**Jolly, Joanna. (2019). Red River Girl: The Life and Death of Tina Fontaine
Toronto: Penguin Random House Canada.**

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Joanna Jolly's book, "Red River Girl: The Life and Death of Tina Fontaine," is a compilation of police notes, recording transcripts, trial testimonies, and extensive face-to-face interviews with detectives, advocates, and the friends and family of Tina Fontaine. In her compilation, Jolly digs deep into the backgrounds of the key people in the story. She also delves into the vast history of the oppression of Indigenous people and their current relations with police and Child and Family Services (CFS), and the existing systemic racism prominent in both. Jolly describes the immense pressure to find Tina Fontaine's killer and includes the perspective of advocates of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls along with reported statistics of how many Indigenous women and girls are estimated to be missing or murdered in Canada. Jolly documents the life of Tina Fontaine, highlighting how Child and Family Services and the police failed to protect her, which led to her vulnerability to be exploited by dangerous people. The book, flawlessly organized into chapters, chronologically details the life and death of Tina Fontaine and the extensive efforts made to identify her killer and bring them to justice.

After speaking to family, friends, and Sagkeeng First Nation community members, Jolly uncovers the troubling childhood of Tina, raised by her great aunt for most of her life following her father's death and absent mother. Like many other Indigenous individuals, Jolly writes about how Tina had close ties with CFS, but this interaction is often less than satisfactory. The author

details how social workers arranged meetings to help Tina, but being located seventy-five kilometres away made the teenager unable to attend the sessions. The teenager also made several calls to victim services, who neglected to give her proper counselling to help her grieve her father's death. CFS continued to overlook Tina and her family after Tina entered Winnipeg, where she was passively placed in various hotel rooms or shelters where she quickly left. CFS also declined to keep in touch with her guardian and tell her where Tina was or if she was safe.

Jolly explains how Tina's story with CFS is, unfortunately, not unique. The CFS, consistently ridiculed for focusing on funding per child, exhibited high rates of removing children – especially Indigenous children – from their families instead of implementing prevention or other intervention methods. She also describes the lack of funding and resources allocated to the services, resulting in children's placement in hotel rooms or shelters where they are no more protected than on the streets. With no other measures to keep them from leaving and being exploited further. Jolly reports that Tina's story sparked the Manitoba Child Advocate report that agreed that "Tina was repeatedly failed by the systems meant to protect her" (p. 275). The report also recommended areas for improvement, such as enhancing support services, developing safe and secure treatment facilities, and funding to move away from the "practice of paying per child" (p. 276).

In addition to CFS, Jolly discovers that the Winnipeg Police also deserted Tina. In one incident, Jolly details how a police officer released Tina Fontaine back to the street after being picked up by a John looking for sex, ignoring the missing person bulletin attached to Tina's name. Jolly further highlights that Tina was missing multiple times without any significant police attempt

to locate her. The author reflects on another case where an Indigenous woman was sexually assaulted, then stabbed by three men. After this crime, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba was established. In their report, commissioners described a “police culture defined by racism, sexism, and indifference, operating in a community where callous treatment of Indigenous people was the norm” (p. 20).

Jolly tells how detective John O’Donovan tried to change this narrative, starting with Tina’s first press conference. His statement, filled with anger and passion, spoke about how horrific it was that a child was murdered. His statement surprised everyone who heard it because “hearing a detective speak with such passion about an Indigenous victim was unusual” (p. 18). Jolly goes on to explain how communities were accustomed to hearing about Indigenous deaths without much emotion put into the statement or much care into finding what happened. The typical explanation given by non-Indigenous people was that “runaway girls ... were dying because they had chosen to follow a high-risk lifestyle” (p. 19). By speaking to advocates for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, Jolly learned and detailed the commonality of blaming the victim, specifically when the victim was an Indigenous woman.

Jolly continues with O’Donovan breaking the mould by noting how he utilized a somewhat rare, expensive, and elaborate undercover strategy termed “Mr. Big” (p. 175). Up until this point, investigations involving an Indigenous person were minimal and short-lived. Investigations often revealed nothing about the cause of death or circumstances, and many murders were left to get cold and unsolved. Justice never served. Using a costly Mr. Big strategy was unheard of to solve

the murder of an Indigenous woman and sparked a significant change in handling similar deaths. The operation lasted months, and critics questioned whether Tina's murder had also fallen through the cracks, that no one was actively investigating anymore. It was especially devastating when Cormier was found not guilty at trial, sparking a quiet outrage in the Indigenous community.

Jolly describes how the investigation was only able to prove Tina's exploitation, how she was taken advantage of by Cormier and other men, selling sex for drug money, and treated as an object. Throughout the book, Jolly details how Tina was taken advantage of by various people, including her biological mother, as soon as she entered Winnipeg. She was trapped in a rough neighbourhood and was involved with people who had nothing to lose and took what they wanted. Those who have nothing to lose are the most dangerous.

Jolly's intended audience is adults interested in true crime and unsolved murders. I believe adults are intended because of the graphic details included, which add to the story's seriousness but may potentially be too detailed for a child or youth. I think that every person of various backgrounds and lifestyles could benefit by reading this book and learn how the systemic racism instilled in Canada takes hold on every Indigenous person in the country. Everyone could gain from reading this to understand the changes that need to be made to protect everyone, especially the most vulnerable, before harm is done.

This book appears to be telling the true story of a young woman murdered and tossed into a river. However, reading deeper, it is clear that Jolly also aimed to expose the racist system at work. Through compilations of extensive interviews and hours of transcripts and reports, Jolly successfully revealed the systemic racism in the Canadian Justice System through a single case

study of Tina Fontaine. I wonder if those reading this story will get caught up in Tina's storyline and be blind to the inner workings that got Tina to Winnipeg and how the CFS and police failed to protect her when she needed it most. I believe that many disciplines, primarily victimology, women's studies and criminal justice, could benefit by reading this book and analyzing how various systems meant to protect the vulnerable instead allowed further exploitation. I found this book engaging, thought-provoking, informative, and balanced with a timeline that was easy to follow. I recommend that every adult, especially Canadians, read this book as there is something for everyone to learn from it.