Deaths in custody run the gamut from deaths resulting from being struck by a police cruiser, being pepper sprayed, and being restrained to shooting and freezing deaths, and deaths due to suicides, overdoses, falls, and ill health. Unless we believe that Indigenous people are always on the brink of death, dying from their own pathologies, we are obliged to consider what the numbers and the circumstances of death tell us about the overall response of settler society towards Indigenous peoples. Although we can survey the panoply of death, the dehumanization that I name does not become visible until we focus on the behaviour of state actors. The failure of professionals to help a sick person, the frequency with which guns or Tasers are used, the numbers of suicides that take place in prisons (indicating how many Indigenous prisoners are driven to suicide and how easy it is for prisoners to kill themselves), and the willingness to risk Indigenous life, as in police drop-offs in sub-zero temperatures, all suggest an abiding disregard for Indigenous life. The same is true of the consistent reluctance in inquests and inquiries to explore the responses of state actors to Indigenous people. Only ever implicit in the numbers, moments of inhumanity, moments when a person’s life is deemed to be worthless are often papered over in inquests and inquiries with recommendations proposing that state actors develop greater cultural sensitivity, remember to check cameras in police stations and hanging points in cells, create protocols for dealing with alcoholics, and learn to take better care of Indigenous prisoners in hospitals and jail cells. Oft-repeated, the recommendations indirectly confirm that settler society finds it difficult to provide the barest minimum of care and respect to a population it over-polices and incarcerates at rates that are among the highest in the Western world. There is a “failure to respond,” concludes the Correctional Investigator for Canada, Howard Sapers. When I examine the numbers and the legal processes that pertain to deaths in custody, it is this failure to respond that I attempt to track, asking where it comes from, what it sustains, and how it might change.