are other occurrences of violence and sexual violence towards Indigenous and marginalized women in British Columbia and in the north.

Some of the following examples have had long lasting impacts in communities in terms of safety concerns and a lack of trust in justice and safety institutions. It is important to recognize these cases as I argue that they reinforce greater systemic issues of racism and sexism that allow for individuals in places of privilege and power to get away with being violent towards innocent women in our communities.

In 2004, Prince George Judge David Ramsay was sentenced seven years in prison for sexually assaulting Indigenous girls ranging from 12 to 16 years in age (CBC, 2004). Ramsay was removed from the bench in 2002 and charged in 2003 (CBC, 2004). The assaults occurred between 1992 and 2001 where evidence shows that Ramsay would pay the girls for sex, drive them to rural areas, and threaten them with death if they were to tell anyone (CBC, 2004). The Ramsay case is an example of an individual in a place of privilege using his power to take advantage of vulnerable girls. This case arguably impacted the level of community trust in the justice system.

In 2002, Robert William Pickton was arrested and later convicted in 2007 of murdering six women on a Port Coquitlam farm. The conviction was followed by two years of judicial appeals to the British Columbia Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada. Pickton's victims were primarily from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, a poverty-stricken neighbourhood. It is believed that he killed many of the women who have gone missing in this part of Vancouver (CBC News, 2018). Between 2007- 2010 media coverage was primarily focused on Pickton and what community members and media deemed a failed police investigation (CBC News, 2018). Family members of Pickton's victims believed that the police did not take many of the cases seriously because of where the victims lived. Missing women from this area were often marginalized sex workers and/or had a substance

abuse disorder which resulted in their cases being dismissed by the police (CBC News, 2018).

The Pickton case helped initiate a province wide Missing Women Commission of Inquiry into the issue of missing and murdered women in British Columbia. This Inquiry will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. It is important to note that this example raises two crucial questions. First, how did the Inquiry play a role in raising awareness of the issues of safety for women in the province but more particularly in the north? Second, did this Inquiry seek to address further the lack of trust between Indigenous and marginalized women and the RCMP? This case is relevant as it recognized the issues of safety for women, not only on a local scale but also at a provincial scale.

On May 28, 2011, Madison Scott went missing from Hogsback Lake near Vanderhoof, British Columbia. She had gone to a party with some friends from the Vanderhoof area. Madison Scott has never been found. Since 2011, missing signs and posters have been placed all throughout the interior of British Columbia including along Highway 16. Communities get together for annual fundraisers to raise awareness of the case. While Madison Scott was not included as part of the Highway of Tears investigation her disappearance has left a significant impact on communities in the north as her family and friends continue to search for her.

On September 11, 2014, Cody Legebokoff was found guilty of four counts of first degree murder (CBC, 2014a). He was charged in the deaths of three women and a girl between 2009 and 2010. Judy Maas, who was the sister of Cynthia Maas, one of the victims, spoke out after the trial and stated that "although her sister and Legebokoff's two adult victims were sex trade workers, that fact should not be used to label or somehow dismiss them: "They weren't 'just' a drug addict and they weren't 'just' a sex trade worker. They

were loved. They're missed"" (CBC, Sept 2014). These cases, years apart from each other, show a persistent trend of violence against marginalized women in northern British Columbia, in addition to violence perpetrated against those that were lost along the Highway of Tears. While these examples do not directly connect with the Highway of Tears investigation, they also show a pattern of violent behaviours targeting vulnerable and Indigenous women and young girls. The examples provide evidence of the broader context of safety concerns in northern, remote and Indigenous communities and highlight the growing fear and mistrust in communities.

3.3 E-PANA Investigation and the Highway of Tears Symposium (2005-2010)

The next part of this chapter will look at a series of events that happened over the course of the ten-year development of the TAP. This section in particular will review the first 5 years and what key moments led to the initial official recommendation of the bus shuttle system for the Highway of Tears. The first 5 years of the development were focused on problem solving, and advocacy.

E-PANA Investigation

It is not clear where the name "Highway of Tears" originated but it is a name that is known all too well across the north and throughout British Columbia. On September 30, 1998 a newspaper, the Terrace Standard, published the name "Highway of Tears". This is arguably one of the first times the name was used (Terrace Standard, September 1998). The newspaper used the name in reference to a vigil that was held in honour of 6 Indigenous women who had gone missing or had been found murdered in the previous decade (Terrace Standard, 1998). The first woman who went missing was Gloria Moody in 1969 in Williams Lake. She was found murdered one day later (Culbert & Hall, 2014). For many years

following 1969, women and young girls across the north went missing and were found murdered.

In the fall of 2005, the E-PANA task force was established by the RCMP's E Division Criminal Operations which ordered a review and investigation into the countless unsolved murders linked to Highway 16 (RCMP, N.D). 'E' refers to the RCMP division located in the province of British Columbia. PANA is "an Inuit word describing the spirit goddess that looks after the souls just before they got to heaven or were reincarnated" (RCMP, N.D). At the time of its creation the task force included approximately 50 investigators and support staff.

The investigation initially included nine cases in 2005. By 2007 the number of cases had doubled from nine to eighteen as a result of the RCMP using the Violent Crime Linkage System (ViCLAS).[2] ViCLAS is a system which investigators use to input various details about a crime including geography, behaviour and victim profiles (Michalko, 2016: 120). This database helps investigators to identify similar patterns in the crimes. Despite the use of ViCLAS to connect similar cases there were still many cases of murdered and missing women in the area (Highway 16, 97 and 5) that went beyond the confirmed eighteen cases included in the RCMP investigation. Some of these cases are arguably similar but due to some minor differences in characteristics like geography they have been excluded. An example of this is Cecilia Nikal who was last seen in 1989 in Smithers and was never found. She is not included on the E-PANA investigation because police believe she went missing in Vancouver. In 1990, Delphine Nikal (Cecilia's cousin) was last seen in Smithers and her

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[2] The investigation was expanded to include cases along Highway 97 and Highway 5 in addition to Highway 16 (the Highway of Tears) (Sabo, 2016).

body was never found. She is included on the E-PANA investigation list as it is believed she went missing in Smithers (Sabo, 2016).

In 1994, the Highway of Tears claimed 3 victims, all of whom were 15 years old when they disappeared. Roxanne Thiara went missing in early July in Prince George and was found murdered in Burns Lake, a community about 2 hours west of Prince George. Alishia Germaine went missing on December 9th in Prince George and was found murdered the same day. She was believed to have known to Roxanne Thiara. Ramona Wilson was last seen in Smithers on July 11, 1994 and her body was later found in April 1995 on the outskirts of the community. All three were included in the E-PANA investigation. In June 2002 Nicole Hoar, a Caucasian victim[3], was last seen leaving a gas station in Prince George hitchhiking towards Smithers to visit her sister. She disappeared and her body was never found (Michalko, 2016: 59). This case arguably brought more media attention to the Highway of Tears, which caused a lot of concern within communities, as it was after Nicole Hoar went missing that the media seemed interested.

The mandate of the E-PANA project was to first establish if a serial killer was responsible for the crimes along the highway. The second part of its mandate was to investigate the various cases under the E-PANA criteria. Three criteria were established for cases that were to be included in the E-PANA investigation and cases had to meet at least two of the criteria:

1. The victim must be female

2. They must have been involved in hitchhiking or high-risk behaviour

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[3] Nicole was the first Caucasian victim named of the initial nine victims that were apart of the E-PANA investigation in 2005. By 2007 the list of victims increased including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women and girls.

3. They had to been last seen or their body found on one of the three highways (Hwy 16, Hwy 97 and Hwy 5) (RCMP, N.D).

Appendix F recognizes the eighteen women who are a part of the official RCMP E-PANA investigation. I want to acknowledge that beyond these eighteen cases there are many more women who have either not been reported or included in this investigation due to the specific requirements. This does not mean that they are not just as important. These individuals were young students attending high school or community college. Some were young mothers or sisters. An overwhelming majority of them were Indigenous and some struggled with trauma, poverty and marginalization. As Michalko states "some used drugs recreationally, as hundreds of thousands of others their age do" but do not get preyed upon by predators (2016: 66). These women will forever be in the hearts of their communities and loved ones and are a constant reminder of the need to address safety concerns for future generations.

Highway of Tears Symposium

On September 17, 2005, a Take Back the Highway campaign was held on the west coast in Prince Rupert which endeavoured to raise awareness in each community along the highway (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 8). Just four days after this campaign was held, another woman, Tamara Chipman (22), went missing in Prince Rupert. Four months later another young girl, Aielah Saric-Auger (14), went missing from Prince George. Her body was found eight days later. The two cases were the final two cases to be included in the E-PANA investigation (9).

The case of Aielah Saric-Auger particularly impacted the city of Prince George and the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation on whose traditional and unceded territory Prince George is located. After her body was found, the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation released an urgent call

for a community symposium to be held (Dolha, 2006). On March 30th, 2006 a Highway of Tears Awareness Walk started in Prince Rupert and ended in Prince George. This walk was organized by victims' families and concluded with two days of roundtable discussions and presentations regarding safety for women in the north. This event was known as the Highway of Tears Symposium.

Approximately five hundred people and more than ninety organizations attended the Highway of Tears Symposium (CBC News, 2006). Symposium presenters and participants included victims' families who shared their stories of loss, as well as delegates from the Native Women's Association of Canada, First Nations Summit, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Assembly of First Nations and the United Native Nations (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 5). Representatives of the provincial Ministry of Children and Family Development, the RCMP "E" Division, and many other government officials from both the provincial and federal levels were also in attendance.

On June 16, 2006, the Highway of Tears Symposium report was submitted by the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation, Carrier Sekani Family Services, Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, Prince George Native Friendship Centre and the Prince George Nechako Aboriginal Employment & Training Association. This report detailed 33 recommendations based on several different areas, including Victim Prevention, Emergency Planning and Team Readiness, Victim Family Counselling and Support and Community Development and Support Strategies (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 8). These recommendations will be discussed in more detail below. The report also outlined both short- and long-term goals that called on community organizations to come together to coordinate a plan of action to respond to the various recommendations outlined by the report.

The section on Victim Prevention identified short-term goals that would work towards developing and implementing a victim prevention plan to reduce the number of women who hitchhike along Highway 16 (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 12). This included establishing a shuttle bus system along the highway and increasing the presence of safe homes between Prince George and Prince Rupert (20). The long-term goals in this section focused on addressing other causes that place women at risk, including an analysis of intergenerational trauma and poverty (12). Increasing outreach services and youth recreational and social activities were also a part of the long-term goals, as bringing more services to the communities would hopefully curb the amount of traveling/hitchhiking that youth do in order to connect with these services in other communities (12). In addition to youth services, the plan set out to bring critical health and social services to First Nation communities in order to reduce traveling for community members (23).

The recommendation that is of particular importance for this thesis falls under this section. It states "that a shuttle bus transportation system be established between each town and city located along the entire length of Highway 16, defined as the Highway of Tears" (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 20). The recommendation details that this shuttle bus would be focused on "the pickup and drop off of young female passengers at all First Nations communities, towns and cities located along the entire length of the Highway between Prince George and Prince Rupert" (20). It also states that during all months of operations these buses should also stop and pick up every young woman they see hitchhiking between the various communities indicated above (21). The recommendation further indicates that seven buses would be required to cover the 724 km stretch of the highway (21).

The section on Emergency Readiness Planning and Team Response outlined short-term goals that included developing and implementing a community readiness plan in each

community. It suggested that this readiness plan must include specific timelines for actions taken by the community emergency response team and the RCMP starting from the moment they receive the missing person report (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 24). This plan must also be communicated to all emergency readiness teams located in each city and Indigenous community along the Highway. This recommendation was put in place as a result of the abovementioned case of Roxanne Thiara who had gone missing in Prince George and was later found murdered in Burns Lake (25). The Symposium found it essential to have an emergency response process that coordinated with all communities involved in the case in attempt to respond faster to any reports of missing persons (25). Long-term goals also included working with municipalities and band councils in coordinating this effort (13).

The section on Victim Family Counseling and Support recognized the gap in support for the families of victims (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 26). The recommendations in this section looked at establishing a First Nation crisis response plan for communities and families who have experienced a traumatic event or loss (26). This response plan would include a list of Indigenous therapists and grief counselors (26). Long term goals in this section looked at improving the connections between the RCMP and the victims' families and ensuring regular follow up and support (28). Lastly, this section outlined the creation of a First Nation advocate to help bridge the communication gap that exists between RCMP and victim families (28).

The section on Community Development and Support Strategy outlined recommendations to look at how resources and support can be gathered in order to fund the initiatives discussed above (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 30). This included recommendations such as creating a legacy fund to support community and agency efforts in their follow up of the above initiatives (30). The fund would include donations from

businesses and community charity events, in addition to funding from federal, provincial and municipal governments (29). Further recommendations consisted of hiring coordinators to provide assistance to communities and allocating funds (30). One recommendation outlined the importance of the RCMP continuing their official investigation into the actual number of missing and murdered women (31).

After the Symposium, the Highway of Tears Governing Body was established to review and support the implementation of the Symposium's recommendations. Members of this body included representatives from the Prince George Native Friendship Centre and the Ministry of Justice, RCMP Members, victim family members and the Highway of Tears coordinator (CSFS, 2019). Lisa Krebs was selected by the non-profit organization Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS), as the first Highway of Tears coordinator as per the recommendations laid out in the report (Michalko, 2016: 115). This position was funded by the $60,000 legacy fund established after the Symposium (Williams, 2007). Approximately one year after her appointment, Krebs announced that the only recommendation which had been completed was the hiring for her position (116). Krebs later stepped down from the position due to a reported lack of funding (Michalko, 2016: 115).

In the years to come, CSFS had to find alternative ways to get sustainable funding to keep the Highway of Tears coordinator position. CSFS Director Mary Teegee acknowledged in a statement to the Prince George Free Press that at the time the funding sources for the position were temporary and the goal was to secure funding for the future along with another full-time coordinator position in Prince Rupert (Williams, 2007). In 2009, former Carrier Sekani Chief Mavis Erickson was named the new Highway of Tears coordinator, under new provincial funding (Thompson, 2010). Soon after her appointment she made a call for a public Inquiry into the Highway of Tears (Michalko, 2016: 116). Erickson, in partnership

with CSFS, gained support from Indigenous organizations in the region and former Regional Chief of the BC Assembly of First Nations Jody Wilson-Raybould for an Inquiry into the Highway of Tears and the RCMP's investigation into the cases (Thompson, 2010). The BC Assembly of First Nations represents First Nations voices and advocates for First Nation rights, title and law in British Columbia (BCAFN, 2019). In 2010, Wilson-Raybould confirmed that she, along with other organizations like the First Nations Summit and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs wrote letters to the BC Attorney General's office supporting the request for an Inquiry (Thompson, 2010). The BC Attorney General is responsible for providing legal advice, reviewing and administering public safety services and programs (Government of British Columbia, 2019a). With support from various organizations, CSFS submitted an official request for an Inquiry to Michael De Jong, the BC Attorney General at the time (Thompson, 2010).

3.4 Government Responses (2010-2012)

In the years following the Symposium, community organizations struggled to maintain funding and support for goals that were highlighted in the Symposium report. Community leaders turned to other Indigenous organizations to help call on the government for an Inquiry. Inquiries are often established in order to evaluate and determine the facts of a prominent issue in society. This section will review the provincial government's Inquiry into the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women and its final report *Forsaken*. It will also examine the response of the provincial government to this report and the involvement of new policy actors in this issue as the policy community broadened.

Missing Women Commission of Inquiry

On September 27, 2010, the Lieutenant Governor in Council, Steven Point, issued an Order to establish the Missing Women Commission of Inquiry (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2013). The Inquiry was tasked with 5 terms of reference:

1. Inquire into investigations between January 23, 1977 and February 5, 2002 by the police in British Columbia regarding the women who had been reported missing from the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver;

2. Inquire into "the decision of the Criminal Justice branch on January 27, 1998, to enter a stay of proceedings on charges against Robert William Pickton of attempted murder, assault with a weapon, confinement and aggravated assault";

3. Make recommendations regarding the investigations of the missing and murdered women in British Columbia, respecting the initiation and conduct of investigations;

4. Make recommendations regarding the investigations of the missing and murdered women in British Columbia, respecting the homicide investigations by the various investigating organizations;

5. Submit a final report before December 31, 2011 [the due date was later extended to on or before November 30, 2012] to the Attorney General (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2013).

Soon after, Wally Oppal, a lawyer and former BC Liberal MLA, was named the Commissioner of the Inquiry by Attorney General Michael De Jong (Tomson, 2010). This appointment did not come without controversy as the Union of BC Indian Chiefs wrote a letter outlining what they believed to be a conflict of interest regarding Oppal's candidacy (Michalko, 2016: 218). This letter outlined that Oppal had made previous statements implying that he saw "no need for an Inquiry" (218). The Chiefs also noted that Oppal was

part of the discussions in Robert Pickton's trial (218). Other elected officials at the time, such

as Vancouver East federal MP Libby Davies, observed that Oppal would face criticism due to

his political past and position as provincial Attorney General during the Pickton investigation

and trials (Thompson, 2010). Concerns were also raised about Oppal's possible role in

discussions about whether or not to proceed with a "trial on twenty of twenty-six murder

charges Pickton faced" (Michalko, 2016: 218). In addition, there was the public perception

that Oppal was still linked too closely with the BC Liberal Party (218). Lastly, regarding the

Inquiry itself, Davies questioned the role that organizations, groups and relatives of the

missing women would play in the Inquiry process as it was unclear how inclusive it would be

in its community consultation (Thompson, 2010). Despite all the reservations from the

public, Oppal was still appointed as the Commissioner.

In order to collect information for the Inquiry, the Commission conducted pre-hearing

conferences in Vancouver and Prince George in which it detailed the purpose of the Inquiry

and gave community members an opportunity to speak about issues they thought should be

included (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2013). On January 21, 2011 the

commission held a pre-conference hearing in Prince George which approximately 400 people

attended (Michalko, 2016: 220). After the pre-conference hearing, the Commission submitted

a request to the government for its powers to be expanded into a "study Commission" which

would allow for more consultation outside Vancouver in northern communities (Missing

Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 2). Evidentiary hearings were also conducted in

which individuals and organizations could speak to issues connected to the Inquiry. Public

policy forums were held in downtown Vancouver from May 1 to 10, 2012 focusing on the

topic of safety for vulnerable women (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2013).

Northern community forums were also held in communities between Prince George and

Prince Rupert from September 12 to 15, 2011 (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2013). These communities included: Terrace, Gitanyow, Moricetown, Hazelton and Smithers. Written submissions from members of the public were also accepted by the Commission (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2013).

In addition to the final report released in November 2012, the Commission published a number of other reports that included information from consultation efforts and policy analysis.[4] One of these reports was an overview of the consultation efforts in northern British Columbia. In February 2012, the Commission released the *Standing Together and Moving Forward* report outlining what it had learned from its conversations with communities and its recommendations in response to the high rates of missing and murdered women in the north. In the report, the Commission recognized the significant role that communities played in organizing protests, marches and other awareness campaigns to get the attention of public figures and local community members (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 1). In particular, the Commission made note of the Take Back the Highway Campaign in 2005 and the Highway of Tears Symposium in 2006, as two key events that inspired critical conversations that led to the creation of a plan in the form of the Highway of Tears Symposium Report (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 1). The report also acknowledged the northern communities' part in pressuring the RCMP investigation and their determination in demanding a response from political leaders (1).

Lastly the report outlined seven key issues and themes that were identified throughout the consultation process in northern communities. These themes underscored the need to stand together physically and emotionally in recognizing the truth of what is happening along

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[4] These reports can be found online at https://missingwomen.library.uvic.ca/index.html%3Fp=24.html.

the Highway of Tears (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 7). The report argued that only after communities, organizations and governments came together and recognized the truth, could there be collective healing (2012b: 7).

The second theme noted concerns that northern communities had about the limits of the Missing Women Inquiry. Many individuals suggested that a separate Inquiry should be established for the north, for the cases along the Highway of Tears outside of the investigation that focused on Vancouver (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 8). Furthermore, the feedback that the Commission received was that the formal hearing process did not connect with Indigenous traditional ways of sharing and connecting (8).

The third theme focused on the impacts of this tragedy on the families and communities. The Commission indicated in its report how often community speakers were overcome with emotion while sharing the "haunting" feeling of living in an area of "unsolved, unexplained" disappearances (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 9). Further statements recorded by the Commission alluded to a sense of fear that the perpetrators of the crimes could be living in their own communities since the crimes have not been solved (9). Other community speakers noted that the number of unsolved cases creates overwhelming pain in a community and in families, which is in turn passed onto future generations leading to intergenerational trauma (9). The Commission also recognized that as a result of the losses, community members or family members of victims are suffering long-term health problems, such as self-medication (substance use and abuse) for the pain they are experiencing (10). The Commission recommended healing services, and more specifically, culturally sensitive services, for communities.

In the community forums, themes of northern realities and the lived experiences of Indigenous peoples in the north also came to light. The fourth theme addressed further

discussions of "geography, colonialism, discrimination, racism, residential schools, poverty, violence and unhealthy lifestyles" that were connected to the issues along Highway of Tears (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 10). Many of these themes were reviewed earlier in this thesis. The issue of accessibility is a symptom of these various barriers and it is critical to understand how they are rooted in society in order to address the problem at hand. The community forums were a platform for local knowledge to be transferred to the provincial level in order to inform the Inquiry process.

The fifth theme that the Commission recognized was the conflict that surrounded the conflation made by government officials, the media and communities between the Highway of Tears and Downtown Eastside investigations. The Commission found the linking of the two cases to be polarizing for northern communities. Some community members saw the connection as unnecessary and demanded that the Highway of Tears have its own Inquiry due to the differences in the cases (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 13). Community members also believed that the north is easily forgotten when the Lower Mainland is involved (2012b: 14). Other community members disagreed and acknowledged that no matter where the Inquiry is focused it would recognize that the justice system is broken (2012b: 13). They argued that regardless of where the Inquiry took place it would shed light on the lack of political and/or police response to the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada (2012b: 13).

The last two themes that were discussed are of greatest importance to this thesis. The Commission acknowledged that "the lack of funded or public transportation results in many negative effects" in northern British Columbia (2012b: 14). In particular, it noted that the lack of public transportation can be linked to the increased number of Indigenous people in custody. For example, an individual may be incarcerated for not showing up to a court date

even if it is because of a lack of transportation (2012b: 14). Communities further detailed to

the Commission their struggles with maintaining local transportation services and the lack of

regional services connecting communities to each other (2012b: 14). Most importantly the

Commission recognized that there is a connection between the lack of transportation along

Highway 16 and safety for women in the north (14). The Commission highlighted that the

limited services that are available are not adequate enough to serve the communities and that

this forces individuals to hitchhike (14). More importantly, it also recognized that hitchhiking

is not a choice but a reality for many individuals who live in northern communities (14).

The last theme the Commission outlined was the community's frustration over

inaction. The main question asked throughout the Commission was "why has it taken so

long" for a government response and the RCMP investigation (Missing Women Commission

of Inquiry, 2012b:18)? The Commission reported that communities expressed anger

regarding the lack of response of the investigations by RCMP but also the government's

inaction to address various factors, including poverty and transportation that contribute to the

vulnerability of women along Highway 16 (18). Lastly many individuals expressed

frustration that the 33 recommendations of the Highway of Tears Symposium Report had not

been fully implemented (18). The Commission investigated further and found that

recommendations for warning signs and awareness campaigns for hitchhiking had been

implemented but that other recommendations like the creation of a readiness plan had not

been followed up on (19). The Commission noted that a lack of funding was the main reason

for inaction on the recommendations (19).

The Standing Together and Moving Forward report acknowledged the need for

change in the north and the need to work together and rebuild relationships between

community members, the RCMP and governments at all levels (Missing Women

Commission of Inquiry, 2012b: 19). The Commission recommended that it is important to secure funding and fully implement the Highway of Tears Symposium recommendations. It also recommended that cultural healing and reconciliation in communities is needed. In addition, communities and the RCMP must work together to strengthen their relationship and enhance communication. Most importantly, cultural workshops should be mandatory for RCMP officers to attend on a regular basis (20). The RCMP and communities must also improve the response and conduct of missing person investigations. Special protocols should be created with the RCMP and communities regarding how they will respond as a united front to searches for missing individuals and providing resources to one another. Lastly the Commission recommended that more measures need to be taken "to protect girls and young women from predators" which included improving public transportation, implementing security cameras along the highway, and creating more education and awareness programs and community-based workshops (20).

Local Government Influence

Before the Commission released its final report in November 2012, on June 26, 2012 the Council of the Town of Smithers came together and voted unanimously to bring forward a resolution that called on the provincial government to act on the Section E: Recommendation 1 from the Highway of Tears Symposium report outlining the need for a regional bus shuttle system (Interview Bachrach, 2018). This resolution was led by then Mayor of Smithers, Taylor Bachrach, who felt a deep connection to the issue. Before Bachrach became Mayor he had attended a Smithers town council meeting in early 2011 where Brenda Wilson (the sister of Ramona Wilson, one of the victims) spoke and expressed her frustration and sadness that none of the town councillors had attended the memorial walk that she holds every year to honour her sister (Interview Bachrach, 2018). In an interview,

Bachrach stated that "I was really moved by Brenda's dedication to her sister's memory and her motivation to do something about the safety issue and so once I was elected she invited me to attend the memorial walk and myself and couple of other councillors attended the walk" (Interview Bachrach, 2018).

In this interview Bachrach elaborated on the issue of accessibility to transportation in the north and noted that even though transit falls under local government jurisdiction, there is a need for collaboration across different levels of government, as well as resources to respond to it. Bachrach stated that the Town of Smithers has had experience with running a transit system between Smithers and the nearby community of Telkwa. Therefore, he knew that the right next step to address the issue of transportation along Highway 16 was to call "on the provincial government to provide resources and to put a better transit system in place between communities" (Interview Bachrach, 2018).

In September 2012, Bachrach submitted the transportation resolution to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) on behalf of the Town of Smithers. The Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) is a local government agency where members come together to represent local government interests and provide a united voice on issues and policy (UBCM, 2019). Every year, conventions are held to give municipal leaders and officials from around the province an opportunity to come together to share their challenges and successes (UBCM, 2019). These conventions also provide an opportunity for them to meet in person with senior provincial officials and ministers. Bachrach explained that he was able to force the resolution to the floor at the convention and it was endorsed unanimously by approximately 2000 delegates in the room. The resolution read as follows:

WHEREAS a number of young women, mostly aboriginal, have been murdered

or have gone missing along a stretch of Highway 16 in northern British Columbia

now referred to as the "Highway of Tears"; AND WHEREAS many of these missing

women are believed to have been hitch hiking between communities where there is a

lack of public transit: THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that UBCM petition the

British Columbia government to implement the recommendation of the Highway

of Tears Symposium by establishing and funding a shuttle bus service between

northern communities (UBCM 2012)

Bachrach said that soon after this resolution, the Commission released its report,

which also recognized the UBCM resolution and used it as evidence that the transit system

needed to be put in place (Interview Bachrach, 2018). He argued that with continuous

pressure by the UBCM and the timely release of the Commission's report, the Ministry of

Transportation and Infrastructure had no choice but to engage in a consultation tour to speak

with northern leaders including local government and Indigenous leaders (Interview

Bachrach, 2018).

Missing Women's Commission of Inquiry: Final Report

As mentioned earlier the Commission's final report titled *Forsaken* was released in

November 2012 about two months after the UBCM convention (Missing Women

Commission of Inquiry, 2012a: 222). This report is different than the Consultation report

Standing Together and Moving Forward that focused on the northern community

consultation for the Inquiry. *Forsaken* contains sixty-three recommendations outlining

various ways to improve police responses to missing person reports and investigations (222).

The executive summary of the report was split into three volumes. Volume 1 examined the

crisis of missing and murdered women in British Columbia and their lives. Volume 2 studied

how society failed the missing and murdered women in terms of the charges against Pickton

and policing failures. Lastly, Volume 3 offered future initiatives and recommendations in order to create a safer society.

Volume 3, Part 6 of the report focused on missing and murdered women in northern British Columbia. Part 6 is a summarized version of the *Standing Together and Moving Forward* consultation report discussed previously. In Part 6, the Commission wrote that "the vast spaces between communities acutely increase women's vulnerability to violence given the lack of public transportation" (Missing Women Commission of Inquiry 2012a: 134). The report outlined the lack of response to the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women in northern British Columbia and acknowledged that this "unresponsiveness extends beyond the police, but the police are a significant part of the solution" (137). The Commission committed "to support the full implementation of the action plan established through the Highway of Tears Symposium process, which was deeply collaborative and engaged communities all along Highway 16" (138). In addition, the report urged the provincial government to commit to developing and enhancing safe public transportation in northern communities (160).

Provincial Government Response

In a news release on December 17, 2012, the BC Liberal government announced it would take steps to address the *Forsaken* report. The announcement stated that the government would be using the final recommendations as a guideline for a new advisory committee overlooking safety and security for vulnerable women. Steven Point, the now former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia who had issued the order for the Inquiry to be established in 2010, was appointed as the chair of the advisory committee (Michalko, 2016: 223). Point was in the role for six months when he resigned due to lawsuits that were filed related to the Pickton trials. In a CBC news report, BC Justice Minister and Attorney

General and northern MLA, Shirley Bond, stated that "in his [Point's] role as chair of the advisory committee, his comments and remarks may well become evidence in the course of the litigation" (CBC, 2013). Therefore, this would have put Point in a difficult position legally and would make him unable to perform his duties as chair to the advisory committee (CBC, 2013).

In addition to the advisory committee, the government also indicated that it would address other recommendations made by the Inquiry. In a news release, Minister Bond stated: "I want to assure you, as well as all British Columbians that our government will use these recommendations as a blueprint for building a legacy of safety and security for vulnerable women over the coming years" (Government of British Columbia, 2012). The government also stated that the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure was developing a plan to respond to the safety and transportation concerns along Highway 16 (2012).

Lastly the release indicated that the "ministry staff will meet with communities along the corridor in the new year, to build upon past studies into transit options in the region and identify options that meet their needs" (Government of British Columbia, 2012). The government also stated it would dedicate itself to reviewing the *Forsaken* report in depth in the coming months in consultation with groups who are impacted by the recommendations (Government of British Columbia, 2012). This news release was one of the first publicly documented policy responses by the government to the safety and accessibility concerns in the north.

3.5 Further Pressure on Government (2013)

This section will discuss two important events in the development of the TAP. These two events influenced the political and social context in which the TAP developed. First, the reduction of existing private transportation services caused concern as it appeared that the north was losing transportation networks rather than developing new ones. Second, another policy actor entered to advocate for northerners at the provincial level. The Official Opposition's role in pressuring government revealed to northern communities where the government was truly focusing its investments after the Missing Women's Inquiry.

Reduction in Transportation: Greyhound

One development that increased pressure on the government to act was the reduction of Greyhound bus services in northern British Columbia. Since 1929, Greyhound has provided private intercity bus and freight transportation, serving approximately 1,100 locations across Canada (Greyhound, 2020). In northern British Columbia, Greyhound had serviced routes between Prince George and Valemount, Dawson Creek and Vancouver, and most importantly its route along the Highway of Tears from Prince Rupert to Prince George (Greyhound, 2020). Making multiple stops in communities along these routes, Greyhound served as a critical connection between communities.

On January 10, 2013, approximately one month after the government's commitment to investigate transit gaps in the north, the Passenger Transportation Board of British Columbia (PTB) approved Greyhound Canada Transportation Unlimited Liability Corporation's application to reduce its minimum route frequency on 15 routes including: Dawson Creek to Prince George; Prince George to Fort St. James; and Prince Rupert to Prince George. The PTB received Greyhound's application initially on August 28, 2012. In the application Greyhound requested that the submission be processed based on an "urgent

public need" which would bypass the usual request for being published and allowing for public input. The PTB denied this special request stating it was necessary to publish it to the public in order to receive feedback from those who would be directly affected by the changes in route frequency set out in the application (Passenger Transportation Board, 2013: 4). The PTB requested additional information from Greyhound and set a deadline of October 24, 2012 for public feedback on the submission (6). Approximately 180 letters and emails were received prior to the deadline.

The PTB made a list of various concerns that were brought up to them through the feedback process, one of which stated that "reductions in service will increase safety risks associated with a rise in hitchhiking on some routes particularly those on Highway 16 and, in other cases, travel using cars in winter conditions" (9). After reviewing the community feedback, including that of local and Indigenous government leaders, the PTB determined that despite the reduction of services, Greyhound would still provide what they believed to be a sufficient level of service to the areas in which these routes existed (13). The reduction of services, however, made an already underserviced highway that much more inaccessible.

Question Period: Pressure from Within the Legislature

Communities in the north were frustrated with the reduction of essential transportation services through Greyhound and the government's lack of action in addressing transportation gaps in the north. This frustration was expressed by representatives from British Columbia's Official Opposition, the New Democratic Party (NDP), in question period in 2013. In July 2013, NDP MLA Jennifer Rice called on the provincial government to establish a bus shuttle service along Highway 16 (James, 2013*).* During question period she stated: "seven years have passed since the recommendation was first made, and we've gone backwards, not forwards…when will communities along Highway 16 get this shuttle?"

(Government of British Columbia, July 11, 2013). Rice referred to the 2006 Highway of

Tears Symposium, the Inquiry's final report and the reduction in Greyhound services to

illustrate the urgency of transportation problems in the north while calling on the government

to respond to safety and transportation concerns (James, 2013).

The Minister of Justice, Susan Anton, responded to Rice's question stating that work

was being done to develop solutions to the concerns (James, 2013). The government's

response recognized the transportation issues and noted the work that the Ministry of

Transportation and Infrastructure was doing to improve safety for travelers in the north

without detailing any specific examples (Government of British Columbia, July 11 2013).

The Minister provided more details concerning the work the government was doing to

address the Missing Women Inquiry's recommendations. This included outlining the

government's investments in resources like a drop-in center for homelessness in Vancouver.

This redirection in the Minister of Justice's response caused many opposition party members

to shout for "a shuttle bus" as the Minister spoke (Government of British Columbia, July 11

2013). This response by the government made it clear that their focus was on investing in

solutions in the south rather than the north.

3.6 International Responses (2013-2014)

This next section will review international responses to the issue of safety for women

in the north. It will go through various reports that were made by non-profit and other non-

governmental organizations that aimed to put pressure on the province of British Columbia.

After the Commission released its report, international organizations released their own

reports in response to the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women in northern

British Columbia. The next two years focused on additional advocacy and further problem definition from international actors.

On February 13, 2013 Human Rights Watch, a non-profit, non-governmental human rights organization, published a report that outlined the high rates of violence against Indigenous women in Canada and in British Columbia in particular.[5] In November 2011, the organization received a report from Justice for Girls, a Vancouver-based non-profit organization that promotes justice and equality for young girls living in poverty. This report detailed human rights violations against Indigenous women in northern British Columbia (Human Rights Watch, 2013). In collaboration with Justice for Girls, Human Rights Watch conducted five weeks of research in July and August 2012 to investigate these human rights violations (2013). The organization conducted 87 interviews, 50 with Indigenous women and girls and 37 with the families of murder and missing women, local advocates, community members and organizations (2013). The research was undertaken by Human Rights Watch researchers in partnership with Mavis Erickson and Sharon McIvor. As noted previously, Erickson, a Nadleh Whut'en Band member, is a former Tribal Chief of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council and a former Highway of Tears Coordinator. McIvor is a Lower Nicola Band member and is a founder of the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (2013). Interviews were conducted with staff from transition houses, outreach workers, and officers of the "E" Division of the RCMP (2013). The end of the report outlines four separate sections of recommendations targeted at the Government of Canada, Government of British Columbia, the RCMP and lastly the UN Human Rights Council (2013).

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[5] This report mentioned earlier in the thesis is titled : *Those Who Take Us Away: Abusive Policing and Failures in Protection of Indigenous Women and Girls in Northern British Columbia, Canada*

Human Rights Watch recommended that the Government of Canada launch a national inquiry on the issue of the missing and murdered Indigenous women. The organization recommended that the Government of British Columbia renew its commitment to the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium report in collaboration with northern communities (2013). Its recommendations for the RCMP included expanding training for officers on issues of racism and sexism in society and, most importantly, improving its responses to violence against women (2013). Lastly, the report recommended that the UN Human Rights Council raise the issue of violence against Indigenous women in Canada as part of a periodic review in order to hold the country accountable and to respond to this issue immediately (2013).

In July 2014, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, James Anaya, released a report on the situation of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This report was based on research that was conducted by his office in October 2013. This report called on the federal and provincial governments to work with Indigenous peoples to address various issues including health, education, truth and reconciliation, justice, and self-government (Anaya, 2014: 24). Most importantly the report called on governments to take steps to address the epidemic of missing and murdered Indigenous women, in consultation with communities (24). Recommendation 84 of the report outlines the need for the government to partner with Indigenous peoples on and off reserve in providing greater access to crucial services like education, health and child welfare (23). This recommendation also recognizes the challenges of achieving this goal because of the "geographic remoteness of many Indigenous communities" (23). This recommendation outlines the gap between people and basic services that is normally bridged by transportation networks.

3.7 Public Consultation (2014-2015)

This section looks at the first stages of the consultation process which was conducted in 2014. It will also reveal what happened with the information from those meetings. Finally, it will end with a review of the Northern Transportation Symposium which was the provincial government's last collaboration with communities before announcing the TAP. During these next two years of development focused on agenda setting and policy development.

Meetings in Northern Communities

In 2014, the provincial Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) was planning to meet with various communities along Highway 16 in order to discuss transportation gaps in the north. According to CBC News, in the summer of 2014 approximately 14 meetings were held along Highway 16 (CBC News, October 2015). Unfortunately, there is little documentation in the public record of the content of these consultations, or who participated, and when. Information on the consultations, therefore, has been pieced together from news articles. The reason for the gap in details regarding the consultations will be addressed later.

In an interview with CBC News, the Mayor of Hazelton Alice Maitland stated that a community meeting was held in Hazelton on June 27, 2014. Ministry officials, including the Assistant Deputy Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Deborah Bowman, were in attendance at this meeting. Maitland stated that these officials indicated they would be spending "about a month travelling along Highway 16" to meet with various communities and individuals to supply a report of their findings to government (CBC News, October 2015). Maitland also said that she met with Bowman two more times later in 2014 (CBC News, October 2015). Former Mayor of Burns Lake Luke Strimbold, Tribal Chief Terry

Teegee and two other leaders from the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council also met with Bowman and staff in 2014 (CBC News, October 2015). The individuals who attended these meetings had a mixed response. Although some attendees found the meetings to be productive, Teegee stated that he was told by the MOTI that they "met with a lot of other First Nations and it [bus shuttle system] wasn't a priority" (CBC News, October 2015). He told the media this was inconsistent with what he and many other communities felt to be an overwhelming need along Highway 16 (CBC News, October 2015). Attendees told the media that the meetings were focused on establishing what the local challenges were regarding safety along the Highway of Tears and what some concrete solutions could be to these issues (CBC News, October 2015).

An interview with a provincial government official revealed that during the summer of 2014 the government conducted one-on-one consultations with local leaders, communities and organizations about the issue of safety for women and its connection to the accessibility of transportation (Interview Government Official, 2018). The official stated "I think it was evident at that time that there were linkages to the missing women because of the lack of transportation" (2018). A key partner in this consultation was the northern branch of the First Nations Health Authority. The First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) works with over 200 First Nations communities across the province (FNHA, 2019). In 2013, the FNHA took over the responsibility of delivering health care programs and services formally under the care of Health Canada (FNHA, 2019). The FNHA works in collaboration with First Nation communities to address gaps in services and to promote culturally based service-delivery and programs (FNHA, 2019).

In addition to being a liaison between remote First Nation communities and the MOTI, the FNHA has also conducted surveys regarding transportation in various

communities. These surveys allowed the MOTI to get a better sense of how Indigenous peoples on reserves accessed services (Interview Government Official, 2018). The provincial government official stated that in regards to the consultation process "it was not perfect, I don't think there's ever a perfect situation when you're dealing with a policy issue like this that is so important" (Interview Government Official, 2018). While consultation did happen in the north regarding the concerns that communities had been raising for years, it was not clear at the time what the government did with this information.

Consultation Information

On November 19, 2014, a Freedom of Information request was made by NDP MLA Jennifer Rice, to access the records of meetings held by the MOTI from May 15, 2014 to November 19, 2014. Rice, who had previously challenged the government about the shuttle bus system in question period in 2013, wanted to get the meeting records to see what work had been done in the communities (Denham, 2015: 5). According to CBC News, the government twice requested an extension in order to get the information, first in December 2014 and then again in January 2015, and eventually notified Rice saying no records had been located for the request and that the file was closed (CBC News, May 2015a).

In a press release in February 2015, Rice stated that she was told by the government that the consultations regarding the implementation of a bus shuttle system were conducted in many communities and that it "was indicated communities thought it was impractical" (Rice, 2015). Rice further challenged the government about why there were no notes from any of the consultations (Rice, 2015). Carrier Sekani Tribal Councillor Mavis Erickson also spoke out in May 2015 regarding the lack of information from the meetings. Erickson told CBC News that when other organizations like Human Rights Watch or the United Nations

conducted research or had meetings, she was contacted but that she was never contacted for any meetings with the ministry (CBC News, May 2015b).

On May 29, 2015, Elizabeth Denham, the Information and Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia Office of Information and Privacy (OIPC), launched a Commission of Inquiry into the Freedom of Information request. On October 22, 2015 a report was released. The investigation into this request found that the MOTI did not fulfil the request that the applicant was seeking. The OIPC also received reports of allegations from a ministerial assistant, Tim Duncan, in which he detailed a request from a ministerial assistant he received to destroy records following a freedom of information request (Dickson, July 2016*).* Duncan explained that in November 2014 he had only been working for a few weeks when he received a request for records to be released relating to Highway 16 and the missing and murdered Indigenous women in northern British Columbia as a result of a Freedom of Information request (Dickson, July 2016). Duncan submitted the documents that he found relevant by email to ministerial assistant George Steven Gretes. Gretes requested that Duncan delete them (Dickson, July 2016). Gretes then tripled-deleted[6] the emails from Duncan's computer and had them permanently removed from the government system (Dickson, July 2016). Gretes confirmed that he did delete emails after initially lying in the investigation that he had not (Dickson, July 2016). The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure Todd Stone, told CBC News that he was unaware of the allegations raised by Duncan until May 2015. In October 2015 Denham released a report entitled *Access Denied* which found that "political staff in [BC Liberal Premier Christy] Clark's office and in ministries were routinely

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[6] Triple deleting is the action of deleting an item from a folder, and then deleting the item from the 'deleted folder' on a computer and lastly overriding a backup that allows a computer system to recover deleted items for up to 14 days.

destroying government records and violating the province's access to information laws" (Dickson, July 2016).

While the Freedom of Information request could have provided crucial information regarding what happened at the consultation meetings, it was also an important moment in the development of the transportation policy. Community members and leaders grew frustrated with the lack of response, but also with the withholding of crucial information from long overdue public consultations regarding this issue. Taylor Bachrach stated that "there was a loss of trust especially among First Nations voters in the region" when it came to the deleted information relating to the missing and murdered women in British Columbia (Interview Bachrach, 2018). Bachrach further stated that "the negative press that they got around [the triple delete scandal] probably increased [the government's] motivation to show some serious progress on that file…all of a sudden they announced that they were going to invest all this money in a bus system and transportation options" (Interview Bachrach, 2018). Bachrach made the point that despite the scandal he never questioned the motives of the MOTI and that he truly believed it always wanted to do the right thing in terms of developing the transportation policy (Interview Bachrach, 2018).

Northern Transportation Symposium

In 2015, a Northern Transportation Symposium was held in Smithers. This came a month after the *Access Denied* report was released and amid the media pressure on the government for answers regarding the missing information. This Symposium was co-hosted by the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the First Nations Health Authority (MOTI, 2015). Ninety participants attended including local government and First Nation representatives. The goal of the Symposium was to identify local issues and establish recommendations for the region (MOTI, 2015). On December 1, 2015, a Northern

Symposium Transportation Report was published. The report noted that "participants acknowledged that providing and coordinating transportation services poses significant challenges due to low ridership and long distances between rural and remote communities" (1). The Symposium reviewed four key themes including: Expansion of Services; Capital and Operating Funds; Collaboration and Communication; and Highway Safety (2-3).

The first theme, Expansion of Services, reviewed the diverse needs and requests from various communities. For example, it outlined that while some communities were requesting increased levels of services, many remote communities just wanted access to some services (2). Symposium participants also acknowledged the need for coordination with existing services in the area like the Northern Health Connections bus or Greyhound.[7] Lastly a common discussion regarding the expansion of services was the animosity growing between the north and south of the province in terms of the amount of transportation services available in the south and the lack of services in the north (2).

The second theme addressed by the Northern Transportation Symposium was the Capital and Operating Funds. This theme outlined concerns about the lack of capacity of local and Indigenous governments to fund services (2). In addition to sustaining long term funding for transportation services, community members also proposed having more support for transportation initiatives that go beyond connecting people to health services (6). In the report it was noted that funding vans and other forms of transportation within Indigenous communities empowers them to support their membership to access basic services and to travel to other communities (6).

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[7] Greyhound ultimately pulled its routes from western Canada as of 2018. There were still existing routes at the time of the Transportation Symposium in the region.

The third theme looked at Collaboration and Communication, acknowledging that solutions to transportation issues need to be community-based as each community is unique (3). For example, participants outlined that some communities would use transportation more for getting into town to work, or for accessing health or other basic services, while others would use the transportation to travel the full length of the corridor (3). Each community interacts with transportation in different ways due to geographical differences, population size and accessibility to services. Therefore, there is a need for greater collaboration in order to make sure all needs are identified when it comes to designing transportation systems. In addition, this theme looked at the need for public awareness campaigns about transportation networks to ensure remote and rural communities were aware of new transportation options so they could use them (3).

Theme four of the Symposium outlined Highway Safety and the pressing need to increase safety along the highway corridor. This theme included recommendations to address cell phone coverage, bus stops, on the bus safety and again further education about and awareness of the system so people know there are options (4). Smaller breakout sessions in the Symposium provided further feedback and community specific recommendations on the issue of transportation. These recommendations included developing peer programs that look at educating youth on the dangers of hitchhiking (8). A mobile app was also offered as a suggestion for hitchhikers to use as a check in/check out process when getting in cars with strangers on the Highway (8). Many of the safety discussions focused on hitchhiking and ways to address hitchhiker safety (8). The end of the report notes that "the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure will present a Highway 16 transportation action plan to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure… [which will] identify solutions to provide safe, practice and sustainable transportation services" (10). This action plan was released to

the public thirteen days later on December 14, 2015, almost a decade after the idea was first proposed at the Highway of Tears Symposium.

3.8 Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan (2015)

On December 14, 2015 the BC Liberal government announced the Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan. This plan outlined five points of action that aim to improve transportation along Highway 16 (Government of British Columbia, 2015). These points included:

- Transit expansion

- A community transportation grant program which will allow communities to purchase and operate vehicles in their area

- A First Nations driver education program

- Highway infrastructure safety improvements including webcams and transit shelters

- An increase in collaboration with existing service providers in the area to better connect services (Government of British Columbia, 2015).

The plan funded the transit expansion by including a $4.2 million commitment from the province on a cost-shared basis with local communities to invest in the expansion of inter-community BC Transit services from Terrace to Prince George (Government of British Columbia, 2015). As of early 2020, four new routes have been put in place in coordination with regional and local governments, including routes from Prince George to Burns Lake, Burns Lake to Smithers, an enhancement of the existing Hazelton to Smithers route, and an

additional Hazelton to Terrace route (Government of British Columbia, 2015). At the time of writing, a route from Terrace to Prince Rupert has yet to be completed.

The second action point, the community transportation grant program, involves funding and purchasing vehicles for communities to operate on a cost shared basis (Government of British Columbia, 2015). These grants are offered to Indigenous governments, local governments and non-profit organizations. As of today, 12 community transportation programs are operating as a result of the grant and new partnerships have been created between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. According to a provincial government official, the development of the TAP has created a better sense of community (Interview Government Official, 2018). This official also stated that "the Mayor of Vanderhoof said that the community vehicles they got funding for, which was a joint venture with the Saik'uz First Nation, has [sic] been transformational" (Interview Government Official, 2018). These vehicles are used to not only connect individuals to services but also to connect communities with one another.

Point three, the First Nation Driver Education Program (FNDEP), includes $400,000 of funding from the Ministry of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (Government of British Columbia, 2015). The FNDEP aims to increase the number of drivers with Class 4 and 5 licences, and starts training at the Learner and New driver level (Class 7) (Government of British Columbia, 2015). Carrier Sekani Family Services delivers the program and has conducted training in communities along Highway 16 (Government of British Columbia, 2019). As of 2019, approximately 190 individuals have participated in the training (Government of British Columbia, 2019).

The fourth point, highway infrastructure safety improvements, includes an investment of $1.5 million by the provincial government and $1 million of federal funding for highway

webcams and new transit shelters (Government of British Columbia, 2015). To date there have been 15 all-weather transit shelters built along the corridor (Government of British Columbia, 2019). Approximately twelve web cams have been installed to increase the oversight of activity along the highway (Government of British Columbia, 2019).

The fifth point involves greater collaboration and an increase in the interconnectivity of services in the region. Going through the consultation process in the development stage of the plan, a partnership with the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA) was key to providing outreach and transferring information from individuals in remote locations and on reserve to policy developers (Interview Government Official, 2018). It is also noted that the FNHA was a key player in the Northern Transportation Symposium held in Smithers in 2015 (Interview Government Official, 2018). Therefore, in order to successfully move forward, the fifth point of the plan set out to continue old partnerships and create new ones that will be critical in the development of the bus routes and sharing information with remote areas once the routes are established (Government of British Columbia, 2015).

With the announcement of the plan, the MOTI appointed a twelve-person Highway 16 Transportation Advisory group which would oversee its implementation (Government of British Columbia, 2015). The advisory group would report to the MOTI over the next few months and would work to create application processes for the funding programs set out in the plan in addition to overseeing and being consulted on the development of other components of the plan (Government of British Columbia, 2015). The advisory group was made up of Ministry representatives, local leaders, and Indigenous leaders (see Appendix G for list of members). On June 15, 2016, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure announced an additional commitment of $2 million of provincial and federal funding for the Action Plan (Government of British Columbia, 2016).

After the announcement of the Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan, BC Transit was tasked with the job of developing an outline of what a transit system would look like along the corridor. Chris Fudge, BC Transit's Northern Regional Director, stated in an interview that over the year and a half after the announcement, BC Transit engaged in an extensive consultation process with communities, organizations and governments along the corridor (Interview Fudge, 2018). In particular, Fudge explained that first BC Transit went to communities in 2016 to get an idea of what they would look for in a new transit system; for example, what the schedule would look like, and what days of the week would be served. From that point, they were able to start developing and implementing small segments of the routes beginning in early January 2017 (Interview Fudge, 2018). Through the consultation process Fudge said that communities were incredibly welcoming (2018). He admitted that there were differences in opinions and in some ways people were not always supportive as they were unsure if the new transportation networks were a worthwhile investment (2018). He said that through the consultation process they were able to spend time educating individuals and quelling misconceptions (Interview Fudge, 2018). Fudge stated "that's the real benefit of doing that in person, you don't have that opportunity if you're just soliciting feedback through a survey, you don't have the opportunity to inform" (Interview Fudge, 2018).

The ability to inform and work face-to-face with communities, governments and organizations helped spread the word and build excitement when it came time to implement and run the new service. Overall Fudge stated that "I've always said is that this is a public safety initiative, and that's really what this is all about…we really want to make sure that the message gets across to people that it's a safe mode of transportation" (Interview Fudge, 2018). He noted that the implementation and evaluation of the bus system, reviewing its

effectiveness and altering the system will happen in consultation with communities, governments and organizations (2018).

In addition to the work that BC Transit has done with communities on the transit system, Carrier Sekani Family Services (CSFS) has continued to support safety and awareness of the Highway of Tears. CSFS is an organization which offers a wide range of services supporting individuals through "justice, health, social and family services" with a cultural holistic approach (CSFS, 2019). This organization has been acknowledged for its commitment to the 33 recommendations of the Highway of Tears Symposium report and its establishment of the Highway of Tears website which gives the community access to the Symposium report, raises awareness and provides updates (Michalko, 2016: 117). CSFS has been deeply involved in the creation of the Highway of Tears Governing Body, the appointment of the Highway of Tears coordinator and endless work on securing consistent funding for Highway of Tears programs.

3.9 Chapter Summary

The TAP initially evolved out of grassroots pressure from community members, organizations and local leaders writing letters, organizing marches and raising their voices. Partnerships with province-wide organizations such as the UBCM and the FNHA and national and international organizations and bodies supported and amplified these local concerns. However, it took the provincial government ten years to respond to a policy problem that contributed to local anxiety and concern for safety for women in northern communities. Eventually, momentum built through the Missing Women's Inquiry, Official Opposition and the triple-delete scandal reinforced the north's policy priorities and put added pressure on the government to act.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the development of the Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan (TAP), a policy that aimed to address the gaps in transportation along the ill-famed Highway of Tears. This chapter will analyze the development of the TAP by applying the themes and concepts discussed in the academic literature to the case study outlined in chapter 3. In doing so, it will respond to the two research questions posed at the outset of the thesis: what factors led to the development of the Transportation Action Plan in 2015; and why did this plan take over a decade to develop following the call for action at the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium?

4.2 Socio-Economic Characteristics of the North

This section of the chapter will look at how characteristics of the north exacerbated the issues of accessibility of transportation and safety for women. The characteristics that will be addressed in this chapter include: geography, poverty, race and gender. In many ways these characteristics served as barriers to the short-term development of the TAP and safe and accessible transportation in the north. They were also indicative of broader social issues that needed to be addressed in order to improve the lives and prospects of many northern residents.

Accessibility

Accessibility to transportation in northern British Columbia is affected by a number of the characteristics outlined in the literature on Northern Studies. Harsh and unpredictable geographic and climatic conditions create an extremely undesirable environment for

transportation. Unpredictable factors like weather and geography can pose many challenges for governments and private actors alike. In addition, the remoteness of northern communities and the vast distances between communities, coupled with low population numbers reduce profits and deter investment (Coates, 1994: 33). The development of the TAP has shown that the north struggles to attract and maintain interest from the private sector, as evidenced by the reduction and later departure of the Greyhound bus services in the region. The weather, geography and isolated populations create an unappealing market for private actors to want to invest in transportation services. For many years, the provincial government was reluctant to fill this void with a public transportation system; its neoliberal ideological orientation favoured private sector investment and a reduced role for the state in the provision of public services in general. The lack of accessible transportation services contributes to the high rates in hitchhiking that place vulnerable populations at risk.

The literature also notes that poverty is a defining characteristic of northern regions in Canada and that Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by higher rates of poverty (Morton, 2016: 303). My research reveals that communities in northern British Columbia have been impacted by boom and bust cycles commonly associated with resource dependent economies, and this makes them more vulnerable to economic downturns and associated poverty. Indigenous peoples in northern British Columbia have been affected by the social and economic impacts of colonialism and racism. These systemic barriers have caused employment inequalities, child welfare issues, and high rates of poverty (Morton, 2016: 303). Higher rates of poverty have also compromised transportation accessibility for northerners and Indigenous peoples in particular, leading to higher rates of hitchhiking and other unsafe practices.

In general, the impacts of poverty on accessibility became apparent during the development of the TAP. Remote communities, including many Indigenous communities, do not have as many services available to them as there are in larger centers in the region (Highway of Tears Symposium, 2006: 17). Therefore, it is common to travel to the nearest town or city to access important services. This is particularly true for individuals living on First Nations reserves, which are often located in remote places with very few amenities such as recreational infrastructure and social activities for youth. This means that many individuals will travel along this highway using any means possible to access activities or services.

Safety for vulnerable individuals travelling along the highway is also compromised by the lack of cell phone reception in many places, making it difficult for travelers to keep in touch with family and friends. Even if an individual is fortunate enough to have their own transportation, traveling in the winter is also incredibly dangerous depending on the weather and road conditions. This is particularly true if an individual chooses to hitchhike; as is noted consistently throughout this thesis, female hitchhikers are especially at risk.

Safety for Women in the North

While geographic and socio-economic conditions like weather and poverty are barriers to the accessibility of transportation, they also impact the issue of safety for women in the north. The literature on ecofeminism helps us to understand how this issue has affected northern British Columbia. Ecofeminist scholars such as Andrea Smith (2005) and Lee Maracle (2012) discuss the ways in which the domination of women and the domination of nature are connected. Maracle argues that there is a direct connection between violence against the earth and violence against women. I identified the case of Site C as one example where an influx of transient workers in a community led to an increase of sexual assaults

(Edwards, 2019), but the proliferation of resource development projects across northern

British Columbia create a general context for violence against the earth that, in turn,

compromises the safety of women.

Throughout the development of the TAP, communities expressed fear at meetings,

marches and through consultation regarding the safety of women due to the constant

disappearances of loved ones along the Highway. Development along the corridor also

contributes to this fear as it brings in predominantly male workers who have no attachment to

the region or its communities. This fear played a role in the development of the TAP.

Communities were not only motivated by the lack of accessible transportation, but also the

need for safe transportation for those individuals who are most at risk: marginalized and

Indigenous women. This latter point is clearly evident when reviewing the list of the victims

of the Highway of Tears. Many of the young women and girls that were lost along the

Highway of Tears were between the ages of 12-19 years. All of the victims were female and

almost all of them were Indigenous.

In this thesis I have found it particularly important to recognize the impacts of

colonialism on women and their safety. While a large part of the northern population is faced

with issues of accessibility, young, Indigenous women are particularly impacted. This

argument is supported by Andrea Smith's (2005) statement that Indigenous women do not

experience the same response from the justice system when it comes to police investigations,

due to racist and sexist notions of risk-taking behaviours. The research suggests that the

demographic profile of those who have been disproportionally affected may have contributed

to the delayed policy response by the government. This was seen with the overdue E-PANA

investigation response in 2005 and delayed provincial response to the issue of missing and

murdered Indigenous women through the Inquiry. I argue that the late response by both the

justice system and the government show that there is a minimization of the impacts and severity of the challenges that certain groups in the north face.

The delayed response to the Highway of Tears cases is an example of ways in which patriarchal and colonial perspectives impacted the response to an issue that was having serious consequences for northern British Columbia. Morton (2016) argues that Indigenous women were often labeled using a colonial/patriarchal lens as devious and incapable. These labels were and still are often used when discussing the issue of hitchhiking along Highway 16. Concerns regarding the safety of women in the north had always been present, but these concerns were clearly not at the forefront of the government's agenda. It took concerted grassroots pressure to hold government at all levels accountable. Community responses to hitchhiking often focused on preventing hitchhiking and educating women and girls of the dangers of hitchhiking in the area. While this is a reasonable response, it puts the onus on the women to find other means of transportation beyond, hitchhiking, rather than providing them with a solution to this dilemma.

As noted earlier, there are many risks of hitchhiking along this stretch including the harsh climate, sparse distances and limited cell reception, but the greater risk that no one should have to account for is the chance of being targeted by someone wanting to exploit a particular age, culture and gender. The characterization of hitchhiking as a dangerous activity is a western notion that targets individual behaviour. While there is a lengthy debate regarding this particular mode of transportation, the discussion as to whether these women should really be choosing to "put themselves at risk" is irrelevant and quite frankly distracts from the greater issue of why this Highway is unsafe and what we can do to be a part of the solution. This discussion leads us into the next section which looks further into the issues of safety for women in the north and whether the TAP addresses these safety concerns.

Highway of Tears Recommendation

Rebecca Tallman (2014) states that people understand security and insecurity in different ways. She notes that for families, communities and advocates, safety can mean things like healing, advocacy and "accountability from the police and government" (2014: 106). By contrast, police and the government find safety to mean "infrastructure, policies and spending" (107). These two perspectives of safety were both apparent in the development of the TAP. In the definition of the problem (safety) and the solution (transportation, healing) you can see how different policy actors have different responses to the issue.

The Highway of Tears Symposium outlined 33 recommendations with regards to addressing the issue of safety, including victim prevention, counselling and support, and community development (2006: 8). As Tallman argues (2014) the community members, organizations and leaders that came together emphasized words like "healing", "support" and "team" in their discussions. The Symposium report also included further recommendations to reconnect and improve relationships with the RCMP.

While the TAP is a response to transportation issues in northern British Columbia, the policy does not mention or acknowledge the Highway of Tears, the missing and murdered Indigenous women or even the word women. More importantly, it also does not address the deeper issues of underdevelopment, colonialism and racism that have caused the problems facing northern and Indigenous communities. I argue that recognizing and addressing the roots of why there are safety concerns in the first place is crucial to the policy and the accountability of those who are responsible for implementing the policy moving forward. In this sense, the TAP is just one small part of a solution to a much broader set of issues and challenges in northern British Columbia and in Canada more generally.

This section has looked at how geographic and socio-economic barriers framed the issues of accessibility and safety for women in the north, and the development of the TAP. It also became apparent that the issue of transportation is symptomatic of greater problems that exist in the north. Issues relating to the accessibility of transportation are complicated by much broader problems such as sexism, colonialism, poverty and racism. In the case of Indigenous peoples, these problems stem from years of systematic oppression continually reinforced by patriarchal and colonial ideals. While issues like transportation may be addressed through policy development, these greater issues will persist causing further harm to women in the north. Mapping the political and institutional context of a region can help us to understand how these problems were addressed and what barriers exist in the policy development at the institutional level.

4.3 Political and Institutional Context

When thinking about accessibility in this thesis, transportation is often the main theme; however, it is also important to consider how the overarching theme of accessibility to political power or influence affected this issue. A critical piece that held back the development of the Transportation Action Plan was the question of who has the power and decision-making authority to address the transportation needs of the northern part of the province. It was clear that the provincial government was the key policy actor in this regard and that, for many years, it was reluctant to develop a public transportation plan. Northern-based actors, including local and Indigenous governments, tried to keep this issue on the political agenda, but lacked the capacity and authority to act. At the same time, it was also apparent that grassroots activism, in combination with alliances with province-wide organizations was instrumental in forcing the provincial government to eventually act.

Earlier in this thesis, I discussed how governance and politics in northern British Columbia have been characterized as being hyperfractionalized (Young, 2016: 46). Hyperfractionalization is a term used to describe how the north is broken up into multiple different forms of government including local, First Nations, and regional districts. In the case of the TAP, it could be seen as a structural barrier to the policy development. I argue that what appears to be hyperfractionalization is a result of a lack of a unified government in the north that truly represents northern interests and has the capacity and authority to act on them.

Hyperfactionalization in the north is reinforced by a culture of opposition. In this thesis I discussed how different conflictual relationships shape the north and can pose as barriers to policy development. Coates (1994) argues that "intense localism" is to blame for regions struggling to cohesively come together to represent their interests in the north (27). This localism is fueled by the great distances between northern communities and competition that results from resource-based investment. This competition contributes to disunity in the north, as local communities struggle to come together. While there was clear evidence that the north is divided, both politically and socially, I argue in the case of the TAP that community members and local leaders were united by the issues of accessibility of transportation and safety for women in the north.

Another conflict that exists that further reinforces hyperfractionalization in the north is that between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Earlier in this thesis I discussed how this conflict is characterized not only by the land but also the lack of political autonomy in Indigenous communities. Indigenous peoples were alienated early on in the policy development by the delayed RCMP response and the years of inaction following the Highway of Tears Symposium recommendations. Institutionalized racism impacted the way

that the TAP was developed and it was clear in the initial lack of response and further lack of

trust reinforced by the triple-delete scandal that Indigenous people's concerns and issues

were not being heard.

The triple-delete scandal in particular highlighted the importance of trust in the policy

process. Trust can be a divisive factor when it is lost in a relationship. The loss of the

consultation information in the scandal reinforced a lack of trust between northern

communities and the provincial government. Before this scandal, northern community

members had feelings of distrust in government responses due to the delayed RCMP

investigation and an unresponsive provincial government to the Highway of Tears

Symposium recommendations. While there were countless challenges to building a trusting

relationship between Indigenous peoples and the government, there were some positive

moments. For example, in 2014 the MOTI partnered with the First Nations Health Authority

(FNHA) in order to conduct consultation with Indigenous communities in the north. I argue

that the development of the TAP may have reinvigorated relationship building in the north

with the help of new actors like the FNHA to assist in bridging the relationship between

Indigenous peoples and the government. Trust was formed at the local level between policy

actors in order to translate northern issues to the provincial level.

Coates' (1994: 39) argument that northern areas of the province feel powerless due to

the concentration of political power in the south proves to be relevant in this case study. This

notion of powerlessness is consistent with Young's idea that the north is not only

hyperfractionalized, but it is also quasi-subordinate to other levels of government. In

addition to being divided, local governments and First Nations governments do not have the

autonomy or financial capacity to address such complex regional issues as public

transportation and safety concerns for women in the north which are in turn exacerbated by deep systemic issues within our society.

Given the north's lack of autonomy, the issue of accessibility to political power and influence persists. This case study of the TAP reveals the limited power of the north in the policy process as it took ten years for the bus shuttle system to develop. Even if local governments had more political autonomy, there would still be other barriers in place including a lack of financial capacity and disunity across the north. Although some research (Ryser et al, 2018) indicates that local governments will take on the costs of investments despite limited financial capacity, this case study shows that these governments alone are not be able to sustain an unfunded mandate to develop expensive public services such as a transit system that crosses municipal and regional boundaries (30). Consequently, they rely on senior governments at the provincial and federal levels to take action.

Even though hyperfractionalization and powerlessness may divide and weaken the north, often preventing it from acting in unison, in the case of the TAP, there is also compelling evidence to suggest that disparate northern communities and organizations can act together. For example, the unity and common purpose displayed between local governments, First Nations, and community organizations was crucial not only in keeping the issue of transportation in the spotlight, but also in the ultimate development of the TAP. Key bridging issues such as issues of safety for women in the north and the need for accessible and safe transportation brought together a diverse set of community members and organizations. This cross-sectional collaboration was evident at the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium. This symposium was attended by multiple different actors from all levels of governments and representatives from organizations and the private sector.

Without a unified regional government in the north, local leaders have to find different ways to advocate for northern issues. This was seen in the development of the TAP as new partnerships were formed. A key partnership that formed early on in the development of the TAP was between Brenda Wilson and the Mayor of Smithers, Taylor Bachrach. Brenda Wilson, who worked at the grassroots level, put pressure on local leaders and raised awareness of the barriers facing Indigenous women. Her actions initiated a series of responses which involved other actors such as the Town of Smithers and, later the UBCM. Collectively, they put pressure on the provincial government to act by translating a local issue to the provincial level. The role played by provincial organizations such as the UBCM and the First Nations Health Authority was critical to the eventual development of the TAP. These organizations not only provided the north with a unified voice at the provincial level, their support for the TAP was also one of the factors that influenced the provincial government to act, despite the fact that, for many years, it was reluctant to do so.

Although hyperfractionalization and powerlessness in part explain the north's inability to pressure the provincial government to develop the TAP, the government's reluctance to act on this important issue also stems from its deep-seated ideological perspectives on the role of the state. The neoliberal orientations of the BC Liberals, the political party that controlled the provincial government from 2000 until 2017, influenced their perspective on this issue. As noted earlier, neoliberalism advocates a reduced role for the state (government) in society, favoring instead market solutions to public policy problems. I argue that the government did not respond immediately to community recommendations for a bus shuttle system because Greyhound, a private company, was already servicing the corridor. The provincial government's continued inaction following the policy recommendation by communities at the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium suggests

that that it was reluctant to invest public funds in a regional transportation network, especially when it was reducing public spending in other areas (Lacharite and Summerville, 2016: 109). It was only after Greyhound reduced its routes in the north that the provincial government decided to conduct consultations with northern communities about the TAP.

4.4 Policy Cycle

This section of the chapter will examine how the TAP developed using the policy analysis literature outlined in chapter 2. It will identify key policy actors within the TAP policy community in terms of their role and impact on the development of the plan. Along with the previous two sections of this chapter, this section will address the research questions outlined in the outset of this thesis.

Policy Cycle

Gregory Inwood's (2012: 222) policy cycle approach provides a framework for recognizing how policy is developed by dividing it into stages. This outline is particularly relevant for this thesis as it can help us understand how the TAP developed, which policy actors were involved at each point of the development and how much influence the exercised over the process. The two stages that Inwood outlines that are particularly important for this analysis include: problem definition and agenda setting; and policy formulation. In this case study, the problem definition and agenda setting stage took place between 2005 and 2014 which encompasses the vast majority of the period under examination. It was not until after 2014, when the provincial government decided to act, that the policy entered into the policy formulation stage.

Academic research on policy analysis looks at how policy knowledge is critical in the development of a public policy that truly addresses the problem at hand. Dunn (2018)

highlights the importance of defining the right *policy problem* to be addressed and whether this problem is persistent or temporary (5). I argue that the TAP policy does address the issue of transportation; however, there are other aspects to the issue of accessibility that the policy does not completely address. I think this speaks to a gap in what Dunn defines as "policy knowledge" (6). Dunn states that a lack of policy knowledge can be fatal for a new policy as inadequate knowledge can define the problem at hand incorrectly. While I do not think the TAP fails to address the problem, I suggest that there are greater systemic issues that will continue to impact individuals' access to transportation that are not entirely addressed by the TAP. This includes concerns of safety for women in the north that will persist even with a new transportation system. As Dunn argues there are also the *expected policy outcomes* that further question whether the TAP policy will respond to transportation accessibility issues after years of its implementation (5). This point remains to be seen in further research of the actual implementation of the policy.

Policy Community

Adam and Kriesi (2007 - as cited in Leifeld and Schneider, 2012) argue that the policy making process entails a combination of actors coming together, including both governmental and non-governmental actors. In the development of the TAP, a policy community was formed that included a variety of policy actors outlined in Figure 1. This figure plots the relationship between each policy actor and the policy; the closer the policy actor to the policy center, the greater the influence wielded by that actor. This part of the analysis will evaluate five policy actors who I feel were critical players in the policy development process. I will integrate Leifeld and Schneider's (2012) factors of relationship building (influence and social trust) to show how these actors related to each other during this critical first stage in the policy process.

Figure 1: Policy Community in the Development of the Transportation Action Plan (2019)
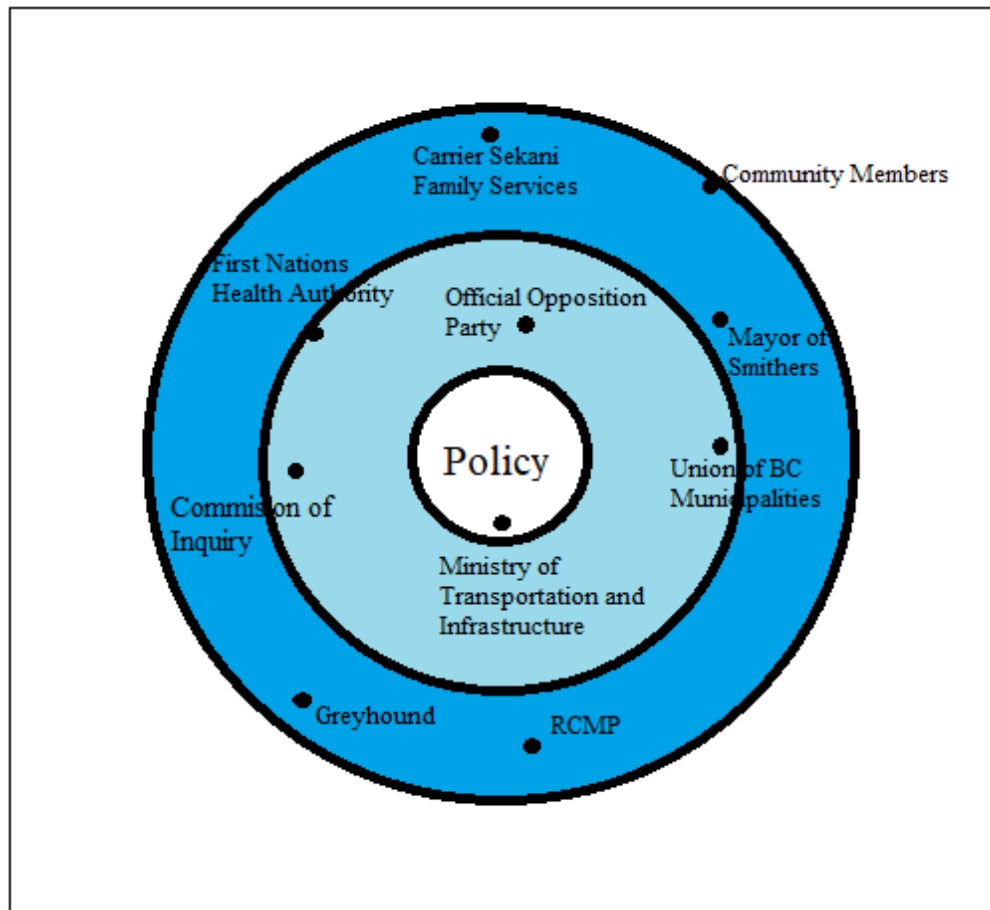
Community Members and Community Organizations

Community members are important policy agenda advocates because they are often directly impacted by the development of public policy (Koduah et al., 2015: 4). In the case of the TAP, community members were involved throughout the process. They attended meetings and marches and interacted with local and provincial officials during various consultation processes. Overall, however, their influence was limited because for most of the period under examination, the provincial government was not engaged in the process. Community members only had direct influence later in the process, when the provincial

government started to engage in consultation through forums such as the Missing Women's Inquiry between 2010 and 2012, and the consultation in 2014 with northern communities that was conducted by the MOTI and the FNHA.

It was also apparent that the lack of social trust between communities and the government negatively affected the relationship building process and the sense on the part of communities that they felt heard by the government. After the consultations in 2014, many community leaders expressed frustration that the goals of the MOTI were unclear (CBC News, October 2015). Chief Terry Teegee told the media that the information given to them by the MOTI was inconsistent with what he felt northern communities really wanted (CBC News, October 2015). In addition, the triple-delete scandal created further mistrust as information regarding northern issues was deliberately lost by government officials.

Community members were often able to mobilize and exert greater influence through local organizations. Community organizations raised awareness of issues at the local level and kept those issues on the local agenda, even when senior governments did not respond. For example, Carrier Sekani Family Services played an important role in raising awareness about the issue of safety for women and, more specifically, Indigenous women in the north. After the Highway of Tears Symposium, CSFS took the lead on reviewing and supporting the implementation of the Symposium's recommendations. Sustaining funding and support from the provincial government for following up and implementing the recommendations proved to be a challenge. However, once the provincial government decided to engage in policy development, community organizations including CSFS were able to advise the policy process.

Local Government

Local government plays a critical role in the delivery of public services, especially in northern regions where they are often the only level of government in a community. Local governments are also advocates for public services and infrastructure that can benefit communities. That being said, it is important to remember that the influence and capacity of local governments is limited by the fact that they fall under the constitutional jurisdiction and authority of the provincial government. Recalling Koduah et.al's (2015) classification of policy actors, local governments can be policy agenda approvers within their own jurisdiction but become policy agenda advisors and/or advocates when it comes to influencing policy at the provincial level

One key local government actor who played an important role in the policy process was Taylor Bachrach, the Mayor of Smithers. The Mayor of Smithers and the Smithers City Council were instrumental in advocating for improvements to public transportation in the north, both at the local level and through provincial organizations such as the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM). While some scholars have noted that local governments are often caught between communities and the provincial government (Halseth & Ryser, 2017), Bachrach became a strong supporter of this issue following his meeting with community activist Brenda Wilson.

It was Bachrach who spearheaded the transportation resolution at the annual meeting of the UBCM in 2012. The UBCM represents local governments across the province and its annual meeting provides a forum for collective action on issues that are important to local governments. While the provincial government may not pay much attention to a small local government in northern BC, such as the Town of Smithers, it will listen to the UBCM. In this sense, the UBCM serves as an important bridging organization between communities at

local governments on the one hand and the provincial government on the other. The Mayor

of Smithers was able to use the platform of the UBCM to raise awareness of the issue of

safety for women in the north and transportation, not only among the local government

representatives in attendance, but also among provincial officials and decision-makers.

First Nations Health Authority

Another critical bridging organization between the provincial government and

communities was the First Nations Health Authority (FNHA). The FNHA works with over

200 First Nation communities across the province of British Columbia (FNHA, 2019). The

provincial government noted that the FNHA was a strategic partner in the policy consultation

process. The FNHA conducted surveys for the MOTI which helped inform the development

of the TAP. It also had significant influence in the policy process, as a policy agenda advisor,

because the government required its assistance in order to conduct meaningful and respectful

consultation with Indigenous communities. The government capitalized on the FNHA's

positive relationships with communities in the north in order to inform the development of

the plan.

Government

Government, at the federal or provincial level, has the power to set the agenda for

new policy development. The choice that government has to act or not on policy is indicative

of its power and influence. Governmental actors can play a number of roles, including policy

agenda directors, policy agenda approvers, policy agenda advisors and policy agenda

advocates. In the case of the TAP, government appeared in many forms including: the

Official Opposition, the Commission of Inquiry and lastly the Ministry of Transportation and

Infrastructure.

While the provincial Official Opposition does not hold a significant amount of policy making power, they do have the ability to influence government by pressuring policy makers to respond to issues in the province. In this sense, the Official Opposition played the role of policy agenda advocate. After years of inaction by the government in power, NDP MLA Jennifer Rice used her position to raise awareness about the issue of northern transportation in Question Period. Rice also capitalized on her position in government to access information that arguably should have been available to the public following consultation in northern communities. While Rice was unable to make policy to respond to the issue, she effectively used her powers as an Official Opposition member to hold the government accountable.

Another government actor that played a key role in the development of the TAP was the Commission of Inquiry. The Commission of Inquiry was appointed by the government to investigate the cases of the missing and murdered indigenous women in the province. While this body was tasked with focusing primarily on the failed police investigation in the Pickton murders and the women from the Downtown East side in Vancouver, it opened up the investigation further to include the north and the Highway of Tears. Although the Commission of Inquiry did not play a direct role in creating the final policy in government, as a policy agenda advisor, it made countless policy recommendations that shaped the policy trajectory of the government in power. The Commission also conducted consultations around the province in order to get further information to inform the policy. In this sense, it held a significant amount of policy power due to the policy knowledge it accumulated during the Inquiry process.

As the provincial ministry that had direct responsibility for the issue of transportation, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) became the focal point for community members, organizations and local governments that wanted change. The MOTI

was the policy agenda approver while the Premier, as the head of the provincial cabinet, was the policy agenda director. During the policy process, the MOTI did not necessarily have positive relationships with northern communities. Northern communities also expressed confusion after consultations in terms of what the MOTI would do with the information they received (CBC News, October 2015). The MOTI also lost a significant amount of community trust when the triple-delete scandal revealed that officials in the ministry had deliberately erased important information related to the issue. Nevertheless, the MOTI was the sole actor that was capable of putting a policy into action and, as such, it is closer to the centre of the policy process compared with all the other actors.

A Confluence of Critical Junctures

Between 2012 and 2015, a combination of key events, or what political scientists have labelled critical junctures, compelled the government to enter the policy process. These critical junctures created the circumstances that forced the government to act on the issues of safe and accessible transportation.

Starting in 2012 significant relationship building among different actors at the local level helped translate local concerns to the provincial level. One example of such relationship building was the abovementioned connection between community activist Brenda Wilson and local mayor Taylor Bachrach. This connection served as a catalyst for action at the local and, later, provincial level through the UBCM. It was essential in translating local concerns to the provincial level. Like the UBCM, the FNHA also served as a bridge between communities and the provincial government. The FNHA assisted in translating local knowledge to the government level in order to develop policy that was truly informed by local interests.

The next critical juncture that influenced the government to act occurred in 2013 when Greyhound, a private bus company that had monopolized intercommunity busing in the north for many decades, reduced its route frequency along the Highway 16 corridor. Earlier in this chapter I argued that the neoliberal ideological orientation of the provincial government was instrumental in maintaining privatized inter-community bus transportation in the north. Although Greyhound did not completely pull out its service at this time[8], the reduction in services exacerbated the issue of safe and accessible transportation for communities in the north. The already underserviced highway was now even more inaccessible. The reduction of Greyhound's routes forced the government to consider investing in public transportation.

The last event that I argue influenced the government to act was the infamous triple-delete scandal in 2014. In many respects, the deliberate deletion of information from public enquiries by government officials embarrassed the government and jeopardized the already fragile trust that existed between the government and communities on this issue. Furthermore, this scandal and the subsequent investigation revealed the government's lack of focus on northern issues. Soon after this scandal occurred, the government acted either to prove that it was working on a transportation policy, or to distract from the scandal itself.

Collectively these key events or critical junctures put considerable pressure on the government to act. While they were important factors in the eventual development of the TAP, it is important that we recognize the role that the Highway of Tears Symposium and the Missing Women's Inquiry also played in translating local knowledge and experience to the provincial level. Despite the government's reluctance to act earlier in the process, these

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[8] Greyhound pulled its transportation routes out of western Canada completely in 2018.

forums kept the issue of safety in the spotlight, especially in northern communities that were most adversely affected.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the academic literature used in this thesis helps us to understand the development of the Transportation Action Plan. The first two sections on the socio-economic and political contexts outline how various factors and circumstances that are common in northern regions in general have affected the political, social and economic development of northern British Columbia and compromised the safety and security of its inhabitants; in particular Indigenous women and girls along the Highway of Tears.   The last section applies the public policy literature to the case to explain the factors that eventually led to the development of the TAP.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Main Findings

The development of the TAP occurred ten years after communities came together and asked for help in addressing issues of safety and transportation accessibility in northern British Columbia. For far too long Indigenous women and girls had gone missing and were found murdered along the Highway of Tears and action was needed. For years the provincial government chose inaction failed to address issues of safety and transportation accessibility in the north. The first recommendation came in 2006 and grassroots advocacy continued for years until the provincial government decided to act. Relationships in the north were formed and healing took place in the face of such political opposition.

Why did it take ten years for the TAP to develop? There are many factors that have been identified in this thesis that explain why this policy failed to develop sooner. These included: a lack of political autonomy in the north; a continued marginalization of northern issues including the Highway of Tears; and lastly a government that chose inaction, prioritized neoliberal values and ignored northern interests.

There are issues of political autonomy in the north that restrict it from responding to problems that are unique to the north. The lack of regional autonomy means that governance in the north is hyperfractionalized. Moreover, local and Indigenous governments do not have the authority or the financial capacity to respond to substantial issues like transportation gaps. In addition to this, it was apparent that the provincial government did not want to get involved in this issue as a private company was already partially servicing the highway. However, communities made it clear that the limited service that did exist was not adequate enough in terms of safety and accessibility for many northern and Indigenous residents. Over

time, partnerships formed at the grassroots and then through provincial organizations that connected individuals and applied pressure on the government. These relationships became necessary to encourage the government to develop a policy that was northern focused in terms of embracing the unique characteristics of the north and inclusive of all the population.

Throughout the ten-year development of the TAP it became clear that there was a lack of understanding of and sympathy for the challenges the north was facing. For many years there was little to no response to the many missing and murdered Indigenous women along the Highway of Tears. In fact, it was not until 2002 that media attention brought the Highway of Tears into focus. Even with this newfound attention and the 2006 Highway of Tears Symposium, which recommended a bus shuttle system among various other courses of action, there was little and inconsistent response from of the provincial government. As mentioned before, there was an acknowledgement that Greyhound was servicing the highway but it was made clear by communities that this system was not enough and not addressing the issue at hand. Even if this was a reason that prevented the government from responding to the issues of safety and transportation accessibility, there was little effort to investigate the larger issues of racism, sexism, colonialism and poverty that shaped the context in which the transportation issue developed.

While the Missing Women's Inquiry and the UBCM resolution helped to raise more awareness of the issues in the north at a government level, it was the communities and organizations in the north that made the greatest push for change. Community leaders were crucial in continuously raising the issues of safety for women in the north and the need for a bus shuttle system to better connect communities. Northern communities made their concerns known through a variety of forums including the media, community consultations and symposiums. Even the former Mayor of Smithers Taylor Bachrach revealed that he got

involved in this issue because of Brenda Wilson's work and advocacy. Ultimately, Mayor Bachrach was the individual who, with support of his Council, brought the resolution forward to the UBCM which put extra pressure on the government to respond. These connections underscored the strength in the grassroots approach to policy development. The TAP would not be here today if it was not for the work of the organizations and individuals in northern communities.

Another important factor to consider was the ideological orientation of the government and how this affected its willingness to act. It was not until 2014 that the government-initiated consultation with northern communities to address the calls for action on the issues of accessibility of transportation. Up until this point communities had already been waiting nine years for a response since their initial recommendation in 2006. The government's reluctance to act can be in part explained by its neoliberal outlook on the role of government in addressing public policy issues. Developing a publicly funded transportation network in the north would not only go against the idea of reducing the role of the state, such a transportation network would also compete with a private company. It was only after Greyhound reduced its services in the north that the government was willing to act on this issue.

It is clear that there is still a lot of work to be done regarding policy development in the north. The TAP addresses one part of an incredibly complex set of issues and challenges that northern communities face on a daily basis. Women and more specifically marginalized and Indigenous women continue to be at risk for violence, whether that is at home or in their communities. There needs to be a change in our understanding of our connection to the land and how this influences how we connect to one another. Reconnection and rebuilding relationships with Indigenous communities and more specifically between Indigenous

communities and government officials is a critical step in addressing the root causes of the broader challenges such as racism, sexism, poverty and colonialism.

Even though the TAP has been developed there is still the issue of how long the process took and the concern moving forward that it will continue to take this long for other issues to be addressed. It is clear, however, that northern communities will persist and continue to take matters into their own hands if they are not heard. Northern organizations, Indigenous communities and local leaders are the best individuals to consult regarding how policies can fit within northern characteristics and needs. The north is its own best expert.

5.2 Future Research

This thesis touches on topics that could be explored in future research. These topics include a deeper look at the issue of political autonomy in the provincial norths, how grassroots political activism has and can be used to influence government policy and lastly how we can explore a new way to develop policy based on Indigenous worldviews. The lack of political autonomy in the provincial north was a massive barrier for communities as they did not have the capacity to address their issues when the provincial government would not. It would be worthwhile to research further how this barrier could be addressed in terms of other forms of governance in the north. Local and Indigenous governments could and should have a bigger role to play if the gap between the northern and southern political interests persists. A re-evaluation of the role and capacity of local and Indigenous governments, relative to other levels of government, would provide some interesting insights on governance and policy making in Canada.

The critical part that northern communities and grassroots organizations played in advocating for policy change was a noteworthy part of this thesis. Researching the factors

that unite or divide northern communities would shed light on their ability to effect political change. An important issue that arose during the development of the TAP was the relationship between government and Indigenous communities. How can policy be developed moving forward that includes an Indigenous worldview and respect for different worldviews? In many ways government policy has integrated various notions of a 'duty to consult', but in many respects this is not enough. The policy development process is rooted in a colonial, patriarchal system. Is there a way, moving forward, that government can reimagine this process to be more inclusive and open? Is this something that could even function within our current society? Most of all, how can government engage with Indigenous communities in a respectful, culturally mindful way?

5.3 Moving Forward

On a final note I believe it is important to empower northern communities to raise their voice and demand a response from their government. With the multiple barriers that exist and issues that persist, the north continues to thrive and find innovative ways to reach out. The TAP may have addressed some of the concerns around accessibility to transportation, but there is still more to the picture that needs to be acknowledged. Women and young girls are still going missing and are still found murdered. Relationships are broken and still need to be healed between Indigenous peoples and the government. It is up to us as a community to reflect and to call on our government to work through these issues together. It is also important for our government to hear us when we call. It is that question that we are left with: what will we do next?

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Appendices

Appendix A: Image of Highway 16 Corridor

©Cassidy Shuvera. 2020

Appendix B: "Girls Don't Hitchhike" Sign along Highway of Tears

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Appendix C: UNBC Research Ethics Board: Approval Letter

UNBC | UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To: Cassidy Shuvera
CC: Gary Wilson

From: Henry Harder, Chair
          Research Ethics Board

Date: February 23, 2018

Re: **E2017.1114.079.00**
          Issues of Accessibility in the North: An Analysis of Transportation and the Highway of Tears

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Thank you for submitting revisions to the Research Ethics Board (REB) regarding the abovenoted proposal. Your revisions have been approved.

We are pleased to issue approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the REB.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Henry Harder

Chair, Research Ethics Board

3333 University Way, Prince George, BC, V2N 4Z9, Telephone (250) 960-6735

Appendix C: UNBC Research Ethics Board: Approval Letter 2

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To: Cassidy Shuvera
CC: Gary Wilson

From: Henry Harder, Chair
           Research Ethics Board

Date: March 12, 2018

Re: **E2017.1114.079.00(a)**
           **Issues of Accessibility in the North: An Analysis of Transportation and
           the Highway of Tears**

Thank you for submitting amendments to the above-noted proposal to the Research Ethics Board
(REB).

The amendments have been approved until the date as provided in the original protocol approval
for this project (i.e. February 22, 2019). Continuation beyond that date will require further review
and renewal of REB approval. Any further changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form
must be approved by the REB.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Henry Harder

Chair, Research Ethics Board

3333 University Way, Prince George, BC, V2N 4Z9, Telephone (250) 960-6735

Appendix C: UNBC Research Ethics Board: Approval Letter 3

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF
NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

MEMORANDUM

To: Cassidy Shuvera
CC: Gary Wilson

From: Henry Harder, Chair
              Research Ethics Board

Date: February 4, 2019

Re: **E2017.1114.079.01**
              Issues of Accessibility in the North: An Analysis of Transportation and
              the Highway of Tears

Thank you for submitting a request for renewal to the Research Ethics Board (REB) regarding the above-noted proposal. Your request has been approved.

We are pleased to issue renewal approval for the above named study for a period of 12 months from the date of this letter. Continuation beyond that date will require further review and renewal of REB approval. Please note that protocols can only be renewed three times, after which a New Application will need to be submitted.

Also, any changes or amendments to the protocol or consent form must be approved by the REB.

Good luck with continuation of your research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Henry Harder

Chair, Research Ethics Board

3333 University Way, Prince George, BC, V2N 4Z9, Telephone (250) 960-6735

Appendix D: UNBC Research Ethics Board: Information Letter

UNBC UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA

MA Candidate- Interdisciplinary Studies: Cassidy Shuvera

Supervisor: Dr. Gary Wilson

University of Northern British Columbia

Professor Department of Political Science

3333 University Way

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Prince George, British Columbia

250-552-6132

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shuvera@unbc.ca

250-960-5514

gary.wilson@unbc.ca

Dear Participant:

The following project titled "Issues of Accessibility in the North: An Analysis of Transportation and the Highway of Tears" is being completed as a part of requirements for a Master's degree in International Northern Development. The purpose of this research project is to examine issues of accessibility of transportation and how it connects to safety (in particular for women) in the north. A case study will be done on the development of the Transportation Action Plan (TAP) the new bus route development along the 724 km stretch of Highway 16 also known as the Highway of Tears. My research will examine the period between the Highway of Tears Symposium in 2006 to the announcement of TAP in 2015.

This study will analyze policy challenges, opportunities and how different actors worked together in order to address issues of accessibility of transportation in the north. You have been chosen to participate in this research project because of your involvement in the development of the TAP policy. You will be asked to consent to an interview which will be approximately an hour in length. During the course of the interview, you will be asked a series of questions on the topics outlined above. Your participation in this project is of a voluntary nature and you have the right to withdraw from the interview process at any time, or refuse to answer any of the questions. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information collected from your participation will be withdrawn and destroyed unless you consent the information can be used.

There are minor risks involved with participating in this study. For example, anonymity cannot always be guaranteed. Despite efforts to maintain anonymity there are potential social risks associated with participation due to the possibility of the public misinterpreting and/or mislabeling statements made. Your identity will be kept anonymous in any publications or other materials that are produced from this research and your name will not be attributed to any of the quotes or information that is taken from the interview, unless you specifically give the researcher permission to attribute your name to the information you provide. The benefits of this study include a greater awareness of the policy process that led to the development of the TAP.

The interview will be conducted in person or over the phone. If the interviews are conducted over the phone a Bluejeans meeting number will be set up through IT support at UNBC. A phone number and conference ID number will be supplied to the interviewee to join the secured call. The interview will only be recorded with your written consent. If recorded, the interview will be transcribed and a physical copy will be mailed to you so you may give feedback and consent. You will be given a prepaid, self-addressed envelope to return the documents with edits you have made to the researcher. The information gathered in this interview process will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office of my research supervisor, Dr. Gary Wilson. Encryption will be used to store and protect

files on a password protected computer. Interview transcripts will be given a number code and the list of number codes and corresponding names will be kept in a separate location. The researcher and Dr. Wilson will be able to access these files. The information taken from your interview will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the project. Following the completion of the project you will be mailed a 2-3 page summary of the main findings of the study. I will also inform you where you can access the full copy of the thesis. I anticipate that the project will finish in May 2019.

If you have any questions, about the project after the interview process is completed, please feel free to contact me at (250) 552 6132 or shuvera@unbc.ca. My supervisor Dr. Gary Wilson can be contacted at gary.wilson@unbc.ca if you have any questions about the research. In the event that you have any complaints about the project, please contact the Office of Research at the University of Northern British Columbia at (250) 960 6735 or reb@unbc.ca.

Sincerely,

Cassidy Shuvera

MA Candidate, Interdisciplinary Studies
University of Northern British Columbia

Appendix E: Interview Questions

Questions:

<u>Interview: Chris Fudge Senior Regional Transit Manager with BC Transit</u>

The North

How would you describe the current state of transportation in the North?

What do you think are some challenges facing transportation in the north?

How do you think accessibility issues affect communities in the north?

What are the current services in in the north that BC transit offers?

Policy: TAP

What kind of impact do you see the new bus system having?

What potential opportunities and challenges are there in establishing a bus route along Highway 16/ Highway of Tears?

Policy: Roles

What has been your role in the development of the bus system?

When were you approached?

Policy: Development

In the development of the bus routes have you been in consultation with various organizations or local governments?

How were the bus routes developed?

Were there any other transportation plans that informed the development and plans of these routes?

BC Transit has been working closely with the Highway 16 Action Plan Advisory Group, how has working with/consulting this group helped inform the development of the bus routes?

Have there been any challenges in the development of the routes?

<u>Interview: Mayor of Smithers Taylor Bachrach</u>

The North

How would you describe the current state of transportation in the North?

What do you think are some challenges facing transportation in the north?

How do you think accessibility issues affect communities in the north?

What are the current services in in the north that BC transit offers?

Policy: TAP

What kind of impact do you see or have you seen the TAP/bus system having?

What potential opportunities and challenges are there in establishing a bus route along Highway 16/ Highway of Tears?

Policy: Roles

What has been your role in the development of the bus system?

Were you approached or consulted in the development of TAP?

Are you aware of how TAP was developed or who was involved in the development of TAP? (if Yes)
Were there similar policies across Canada that informed the development of this policy?
Policy: Development
Were you aware that TAP was being developed before it was announced in 2015?
What was your biggest concern you raised in regards to the policy development?
Do you see your concerns being addressed?
You are a part of the Highway 16 Action Plan advisory Group, how did you get involved and why do you think this advisory group is important?
Was there a lot of contact between the local governments and provincial government after the Highway of Tears Symposium recommendation in 2006?
Was there a lot of contact between local governments and the provincial government in the development of the Transportation Action Plan?

Interview: Government Official 1
The North
How would you describe the current state of transportation in the North?
What do you think are some challenges facing transportation in the north?
How do you think accessibility issues affect communities in the north?
What are the current services in in the north that BC transit offers?

Policy: TAP
What kind of impact do you see or have you seen the TAP/bus system having?
What potential opportunities and challenges are there in establishing a bus route along Highway 16/ Highway of Tears?

Policy: Roles
What has been your role in the development of the bus system?

Policy: Development
When you were minister of transportation and infrastructure between 2009-2011 was this plan in development?
When you were at the MOTI was the issue of transportation in the north on your agenda?
If so, what were the solutions in comparison to BC?

Interview: Government Official 2
The North
How would you describe the current state of transportation in the North?
What do you think are some challenges facing transportation in the north?
How do you think accessibility issues affect communities in the north?
What are the current services in in the north that BC transit offers?

Policy: TAP
What kind of impact do you see or have you seen the TAP/bus system having?

When did the consultations take place and what questions were asked of communities to inform the development of the policy?
Was there a lot of contact between organizations and the government after the symposium recommendation or the development of the Transportation Action Plan?
Were there similar policies across Canada that informed the development of this policy?
What potential opportunities and challenges are there in establishing a bus route along Highway 16/ Highway of Tears?

Policy: Roles
What has been your role in the development of the bus system?
When was the issue of transportation in the north placed on the agenda?
Who approached you and when were you asked to address this issue?

Policy: Development
How was the TAP developed?
How were you involved in the consultation process?
How/ when were communities approached or contacted?
If so, what were the solutions in comparison to BC?

Appendix F: List of Missing and Murdered Women along the Highway of Tears

1969- Gloria Moody (27) from Williams Lake was found murdered. This case is unsolved.

1970- Micheline Pare (18) from Hudson Hope was found murdered. This case is unsolved.

1973- Gale Weys (19) from Clearwater went missing in 1973, she was found in murdered 1974. She was believed to be hitchhiking to Kamloops and was found off the Yellowhead Hwy. The RCMP did suspect Bobby Jack Fowler in her death however the case remains unsolved.

1973- Pamela Darlington (19) from Kamloops was found murdered. The RCMP did suspect Bobby Jack Fowler in her death however the case remains unsolved.

1974- Colleen MacMillen (16) from Lac La Hache went missing in August 1974 and was found dead one month later near 100 Mile House. In 2012 it was announced that DNA evidence did link Bobby Jack Fowler to MacMillen.

1974- Monica Ignas (14) went missing in Thornhill in December 1974. She was found murdered five months later east of Terrace. This case is unsolved.

1978- Monica Jack (12) went missing in 1978 near Merritt. She was found dead in 1995. This case is unsolved.

1981- Maureen Moise (33) was last seen in Salmon Arm and was later found dead near Kamloops was found dead. This case is unsolved.

1983- Shelley-Anne Bascu (16) from Hinton, Alberta went missing in 1983. This case is unsolved.

1989- Alberta Williams (24) went missing in August in Prince Rupert and she was found dead on Highway 16 weeks later. This case is unsolved.

1990- Delphine Nikal (16) from Smithers went missing in June. This case is unsolved.

1994- Ramona Wilson (16) from Smithers went missing in June. She was found dead 10 months later. This case is unsolved.

1994- Roxanne Thiara (15) went missing in Prince George in July and was found dead in August in Burns Lake. This case is unsolved.

1994- Alishia Germaine (15) from Prince George was found dead in December. This case is unsolved.

1995- Lana Derrick (19) went missing in October near Terrace where she attended community college. This case is unsolved.

2002- Nicole Hoar (25) from Alberta, went missing while working as a tree planter in Prince George. She was last seen hitchhiking to Smithers. This case is unsolved.

2005- Tamara Chipman (22) from Moricetown First Nation, went missing and was last seen near Prince Rupert. This case is unsolved.

2006-Aielah Saric- Auger (14) from Prince George, went missing and her body was found 8 days later. This case is unsolved.

Appendix G: Highway 16 Transportation Action Plan Advisory Group

As per the December 8, 2016 meeting, the Advisory Group members included:

- Penny Anguish, Chief Nursing Executive & Chief Operating Officer

- John Mah, Vice President, First Nations Benefits, First Nations Health Authority,

- Steve Raper, Chief Communications Officer- Northern Health Authority

- Maureen Haley, Northern Health Authority

- Joseph Bevan, Chief Kitselas First Nation

- Shane Brienen- Mayor- District of Houston

- Richard Jock, Chief Operating Officer- First Nations Health Authority

- Carol Leclerc- Mayor- City of Terrace

- Rob MacDougall, Mayor- District of Fort St. James

- Reg Mueller- Saik'us First Nation

- Taylor Bachrach- Mayor- Town of Smithers* replaced former Mayor of Burns Lake Luke Strimbold in the fall of 2016

- Mary Teegee- Executive Director- Carrier Sekani Family Services