

Decolonizing Indigenous birth work and reproductive health

CGSHE Spotlight Series

Miranda Kelly (she/her)

June 1, 2021





Settler Colonialism in Canada

RCAP (1996)

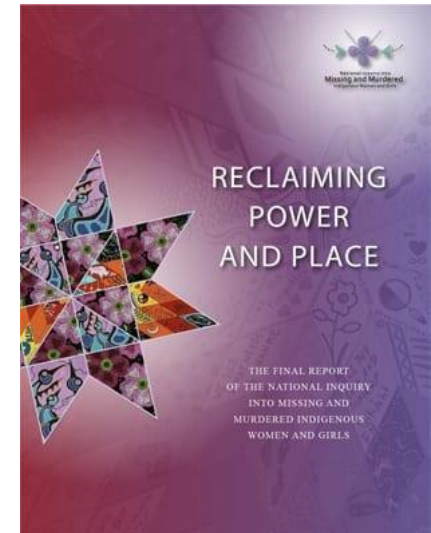


TRC (2015)

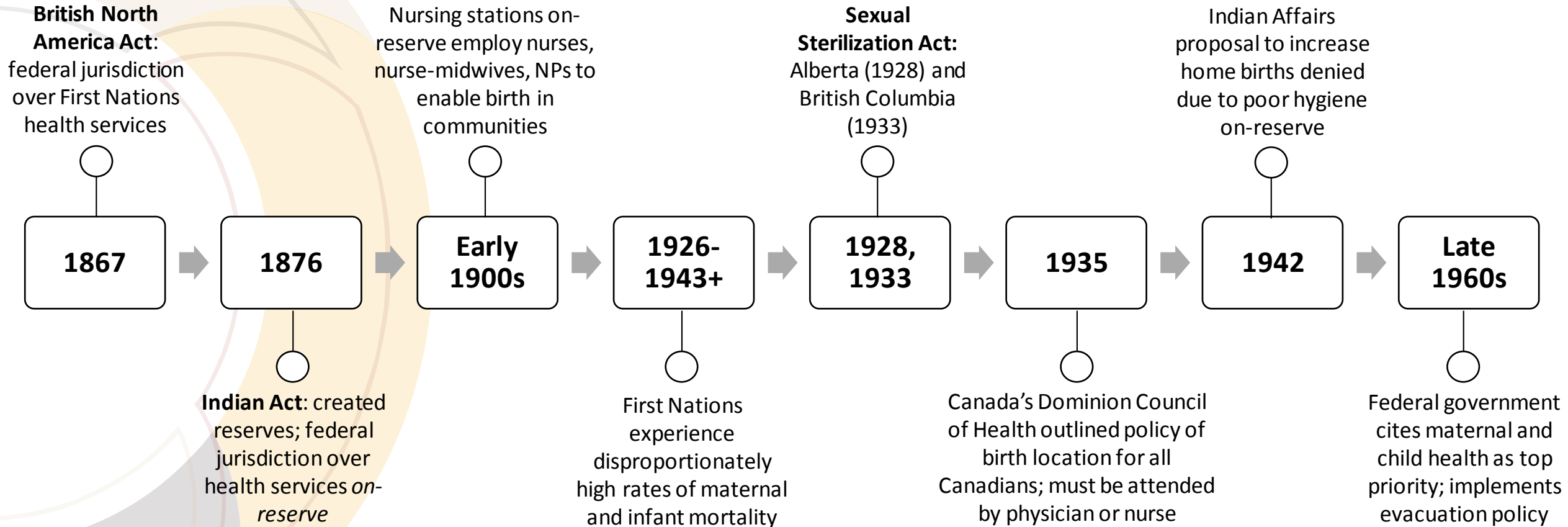


Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission of Canada

MMIWG2S (2019)



Birth as a Site of Ongoing Colonization



Birth as a Site of Ongoing Colonization

Sexual Sterilization

Act: repealed in Alberta (1972) and British Columbia (1973)

1972,
1973

1998

Health Professions

Act: Midwifery became a designated (regulated) health care profession in BC

2000+

Closure of many rural maternity care services across BC.

2015

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
94 Calls to Action (Health 18 – 24)

2018

First Nations continue to experience disproportionately high rates of infant mortality (FNHA & PHO)

2019

MMIWG2S Final Report; BC bans the practice of 'birth alerts'; BC passed **Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act**

2020+

COVID-19 public health restrictions; exacerbates inequities in health care services

Nov 2020

In Plain Sight report

Birth as a Site of Ongoing Colonization

Witness Shares Account of Racism in the Delivery Room

An obstetrician told this Review about the terrible treatment received by an Indigenous woman who has a history of trauma and sexual assault. The woman attended a B.C. hospital to have a child by C-section.

Prior to the procedure, the obstetrician witnessed an anesthesiologist manhandling and yelling at the patient. The same anesthesiologist later made the statement that *“People like her should be sterilized.”*

In Plain Sight Full Report, page 73



LOCAL

Claims B.C. Indigenous girls forcibly given IUD birth control shock youth advocate

BY MARTIN MACMAHON AND LISA STEACY
MAY 21, 2021 AT 7:31 PM · 3 MIN READ

VANCOUVER (NEWS 1130) — An allegation that Indigenous girls in B.C. — some younger than 10 years old — have been forced to have IUDs inserted by social

Approaches to decolonizing birth and reproductive health

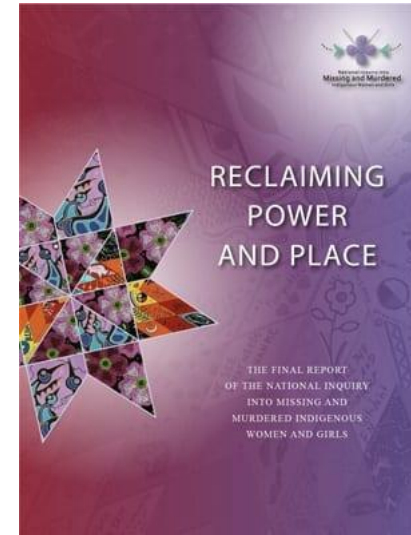
RCAP (1996)



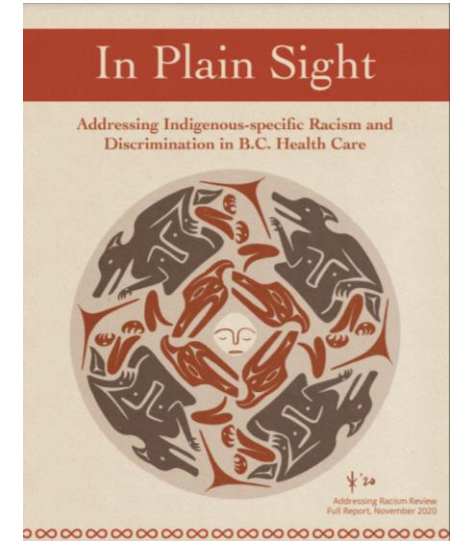
TRC (2015)



MMIWG2S (2019)



In Plain Sight (2020)





Position Statement on Evacuation for Birth >>>

NACM strongly condemns the routine and blanket evacuation of pregnant people for birth and demands the return of birthing services to all Indigenous communities.



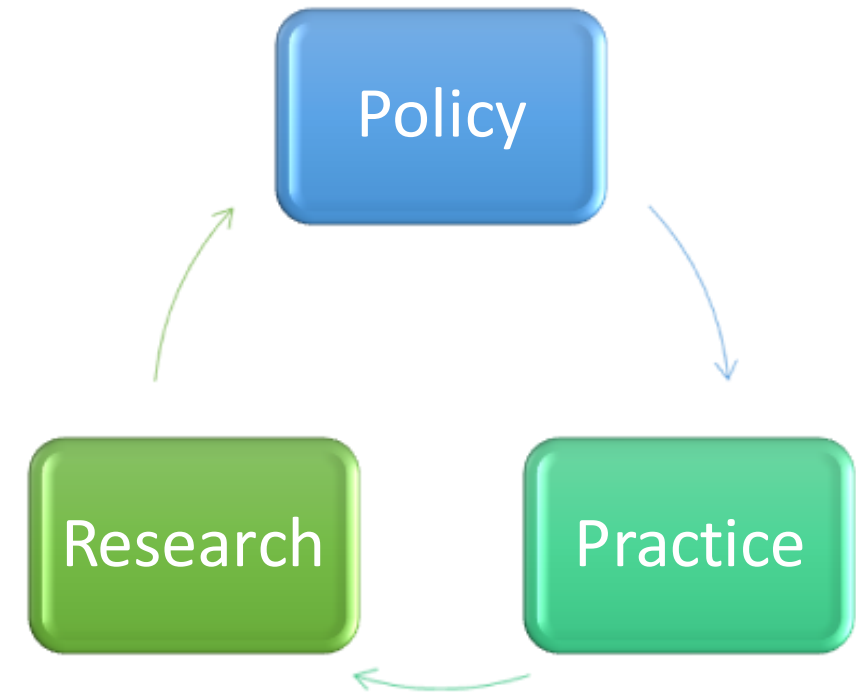
Position Statement on Indigenous Child Apprehensions >>>

NACM strongly condemns the over-representation of Indigenous infants and children in child protection services across the country and within our Nations.



Position Statement on Forced and Coerced Sterilization of Indigenous Peoples >>>

NACM strongly condemns the forced, coerced, and involuntary sterilization of Indigenous Peoples.



Holding Space for Indigenous Birth workers

- Centering and amplifying the voices of Indigenous families and birth workers
- Structural supports
 - Policy
 - Funding
 - Training



"Spirit of the Realms" mural on Beatty St., Vancouver, BC, created by Indigenous Artists Haisla Collins, Jerry Whitehead, Sharifah Marsden, Mehren Razmpoosh, Richard Shorty and Vanessa Walterson.



“...it is important to understand that in the process of decolonizing birth, one is not dealing with a homogenous subject (“The Indigenous Mother”) but incredibly diverse Indigenous women from various sociocultural and geopolitical backgrounds. As such, Indigenous women may choose to forego customary practices even if they do have access to them for any number of reasons, and they should not be shamed for that decision. It is the ability to decide how they will give birth, where they will give birth, and who will be present during the birthing process that is crucial. Overall, Indigenous women must be free to choose. The act of Indigenous birth is, at its core, an act of radical love—an affirmation of Indigenous family resilience, of Indigenous peoples’ continued presence on these lands, and of Indigenous peoples’ strength and futurity.”

Erika Finestone & Cynthia Stirbys

Indigenous Birth in Canada: Reconciliation and Reproductive Justice in the Settler State, p. 192

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References & Resources

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