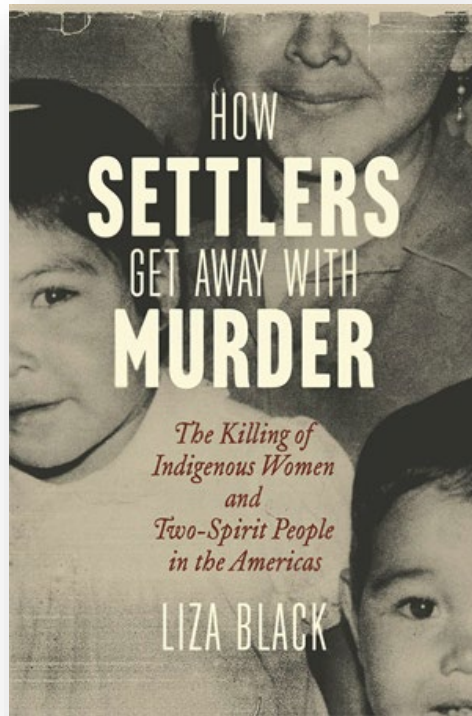


*How Settlers Get Away with Murder:
The Killing of Indigenous Women and Two-Spirit People in the Americas*
by Liza Black

Readers' Guide Discussion Questions



Overall Book Questions

1. The author argues that archives are “battlegrounds where evidence can be buried alive” rather than neutral repositories. How does this book demonstrate that the absence of records can be as significant as their presence? What strategies does the author use to reconstruct histories when official documents are missing, corrupted, or deliberately misleading?
2. Each of the five chapters centers on a specific murder investigation, yet the book argues these are not isolated tragedies but part of a “macro crime scene”—the ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands across the Americas. What patterns connect these five cases across different time periods, regions, and legal systems? How does the author make the case that these deaths are structural rather than incidental?

3. The book coins the term “narrative arbitrage” to describe how media, courts, and state institutions manipulate stories to protect settler perpetrators while rendering Indigenous victims invisible. Where do you see this concept operating most clearly across the cases? What role do stereotypes about Indigenous women play in this process?
 4. The author explicitly rejects victim-blaming narratives that focus on Indigenous trauma and instead examines “the state as the key that unlocks the cases.” What does it mean to investigate the state rather than the victim’s community? How does this shift in focus change our understanding of these crimes?
 5. The book moves between microhistory (detailed reconstruction of individual cases) and macro analysis (broader patterns of settler colonialism). How does this approach work as a method of historical investigation? What does it reveal that a purely structural analysis or a purely narrative approach might miss?
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Chapter-Specific Questions

Chapter 1: Lydia

The author ultimately concludes that Looney Rattling Gourd likely did not attack Lydia Kingfisher, despite oral history naming him as the perpetrator. How does this chapter use archival records both to preserve Cherokee oral history and to complicate it? What does the chapter suggest about how Cherokee communities may have strategically redirected blame as a form of survival?

Chapter 2: Levina

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has known the names of three suspects of Levina’s murder since at least 1999 but refuses to publicly identify them, citing the case as “open.” How does the chapter trace the connections between these suspects, the inquest jury, and law enforcement? What does the suspicious timing of the suspects' deaths suggest about how this case was managed?

Chapter 3: Fred/FC/Fredrika/Beyoncé

The chapter raises questions about the 2018 parole of Shaun Murphy, who served only sixteen years of a forty-year sentence. What anomalies in the parole process and in evidence handling does the chapter identify? How might the destruction of Exhibit 17 and Murphy’s transfer to minimum security against parole board recommendations be significant?

Chapter 4: Ernestina

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in 2025 that Mexico was responsible for violations surrounding Ernestina’s death, yet no soldiers have been prosecuted. How does the

chapter trace the collaboration between the military, state government, and the National Human Rights Commission to suppress evidence? What role did the exhumation and second autopsy play in this cover-up?

Chapter 5: Savanna

Fargo police visited apartment 5 three times while Savanna's body and baby were hidden inside (and another time in the apartment parking lot with her baby hidden in a bag). How does the chapter analyze the officers' interactions with Brooke Crews versus their treatment of the Greywind family? What does the disparity in how police treated William Hoehn (offering him a Sprite) versus Ashton Matheny (withholding water during interrogation) reveal about the investigation?