

# DEFEND THE SACRED

THESIS DEVELOPMENT

# Artists Statement

Kalila (Huh-LEE-luh) J. Fuller is a Native American illustrator born and raised in Portland. She graduated from Pacific Northwest College of Art with a BFA in Illustration in 2019. Her style focuses on graphic shapes combined with rough details. Her personal work centers on themes surrounding civil and social inequality within the United States, her heritage, and her childhood experiences growing up in Oregon. Her current work is primarily digital with analog mixed media.

# Proposal

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The numbers are staggering. There were 5,712 known instances of missing and murdered Indigenous women in 2016 (National Crime Information Center). The Indigenous women homicide rate is 10 times higher than any other ethnicity and it is the third highest leading cause of death among the population (Centers for Disease Control). The majority of these murders are committed by non-Native people on Native-owned land. Due to a lack of communication between state, local, and tribal law enforcement, it's difficult to initiate the investigation process for these cases. Therefore, only 17% of murder cases are solved (National Crime Information Center).

The conversation regarding murdered and missing Indigenous women is one that has been avoided for decades in North America. It is a subject that delves deep into the heart of a legacy predominated by patriarchal control and a conquered landscape. Missing and murdered Indigenous women is an economic and social issue affecting Indigenous peoples. These people include members of the First Nations people of Canada, the Inuit of the Arctic Circle, and the various Native American communities of the United States. As a cultural ethnic group that has been socially, economically, and politically marginalized, Indigenous women have been frequent targets of hatred and violence. Here in the United States it is a plague that continues to be overlooked. It is our country's dark and open secret that these high rates of violence continue to be committed against Indigenous women. The complicated and tense mesh of federal, state and tribal law as well as entrenched racism towards Indigenous people across North America leads to cases continually falling through the cracks. The legacy of sexism and violence against Indigenous women has escalated with economic disparities and intertribal factionalism contributing to the cycle of injustice. It is an ongoing struggle against the disempowerment and fetishization not just from Europeans but from within our own communities. This exists in stark contrast to our traditional beliefs as we adapted by adopting foreign ideologies as a form of survival. This adaption is our resilience and our curse.

My project proposal exists to create a visible narrative for the general public to witness. To tell our story in a way that is separate from the imagery of the past. The project consists of a 12 edition poster series acknowledging and spreading awareness for violence against Indigenous women. The number of editions is 12 because that is the number of solved Indigenous homicide cases in Canada over the last 10 years. 12 out of 66 total reported murder cases. 12 out of 128 missing persons cases. By using basic statistics as a jumping off point I will incorporate Indigenous artistic methods to create a series of informative art pieces to be used as a tool of awareness and education within a larger media scape. The true end goal of the project is to effect social change. However, you cannot effect change without education. You can't have education without awareness. Awareness cannot start without visibility. So that is where I begin.

I will be focusing on Indigenous artistic language for the project's imagery. The project's color pallet will be a monochromatic red. Red is the official color of the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women movement. In various tribes, red is known to be the only color that spirits see. Therefore it is hoped that by wearing red, we can call back the missing spirits of our women and children so we can lay them to rest.

Pattern as symbolism is an important theme within Indigenous art, both fine and utilitarian. Traditionally geometric shapes are used by women as a decorative element on objects such as pottery and rugs. Incorporating the geometry as a graphic visual language will be key to the poster image's visual message. Throughout the poster series I will be narrowing on three specific keywords or themes. They will be represented by a total of 4 posters for each theme. These themes include the ideas of SACRED, TAKEN, and FORGOTTEN. Sacred ties into the traditional ideas of the divine feminine. Many traditional Indigenous religions include a female divine spirit, a cosmology that placed Native women in a position of respect and social prominence. Taken is the core of this project. It is the many stolen women and girls from their homes and families. The intersection of racism, sexism, and the legacy of colonialism contributes to this dangerous reality for Indigenous women. The final keyword is Forgotten. For many young Indigenous women in the US, their stories are often left untold. By using Forgotten as a theme I hope to create a feeling of unease and almost horror. Conveying a narrative that makes the viewer stop in their tracks. An important final step is to define the underlining Indigenous methodologies. The project takes on a Western form but is rooted in traditional knowledge, the two acting together as allies. The methodologies utilized include using story as method, situating self and culture, interplay between figure and ground, landscape as a mnemonic device for narrative, and symbolism.

In my ideal world, I hope this project exists in a place of transition. At its smallest scale, one or a couple will be placed throughout a city where people can come into contact and interact with them. They will be placed in those liminal places where you are neither here nor there. I find that waiting, the cusp right before boredom, is where I absorb the most information. Whether it is at a transit stop, an airport, on a train, or in the ever dreaded waiting room. I hope that the content is profound enough to stop people and the information contained is enough to spark curiosity. That upon seeing them the viewer may of their own volition go online and learn more about the topic. I don't know how much people use QR codes anymore but I also hope to include the basic urls to some informative websites like the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women ([cspanw.org](http://cspanw.org)) and Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women And Girls ([mmiwg-ffada.ca](http://mmiwg-ffada.ca)) either as type on top of the image or within the composition itself. I also hope that one day the content is everywhere.

For the physical presentation of this project within PNCA I want to present it in a way that mimics a poster advertising campaign. I want to create a wall of my posters, 12 on top, 12 on the bottom so that there are repeats in the visuals to help convey the overall narrative. I believe that this is the best way to convey the relationships between the posters in theme and imagery as well as having the highest visual impact. The individual poster dimensions will be created at 17 inches by 22 inches so that it will be able to be scaled up or down to accommodate it's locations scale. I have 28 weeks between thesis proposal and defense so on average 2 weeks per poster. This should give enough time for thumbnailing, composition, review, and finalization. I will be conceiving the series as a whole and then taking each poster one at a time to completion rather than all at once. I believe this lends itself to a natural progression of the media while also being aware with how each one relates to each other and the aforementioned keywords.

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The main influences for this project come from other individuals within the Indigenous Community. Specifically the dedication and activism of Sarah Eagle Heart. She is a member of the Lakota Nation, the CEO of Native American Philanthropy, and one of the producers of the new VR film Crow: The Legend. I will also be looking to the artistic voices of Baje Whitethorne Sr. of the Navajo Nation and Oscar Howe of the Yanktonai Dakota. All three are amazing people who have done and will do amazing things for their people and communities through their time and their art. I believe there is a place to continue to bridge the gap between activism and art in relation to these specific social issues.

For example, in the past I have made art related to my Indigenous identity but never on this scale and never for this reason. I lived for a brief time in Santa Fe, NM and in that time I found a community striving to rematriate and recenter an Indigenous presence within the city. A place traditionally occupied by the Pueblo people. Eventually these artists became the Three Sisters Collective, an art activism group founded/led by Pueblo Womyn. Looking back on the work it was all very technical. There is so much room to grow in art within the Indigenous community and to use it as a tool of education and visibility. There is a place where the image of Indigenous peoples can change within media.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the current Indigenous presence within media. We exist, but we don't exist. We are visible but invisible. We don't show up in the media, we don't show up in textbooks, we don't show up in conversation. This is the Indigenous existence as we know it here in the United States. We exist as mascots, as costumes, as antagonists in your fairytales, or as your loyal sidekicks. Images of American Indians have been used to sell cars, motorcycles, toys, hotel rooms, and tobacco. Despite of all that, signs of Indigenous culture and how Native Americans have helped shape this nation's history are everywhere. Thousands of U.S. communities, schools, parks, streets, and waterways have names derived from Native American words. The "Indian Brave" is ubiquitous; the people they represent often forgotten.

## Thesis Abstract

“Defend the Sacred” is a poster series made up of 8 portraits and 4 statements acknowledging and spreading awareness about violence against Indigenous women (MMIW). My goal is to shed light on a critical, ongoing issue that has been ignored, minimized, and hidden; to tell our story in a way that feels alive and current, not rooted in stereotypes. The posters are for public use and you can find them at [kalilafullerart.com/defendthesacred](http://kalilafullerart.com/defendthesacred).

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## Introduction:

Welcome everyone, before I begin my thesis defense I want to acknowledge the land on which we sit and which we occupy here at PNCA. The Portland Metro area rests on traditional village sites of the Multnomah, Wasco, Cowlitz, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Bands of Chinook, Tualatin, Kalapuya, Molalla, and many other tribes who made their homes along the Columbia River creating communities and summer encampments to harvest and use the plentiful natural resources. I take this opportunity to extend our deepest gratitude to those who have stewarded this land, and offer our respect to their elders past, present, and future.

“Halito” and welcome to my thesis defense. My name is Kalila (Huh-LEE-luh) Fuller and I’m very excited to talk to you all today about my project “Defend the Sacred” and how it connects to a subject I am deeply passionate about.

“Defend the Sacred” is a poster series made up of 8 portraits and 4 statements acknowledging and spreading awareness about violence against Indigenous women. My goal is to shed light on a critical, ongoing issue that has been ignored, minimized, and hidden; to tell our story in a way that feels alive and current, not rooted in stereotypes, or in white man’s history. As a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, my childhood and adolescence was filled with warnings and cautionary tales of what it meant to be an Indigenous person in the United States. I grew up not far from here in the incredibly (in my opinion) sheltered suburban neighborhoods of Lake Oswego. (No really, everyone in Lake Oswego calls it “the bubble.”) Growing up, I never felt like I was in any danger, I never felt like I had to watch my back. The warnings my grandmother whispered to me seemed so far away. It was easy to forget and feel safe in that kind of environment, especially as a white-passing person in a primarily white, wealthy neighborhood. And I have never experienced the personal heartbreak of this issue, because of everything my grandparents and family have done to protect me and my family from it. Still, I’m affected by it. It affected my grandmother, my great grandmother, all of my female ancestors. I get to be here and be safe because of what they lived through. It didn’t have to be my burden, but this project is my way of honoring this history, keeping my eyes open to it, and opening all of our eyes to it.

The numbers are staggering. There were 5,712 known instances of missing and murdered Indigenous women in the year 2016. Only 116 of those cases were reported by the Department of Justice. Only 17% of these reported cases are solved. Indigenous women are murdered at a rate 10 times higher than any other ethnicity in the U.S. Although Indigenous women and girls make up only 4 percent of the female population, they represented 16 percent of all female homicides between 1980 and 2012.

## Overview:

The conversation regarding murdered and missing Indigenous women is one that has been avoided for decades in North America. It is a subject that delves deep into the heart

of a legacy predominated by patriarchal control and a conquered landscape. These missing and murdered Indigenous women represent an economic and social issue affecting all Indigenous communities. From the First Nations people of Canada to the Inuit of the Arctic Circle, and onward to the various Native American communities of the United States. It is our country’s dark and open secret.

As a cultural ethnic group that has been socially, economically, and politically marginalized, Indigenous women have been frequent targets of hatred and violence. Underlying social factors such as poverty and homelessness contribute to their victimization, as do historically cultural factors such as racism, sexism, and the legacy of colonialism. The intersection of these factors contributes to a dangerous reality for all Indigenous women across North America.

Originally the plan at my thesis proposal was to make 12 posters with 12 completely different compositions following a set of three themes, Sacred, Taken and Forgotten, while using a monochromatic red color pallet. The themes were created to bring order to disparate content within the poster series. After many conversations over the summer, it became apparent in late August that the project needed to be portrait posters. Before, I had a lot of difficulty with creating 12 different yet related compositions representing the murdered and missing Indigenous women issue and conveying a call to action within that. In the end I realized that I was over complicating the subject matter. At the end of last semester, I created a portrait series of female singer-songwriters who used their platform to speak out for social justice. The portraits were powerful and confronting. I decided that I needed to create the same feeling in regard to the Defend the Sacred posters. That no matter what thematic poster illustration I made, it would not compare to the issue looking at the viewer in the face.

When the decision was made to create only portraits the need for specific themes to represent was no longer needed. The unification came with the repetition of visual language rather than the thematic keywords. Separating women into separate categories to represented subverted having them just hold the space. The ideas of Scared, Taken and Forgotten instead become underlying thoughts that were present in my mind during the process of ideation and making.

The number of posters and the intent were the only things that remained the same. Even the name of this project has changed. The original name at my thesis proposal was “Defending the Sacred.” At the time, that made sense. I was in the act of defending my people. I was defending them from the ideas of patriarchy and colonialism that runs rampant. I was even defending myself and my ability to create this project. Now it is a call to action. DEFEND. It may not seem like a large change, from defending to defend, but for me it was. The idea of a call to action rather than a statement ignited the power of the poster series.

## Project Description:

I chose to create 12 different posters, 8 portrait and 4 text, because 12 is the number of

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solved Indigenous homicide cases in Canada over the last 10 years. 12 out of 66 total recorded murder cases. 12 out of 128 recorded missing person cases. I chose to couple text with portraits on separate posters instead of doing only portraits, powerful as they are, as they lacked context by themselves. The 8 portraits are of Indigenous women who went missing between 1960 and 2019, including some whose cases are still unresolved. The ages of the individual women I chose to depict reflect the median age range of murdered and missing Indigenous women. Homicide is the 3rd leading cause of death among 10-24 years of age. 6 of the 8 depicted women are within that age group.

The women in these portraits are: Brenda Jeanette Campbell, age 51, from Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has several children and was known as kind, with a strong spirit. As of 2017, two men have been arrested in connection with her death. Ramona Lisa Wilson, age 16, her family last saw her at her home in Smithers, British Columbia, on June 11, 1994. A year later her remains were found by the Smithers Airport. Lana Derrick, age 19, was a college student and visiting her mom in Terrace, British Columbia, when she went missing in the early hours of Oct. 6, 1995. Marie Laliberte, age 47 went missing on New Year's Day 1997 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her disappearance wasn't reported until March 2002. Terrie Ann Dauphinais, age 24, was a mother of three with dreams of becoming a pediatrician. Her husband was arrested in 2018 in connection to her death in 2002. Ashley HeavyRunner Loring, age 20, vanished from Montana's Blackfeet Reservation in June of 2017. The FBI joined the investigation in 2018 after no progress was made on the investigation. Noreen Kyla Osborne, age 16, was last seen on February 28, 2019, in Winnipeg, Canada. Aleyah Elaine Toscano, age 16, was found unresponsive in front of an apartment complex in Whittier, California on September 20, 2019 after entering protective custody.

It is important for me to take a moment here and hold space for these women.

The process of making these portraits was meditative and almost a ceremony in itself. There's something really intimate about recreating a face, drawing it, looking deeply into it and making it visible on the page. The reason for my doing these portraits is really heartbreaking, but being able to make people see them and look at them, and giving them the agency to look us all in the eye and challenge us with our complicity in this issue, was incredibly meaningful to me.

Dominant, western culture is the main audience of the project, and more specifically, I'm initially focusing on Portland's downtown or commuting population, which is predominantly White. According to Data USA (which is a free platform that allows users to collect, analyze, and visualize shared U.S. government data), the city of Portland, Oregon's population is 98.7% non-native. Here on the PNCA campus, the student demographic is quite similar at 97.1%. It was important to target a specifically a non-native population because 70% of these violent crimes against Indigenous women are committed by non-native persons. The goal of the project is to create visibility for the murdered and missing Indigenous women issue within the dominant culture and PNCA, as well as the greater Portland area, will serve as a premier place to do that.

My target audience plays into my choice to make the project a poster series. Posters are a historically western media used for advertising and as a way to "sell" things, whether we're selling goods, services, or ideas. And I wanted to use my experience in marketing to market something that's not a product. I work in marketing for an architecture firm (I sell a lot of buildings)...but that same skill can be applied to activist work. I feel like people have this idea that activism has to be so separate from marketing because of how corrupt the capitalist system can be. But clearly it works.

I was also interested in the accessibility of posters. They are affordable to make, easy to disperse, and you can put them in a lot of different kinds of places rather than just in one "niche" kind of area. Posters also allow the viewer to engage with their surroundings... they're not in your phone, they're right there in your space and in your face. It's why posters in the elevator are so much more effective than making a post on homeroom (sorry, Homeroom). They can also encourage an active response. Whether it's making a phone call, attending an event, or maybe even going back to a website, a poster can send a clear message that inspires people to do something.

I chose to depict these women in a bust pose where they are only shown from the shoulders up because I wanted these women's faces to be what the viewer focuses on. I also wanted them to look straight at you. When someone looks at you for an extended period of time with a straight face, or even a smile, without the addition of other body language that often gets interpreted as confrontational. I want these women to confront the viewers and their complicity. When we look into their eyes we want to change things.

The color pallet is punchy and aggressive in a way that also calls your attention. The main color I am using is red. There are two shades of it, one dark and one hot. Red is the official color of the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women movement. In various tribes, red is known to be the only color that spirits see. Therefore it is hoped that by wearing red, we can call back the missing spirits of our women and children so we can lay them to rest. The natural green-blue represents the Turquoise Trail, which existed long before European settlement as a route of trade from modern Mexico to Canada. It reminds me of the interconnectedness of our people beyond language and cultural barriers. Despite modern sentiment that we are all so different, turquoise reminds me how interconnected we are. Lavender represents the sacred plant of the same name that is often incorporated in ceremonies, many of which are centered around women. I chose vibrant blue is the cool tone that brings them all together. It's my grandmother's favorite color and I chose it because it just set off the other colors well. (Color theory made me do it!)

I chose Champion Gothic as the typeface for this project. Vintage boxing posters served as inspiration and a jumping-off point for the style and mood of the type posters. Boxing, to me, is a way to get aggression out, but it's not pure rage...it's in a ring, in a formal setting...it's a sport, with rules. It's not a street fight. I didn't want people to think, "That poster is yelling at me," but more like "Sunday Sunday Sunday!" The posters are eye catching but not alienating. The typeface is a love letter to wood type, it is both vintage and modern with enough "punch" (hahah) to make it stand out on the street. I chose to

hand write key words and overlay that handwriting over the set type to give those words more emphasis and more emotion. I chose to highlight words that specifically relate to body and land. "Violence, 5,712, Spirits, Our Bodies," and "This Land" all bring the focus back to the physicality of the issue.

The final installation is a 16 foot long by 7 foot high 1 inch strand board wall with 64 posters wheatpaste in a grid. I chose strand board as the mount for I believe that it mimics an urban setting. The posters are printed on 12 inch by 15.5 inch heavy bond paper that would hold up to the wheatpaste without being too heavy to adhere. I chose to wheatpaste my posters instead of using wallpaper adhesive for I found that staying with the affordability and accessibility of wheatpaste was more true to the overall theme of the project in letting education through imagery be accessible to everyone.

#### **Process of Making:**

In the beginning for "Defend the Sacred" there was a lot of research and a lot of reading. I started with my own experiences and the stories and the warnings that I grew up with and went out to expand upon that in a more objective way. Over the summer I checked out books, read articles, and talked to community members. I wanted to see this project past myself. In the end, it became more important to me to represent the people it has directly affected. Indignous culture and people in this country are constantly erased in today's media and I wanted to do the opposite of that. I want the people who view this project and these posters to be confronted.

The physical making of the posters started with the portraits. Using a database of collected information on murdered and missing Indigenous women cases and looking at current events I decided on the women I wanted to illustrate and represent. The motivation behind making those decisions wasn't objective, it was rooted in feeling. I let the women and their stories speak to me. I know that was an incredibly subjective and personal process. I went to a database and looked at current events, and looked at the faces of these women in the photos available. The first woman I chose was Brenda, because she looks so strong. Then I picked Marie because I saw a spark of my grandma in her eyes. Then I heard about Aleyah on the news, that she was 16 and was supposed to be in police protective custody but somehow ended up dead in an apartment complex she didn't live in. Each of these women spoke to me and I'm sure I could have been more scientific or calculating about it, but I had to start somewhere. Eventually I looked at the age and geographical demographics of the women I chose and tried to balance out the group based on the demographics of missing and murdered Indigenous women featured on the CBC News database.

The drawing and creation of the posters needed to be a meditative process. I needed to be present in every decision and every mark. There is a great deal of respect and almost reverence in the depiction of these women and these girls that had to come through. In depicting these women's faces I also hoped to give them agency. A majority of murdered and missing Indigenous women's cases aren't reported on and showing these women as

people and to make them and their stories visible is the crux of the whole project.

I didn't notice it in the posters but I saw it come out as I was making them. Their eyes held different meaning. Marie's eyes are so kind, she looks at you in such a loving way, while Brenda's eyes are so challenging. Almost like they are saying "what are you going to do about it?" Lana's eyes are "imma stab you" Terri's eyes are filled with so much pride. The eyes were the first thing I drew on all of them and I find that looking into a person's eyes is what connects you to that person the quickest.

Making these became a coping process for my own grief. In making this project I found a lot of peace and hope amongst the heartbreak. That if I make this project and people listen to it, then hopefully there will be less pain in the future. If people feel what I felt making these, then our collective action will impact my daughters and my sister's daughters; our daughters, my friends' daughters, will get to live in a better world.

In talking and making surrounding the project there has been a lot of talk about being angry. My people and specifically my family have been angry for so long that in my opinion there is not a lot of positive change that comes from just being angry. Yelling at people is not a way to get them to listen. Despite all of that, I am angry. It breaks my heart that this is the world and reality that thousands of women live in everyday. In regard to reconciling that anger into a clean, logical, and polished style of the posters became more of a decision regarding connection to the viewer. Imagery concerning Native identity is often constricted to a stereotype. I wanted to create a piece about Native issues made by a Native person that wasn't stereotypical. I wanted to separate this piece from what would be expected. I feel that the anger comes through the polished style of the project in the color reds and in the handwritten type. I wanted the viewer to feel enraged, rather than raged at. And still have room left to hope and change things.

#### **Influences:**

In preparation for this project I looked to other activist and artistic individuals within the Indigenous community. The dedication and activism of Sarah Eagle Heart is one of that come to mind. She is a member of the Lakota Nation, the CEO of Native American Philanthropy, and the first Native American member of the Women's March Board. Her involvement in changing the conversation regarding Native Americans in media inspired the infant idea of this project.

A large inspiration to this project for its content and its form is graphic designer Lexx Valdez who is an independent creative consultant based in Los Angeles. Her clients include foundations, organizations, and individuals creating impactful change around the world. Her practice contains photo-collage aesthetics and bold colored posters that she uses as a form of social activism both personally and professionally. In 2018, Lexx and her business partner Tomas Alvarez, launched Idea2Form: A design agency for social impact, where they collaborate with change-makers to bring their ideas to form and elevate their visibility so they're easy to connect with and impossible to ignore. I wanted to take her ideas of

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visual social activism in the medium of a poster and blow it up to a high saturation of images. Even though my work is not photo collage, I looked to her use of high impact color in color-corrected photos when thinking about the color pallet of "Defend the Sacred" as well as her emphasis on people. I wanted to explore the place that bridges the gap between activism and art.

My Ipokni, my grandmother, is and always will be my main inspiration in regard to this project if not for my entire life. It is because of her resilience that I am here today. It is because of her that I know my language and my culture. It is because of her that I know my people. I made this project for her, for all the women that came before me and all the women who will come after.

#### **The Project in Culture:**

I have included on the text posters, a URL to [mmiwhoissing.org](http://mmiwhoissing.org). MMIW | Who Is Missing is a campaign for missing and murdered Indigenous people and they house a lot of information on their website as well as links to foundations where people can give financial support. I chose this website specifically because it had the most information about the issue in both the United States and Canada. I have also created a page on my website to include multiple links to foundations, articles, and organizations as well as information about the "Defend the Sacred" Project. I have also created these lovely takeaways for you to take home today that include a QR code to the project website as well as other resources. The purpose of the project is to educate so I hope that streamlining the process of finding information about this issue will spur more interest and self initiated learning. I will also provide free PDF downloads on the project website for public use in hopes of self initiated action.

The posters eventually will be placed outside of the 157 Gallery and PNCA. The ideal place for them being transitional places, where a person is waiting or in between destinations. I find that waiting, on the cusp right before boredom, is where I absorb the most information. Whether it is at a transit stop, an airport, on a train, or in the ever-dreaded waiting room. I hope that the images are striking enough to stop people to look, and the information contained is profound enough to spark curiosity. I hope to wheat paste sets in different locations around the city of Portland in highly visible and frequented locations like the Pearl District, Rose Quarter, Brewery Blocks, and areas surrounding Pioneer Square. The more touristy the better. These posters can be combined and recombined in many different ways for visual interest that makes the viewer stop and pay attention. I thought of layering the posters on top of each other, adding and tearing away, to mimic the way posters weather and are reapplied on the streets, changing but still present. In the end I decided that for the presentation here in PNCA that layering ripped text posters over the portraits took away from the focus being on the women themselves. However, outside of PNCA there is an opportunity to explore that idea of hiding and revealing as well as other forms of installing the posters. For example, installing all the portraits in a row with one text poster at the end or a wall full of repeating text posters.

Since media and marketing is an important part of this project I want to acknowledge the current Indigenous presence within modern media. We exist, but we don't exist. We are visible but invisible. We don't show up in the media, we don't show up in textbooks, we don't show up in conversation. This is the Indigenous existence as we know it here in the United States. We exist as mascots, as costumes, as antagonists in your fairytales, or as your loyal sidekicks.

Images of American Indians have been used to sell cars, motorcycles, toys, hotel rooms, and tobacco. Despite all of that, signs of Indigenous culture and how Native Americans have helped shape this nation's history are everywhere. Thousands of U.S. communities, schools, parks, streets, and waterways have names derived from Native American words. The "Indian Brave" is ubiquitous; the people they represent often forgotten.

I hope that this project steps away from these images. I hope that you see us in a different light. I hope that you remember us. The social justice issue of murdered and missing Indigenous women goes beyond this project and beyond this room. To be Indigenous in this modern age is to *fight always*.

#### **Conclusion:**

Indigenous people and communities are exceptionally strong and resilient; the fact that we are still here is proof. These posters here are a tool of awareness and education within a larger mass mediascape, to bring visibility and agency to an otherwise ignored issue. The true end goal of the Defend the Sacred project is to effect change. However, you cannot effect change without education. You can't have education without awareness. Awareness cannot start without visibility. So that is where this project begins to live. More than 95% of murdered and missing Indigenous women cases were never covered by national or international media, and my goal was to hold space for them. To give those individual women agency in a world that strives to take it away.

I would like to say "Yokoke" and thank you to my grandmother for teaching me. "Yokoke" to my thesis mentor Kristin Rogers Brown for supporting me through this project and always giving me great advice. "Yokoke" to my partner Ian for being my rock and for helping me transport these boards. "Yokoke" to my parents for being with me every step. And "Yokoke" to everyone for coming here today.

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# Creative Brief

## Project Vision:

“Defend the Sacred” is a poster series made up of 8 portraits and 4 statements acknowledging and spreading awareness about violence against Indigenous women. My goal is to shed light on a critical, ongoing issue that has been ignored, minimized, and hidden; to tell our story in a way that feels alive and current, not rooted in stereotypes. The number of portrait poster editions is 12 because that is the number of solved Indigenous homicide cases in Canada over the last 10 years. 12 out of 66 total reported murder cases. 12 out of 128 missing person cases. The physical presentation of this project within the PNCA campus is presented as a street poster advertising campaign on four 4' x 7' one-inch strand boards that will be installed in the PNCA 157 Gallery.

## Audience:

Dominant, western culture is the main audience of the project, and more specifically, I'm initially focusing on Portland's downtown or commuting population, which is predominantly White. According to Data USA (which is a free platform that allows users to collect, analyze, and visualize shared U.S. government data), the city of Portland, Oregon's population is 98.7% non-native. Here on the PNCA campus, the student demographic is quite similar at 97.1%. It was important to target specifically a non-native population because 70% of these violent crimes against Indigenous women are committed by non-native persons. The goal of the project is to create visibility for the murdered and missing Indigenous women issue within the dominant culture and PNCA, as well as the greater Portland area, will serve as a premier place to do that.

## Methods & Materials:



The project takes the form of illustrated posters, which often line the streets of urban centers as advertisements on. But the project is rooted in traditional knowledge, working with the modern poster format, the two working as allies. For the physical project within PNCA, I want to present in a way that mimics a street poster advertising campaign. I will create a wall of my posters set up in a grid with some repeated visuals to help convey narrative. These posters can be combined and recombined in many different ways for visual interest that makes the viewer stop and pay attention. The individual poster dimensions are 12 inches by 15.5 inches so that the installation can be scaled up or down to work in different locations and formats. If time permits, I will wheat paste sets in different locations around the city of Portland in highly visible and frequented locations like the Pearl District, Rose Quarter, and areas surrounding Pioneer Square.

Champion Gothic is the chosen typeface for this project as vintage boxing posters served as inspiration and a jumping-off point for the style and mood of the type posters. The type is a love letter to wood type and -is both vintage and modern with enough punch to make it stick out amongst the shuffle.

## Comparative Media:

A large inspiration to this project Graphic Designer Lexx Valdez is an independent creative consultant based in Los Angeles, where her clients include foundations, organizations, and individuals creating impactful change around the world. Her practice contains photo-collage aesthetics and bold colored posters that she uses as a form of social activism both personally and professionally. In 2018, Lexx and her business partner Tomas Alvarez launched Idea2Form: A design agency for social impact, where they collaborate with change-makers to bring their ideas to form and elevate their visibility so they're easy to connect with and impossible to ignore. I wanted to take her ideas of visual social activism in the medium of a poster and blow it up to a high saturation of images. Even though my work is not photo collage, I looked to her use of high impact color in color-corrected photos when thinking about the color pallet of “Defend the Sacred” as well as her emphasis on people. I wanted to explore the place that bridges the gap between activism and art.

## Marketplace Application:

The posters eventually will be placed outside of the 157 Gallery and PNCA. The ideal place for them being transitional places, where a person is waiting or in between destinations. I find that waiting, on the cusp right before boredom, is where I absorb the most information. Whether it is at a transit stop, an airport, on a train, or in the ever-dreaded waiting room. I hope that the images are striking enough to stop people to look, and the information contained is profound enough to spark curiosity. I hope to wheat paste sets in different locations around the city of Portland in highly visible and frequented locations like the Pearl District, Rose Quarter, Brewery Blocks, and areas surrounding Pioneer Square. The more touristy the better. These posters can be combined and recombined in many different ways for visual interest that makes the viewer stop and pay attention. I thought of layering the posters on top of each other, adding and tearing away, to mimic the way posters weather and are reapplied on the streets, changing but still present. In the end, I decided that for the presentation here in PNCA that layering ripped text posters over the portraits took away from the focus being on the women themselves. However, outside of PNCA, there is an opportunity to explore the idea of hiding and revealing as well as other forms of installing the posters. For example, installing all the portraits in a row with one text poster at the end or a wall full of repeating text posters.

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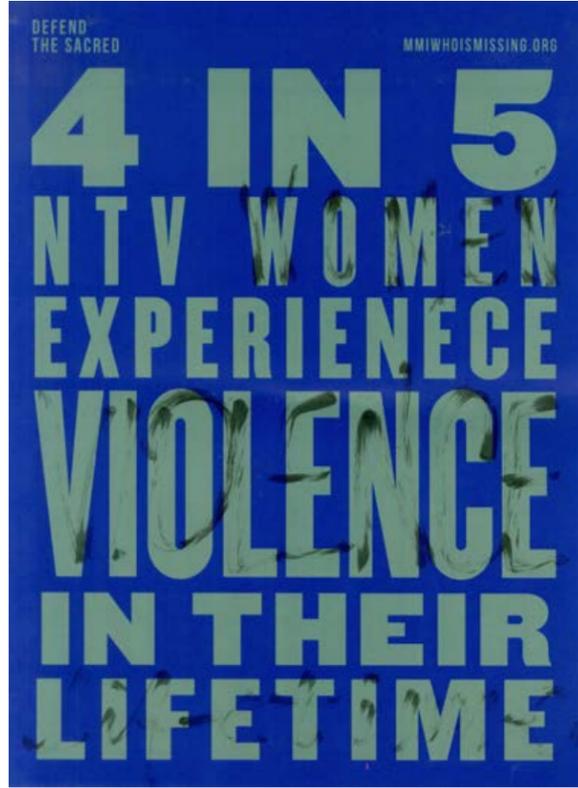
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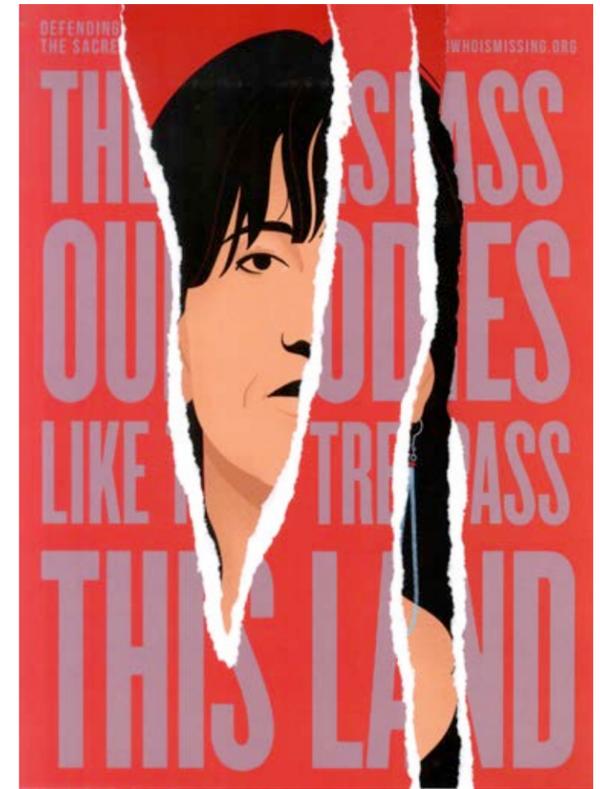
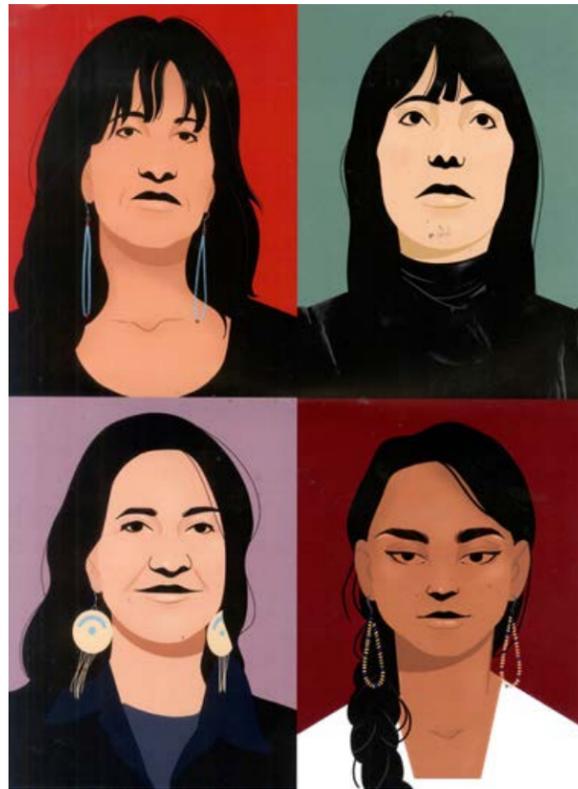
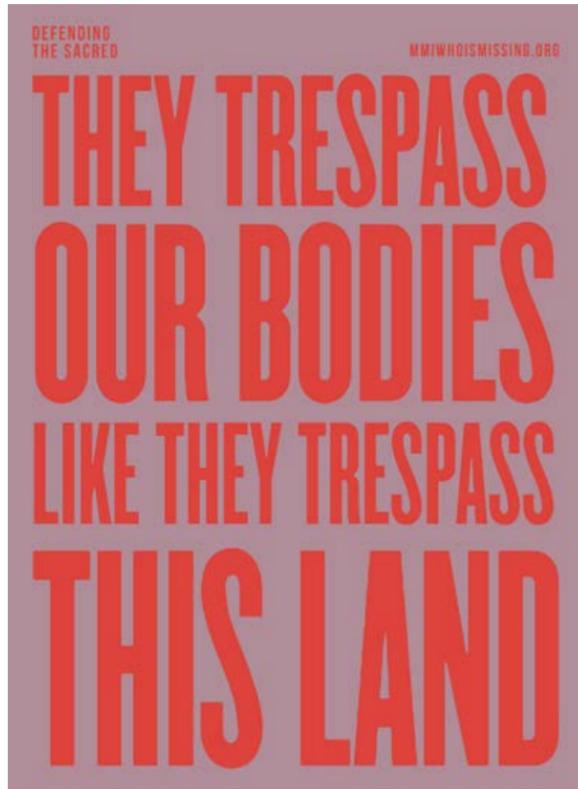
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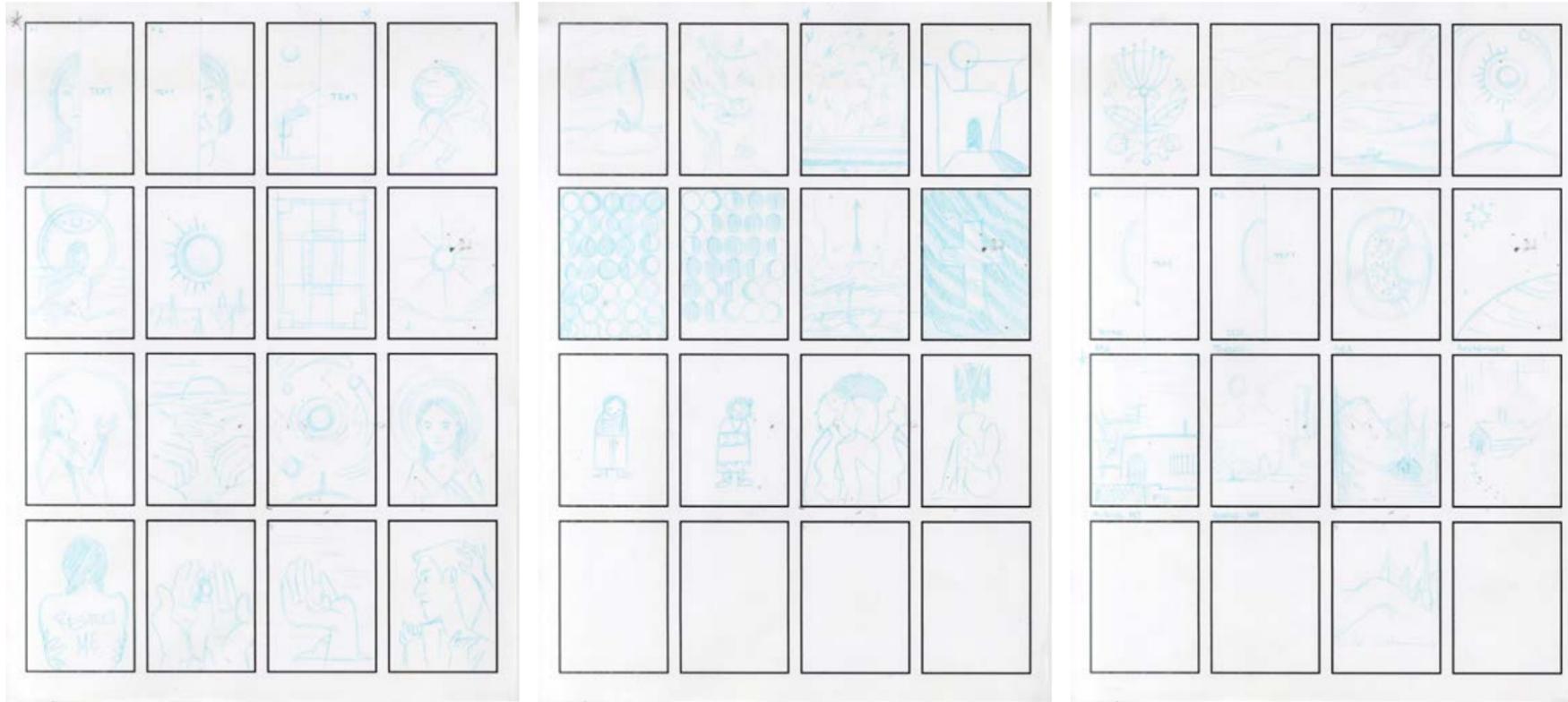


# Process

Pg. 1



Early Ideation:



# Process

Pg. 2

Handwritten Text Tests:

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# Documentation

Pg. 1



# Documentation

Pg. 2

