



When beginning my most recent project I found myself more serious about this book than anything that I have ever written. I spent days watching the videos, visiting a local Indigenous Cultural Center, talking to local native American people and even reading other books about this.

My year of university studies in Pacific Northwest History fostered a profound appreciation for the region's inhabitants. The history itself is troubling, yet what is even more disturbing is the continuation of crimes and abusive behaviors today. Organizations like I.C.E., among others, persist in their mistreatment of people whose heritage traces back to the very origins and cultivation of this land.

Lesson Outline: Researching Your Manuscript and Planning

I. Understanding the Scope: Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP)

A. Historical Context and Systemic Issues

- **Colonialism and its ongoing impact:** Research the historical trauma, forced assimilation (e.g., residential schools), and systemic violence contributing to the crisis.
- **Jurisdictional complexities:** Investigate the legal and procedural hurdles that complicate reporting, investigation, and prosecution of cases involving Indigenous people, particularly on reservations (e.g., tribal, state, federal law conflicts).
- **Socioeconomic factors:** Gather data on poverty, inadequate infrastructure, lack of healthcare, and substance abuse in Indigenous communities as related factors. How does Washington State Address Missing and Murdered Indigenous people?

B. The Magnitude of the Crisis

- **Key statistics and reports:** Identify and utilize reports from organizations (e.g., National Institute of Justice, Urban Indian Health Institute, governmental agencies) regarding the incidence and prevalence of MMIP.
- **Geographic hotspots:** Research specific regions (e.g., the "Highway of Tears," border towns, urban centers) that have been disproportionately affected.
- **Media representation:** Analyze how the crisis is covered (or ignored) by mainstream media and how that impacts public awareness and political action.

II. Essential Research Areas for Story Authenticity

A. Indigenous Cultures and Sovereignty

- **Specific Tribal Research (if applicable to the story):** If the story focuses on a specific tribe, research their history, traditional governance, language (if used), spiritual beliefs, and community structure. *Ensure respect and ethical representation.*
- **Understanding sovereignty:** Research the concept of tribal sovereignty and its implications for law enforcement and community well-being.
- **Community responses:** Investigate ways Indigenous communities are organizing, holding vigils, conducting their own searches, and advocating for change (e.g., grassroots movements, MMIW/MMIP initiatives).

B. Law Enforcement and Investigative Procedures

- **Missing person protocols:** Research the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for reporting and investigating missing persons, highlighting the differences and delays often encountered in MMIP cases.
- **Forensic and technological challenges:** Research cold case technologies, DNA backlog issues, and how remote geographies affect search efforts.
- **Victim/Family advocacy:** Investigate the role of victim advocates and how families navigate the investigative process.

III. Character and Narrative Development Research

A. Personal Accounts and Impact

- **First-person narratives:** Research published interviews, documentaries, or oral histories from family members of the missing or survivors to understand the emotional toll.

- **Intergenerational trauma:** Research how historical trauma manifests in the lives of contemporary characters (e.g., substance abuse, distrust of authority, mental health struggles).

B. Setting and Atmosphere

- **Location scouting (virtual or physical):** Detail the specific environment (e.g., reservation landscape, urban Native center, rural town) to ensure authentic descriptions of climate, travel distances, and local landmarks.
- **Sensory details:** Collect research on the smells, sounds, and visual elements of the settings to ground the reader in the story's world.

IV. Ethical Considerations and Consultation

- **Sensitivity reading:** Plan to engage Indigenous consultants or sensitivity readers to review the manuscript for accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and respectful portrayal of trauma.
- **Data integrity:** Establish protocols for verifying statistics and facts to avoid spreading misinformation or harmful stereotypes.

Phase	Task/Focus Area	Estimated Research Time	Resources (Example)
Phase 1	Historical Context & Scope	2 Weeks	Government Reports, Academic Texts, Non-fiction Books
Phase 2	Tribal/Cultural Specifics	3 Weeks	Tribal Websites, Oral Histories, Community Leaders (Consult)
Phase 3	Law Enforcement Procedures	1 Week	Policy Documents, Interviews with former officers/advocates
Phase 4	Character/Emotional Depth	2 Weeks	Documentaries, Podcasts, Family Testimonials

<https://www.atq.wa.gov/washington-state-missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-people-task-force>

<https://www.npr.org/2022/03/31/1090085138/missing-indigenous-women-alerts-washington-state>

<https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/ko/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-and-people-washington-mmiwp>

<https://www.bia.gov/service/mmu>

<https://www.niwrc.org/mmiwr-awareness>