The Radical Activist and the Natural Victim: Colonial Tropes of Aboriginal

Identity, the Media, and Public Inquiries in Canada

by

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ABSTRACT

Images of Aboriginal social problems and protests are frequent features of mainstream news discourse. This thesis identifies two dominant tropes of Aboriginal identity found within the mainstream visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems: the radical activist and the natural victim. Using "hot-button" cases of Aboriginal social problems that resulted in public inquiries (i.e. Oka, Ipperwash), this thesis identifies where and why colonial tropes are constructed within the visual discourse of these events and their subsequent public inquiries. This thesis will pay particular attention to the way in which colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity continue to shape the mainstream visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and in turn have an impact on public opinion and government responses to these hot-button issues.

DEDICATION

To the consummate teacher and student, Mr. Tom Mayne

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Introduction

What does Aboriginal radical activism look like? What does victimization look like? Images hold enormous power to incite emotional responses and shape perceptions. Mainstream media capitalizes on the power of images to not only tell stories, but also to actively construct identities of the people reflected in the discourse. As both a source of information and entertainment, the power of media is immense, with a great deal of this strength drawn from the media's visual components. Aboriginal news stories, featuring social problems and protests have a strong visual element. These images help to shape viewer perceptions of Aboriginal social problems and position the news narratives of Aboriginal social problems within broader Canadian identity narratives. Pictures of Aboriginal social problems and protests are memorable, shocking, and controversial, making them important elements of how Aboriginal identity is constructed within mainstream media discourse.

The project of this thesis is expository: to identify two overarching tropes utilized in the construction of Aboriginal social problems and to illustrate how these two overarching tropes appear in public inquiries. Building on the identification of particular tropes in colonial theory, this thesis will make the contribution of identifying how these tropes have a direct impact on how the state publically responds to Aboriginal social problems through public inquiries.

Media representations of Aboriginal social problems are not neutral accounts of an objective reality of Aboriginal experiences in Canada. Instead, they are historically rooted constructions of dominant tropes of Aboriginal social problems that directly link

to political and social assumptions surrounding power inequalities, lingering colonial attitudes and dependency. There is a striking consistency in how the Canadian media presents Aboriginal social problems such as poverty, lack of shelter and potable water, and the common referral to "third world living conditions within Canada". The media construction of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems often adheres to two dominant tropes of natural victimhood and radical activism. This mediated construction can be seen throughout the visual discourse, particularly in the use of images that feature Aboriginal people as subordinated, helpless, and dependent subjects or as radical, disruptive, and unpredictable lawbreakers.

The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in Canada reflects an evocative framing of news-media narratives in order to comply to and reinforce these dominant tropes. Framing of Aboriginal social problems has a powerful influence over the success or failure of an event or issue in gaining widespread media attention and popular support and, as this thesis will argue, whether or not a "hot-button" issue culminates in a public inquiry. In the framing of Aboriginal social problems, the media regurgitates deep set cultural norms and also works to legitimate power imbalances that lead to the subordination and marginalization of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The construction of Aboriginal social problems in Canadian media are in accordance with a continuance of the existing status quo, whereby Aboriginal communities are universally characterized as damaged, dependent, helpless wards of the state. As Taiaiake Alfred and Lana Lowe contend, "[i]n the long process of gaining control over Indigenous nations, Canadian governments and other institutions of Canadian society have created fake images of Indigenous people to suit the imperatives

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of dominion" (2005: 3). The work of this thesis is to illustrate the links between tropes of Aboriginal identity (as identified in postcolonial theory), the framing of Aboriginal social problems in mainstream media, and how these tropes further infiltrate and impact state Aboriginal public inquiries and commissions are examined. This thesis will seek to not only locate the dominant tropes of Aboriginal identity identified through colonial theory within the contemporary media visual discourse, but also examine how the legitimation of these tropes function to shape and frame state responses in the form of public inquiries.

The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems rests on the seemingly universal Aboriginal victim. The content and usage of images evoke a sense that Aboriginal populations are helpless subordinates that require constant paternalistic attention and guardianship by the state in order to be "saved". This power relation of the non-Aboriginal majority dominating and subordinating the constructed Aboriginal victim is reflected in the way in which Aboriginal social problems are framed and constructed in the media. The impact of dominant constructions of Aboriginal social problems are reflected in how and where Aboriginal issues gain traction in the visual discourse of media in Canada. This is subsequently reflected in which Aboriginal issues provoke government intervention in the form of public inquiries and commissions.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a useful qualitative approach for not only analyzing textual discourse, but visual discourse as well. CDA concepts will be utilized throughout this thesis in order to analyze specific cases of media framing of Aboriginal social problems. The CDA approach will allow for an in depth analysis of the message, content and meaning of the visual discourse and will also allow for a critique of how the visual discourse functions to normalize lingering colonial and prejudicial attitudes that

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subordinate Aboriginal peoples. The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems

throughout this thesis will be read and analyzed as a text. As Norman Fairclough

contends, "texts are social spaces in which two fundamental social processes

simultaneously occur: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction"

(1995: 6). Accordingly, by invoking CDA and reading the visual discourse as a text, this

thesis will engage with how the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems functions

and also how the discourse is indicative of unequal power relations between Aboriginal

peoples and the dominant majority. Ruth Wodak indicates the power of CDA to reveal

underlying power relations and structures by arguing that, "CDA engages with the

opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination,

power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 1995: 204). This thesis will track

the way in which the visual discourse represents and constructs implicit meaning and as

Fairclough suggests, "analysis of implicit content can provide valuable insights into what

is taken as given, as common sense" (1995: 6). Through critical discourse analysis it is

possible to problematize the taken for granted and normalized tropes that colonial theory

has detected that still inform public opinion and understanding of the Aboriginal other in

Canada.

The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in Canada is prevalent across

print news, online sources and video coverage. The individual images that make up the

discourse, although often separated by distinctive time periods, circumstance and

different Aboriginal communities share some striking similarities. Discursive

consistency is an important component of reinforcing colonial identity tropes.

Consistency creates a particular "mould" as Edward Said describes which is then

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replicated over and over again (Said, 1979: 26). Said recognized a similar consistency in the construction of Orientalism and reflected that, "[t]elevision, the films, all the media's resources have forced information into more standardized moulds" (Said, 1979:26). Imagery that communicates the trope of "third world conditions in Canada" is frequently deployed in coverage of Aboriginal social issues. This imagery features elements that graphically demonstrate a lack of basic necessities, be it clean water, health care, or proper nutrition. The images frequently feature a female or child subject in a position of perceived vulnerability or weakness.

The visual discourse is a crucial location for the construction and communication of implicit propositions and meaning (Fairclough, 1995: 24). The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is particularly important in understanding the impact of lingering colonial attitudes in Canada because "ideologies are primarily located in the unsaid (implicit propositions)" (Fairclough, 1995: 24). Therefore, in order to illustrate how the tropes of Aboriginal identity found in colonial theory can be observed in the day to day discourse of Aboriginal social problems, the images (as a space of unsaid and implicit propositions) become central subjects of analysis. Discourse analysis in this thesis will be used in order to tease out the colonial discourse within media visual imaginings of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries.

This thesis utilizes public inquiries as a measure of public responses by the state to Aboriginal social problems that culminate in "hot button" political issues. Public inquiries were selected because they produce enormous amounts of research and material and more importantly because inquiries are public displays by the state that construct and legitimate a particular account of an issue or problem. The meaning-making component

of public inquiries is what made them important to the research of this thesis. Not every

public inquiry during the chosen time period were researched during this project. Instead

the criteria used to pick public inquiries were whether or not they were intended to be

Aboriginal focussed and whether or not they can be linked to a particular "hot button"

political issue that received coverage in the mainstream media, for example, the Oka

Crisis or the events at Ipperwash.[1] This criteria was used in order to isolate how

Aboriginal tropes of identity in particular were constructed and how these tropes

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[1] The Oka Crisis of the summer of 1990 was the highly publicized culmination of a historical conflict over

contested land that in 1990 was sold to expand a golf course in Oka Quebec. Following decades of petition

by the Mohawks to regain the disputed land, the government approved an expansion of the golf course in

1990, once again ignoring the claims of the Kanesatake First Nation (Hedican, 2013: 111). The expansion

of the golf course would cover a Mohawk cemetery and 39 hectares of pine forest that was culturally

important to the First Nation (Hedican. 2013: 111). After meetings and mediations collapsed, Aboriginal

protestors occupied the contested space and a standoff ensued. For more information about this particular

event, please see page 108 of this thesis.

Ipperwash, similar to Oka, was a conflict over contested Aboriginal land.   On July 29th, 1995, members

of the Stoney Point First Nation occupied Camp Ipperwash, a military base that was located on their

nation's confiscated territory that was seized during World War II (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers,

2010: 331). During a tense standoff, Dudley George, an Aboriginal protestor was shot and killed by an

OPP officer (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 331). For more information about this particular

event, please see page 111-112 of this thesis.

appeared in public inquiries specifically designed to address issues identified as Aboriginal social problems.

The extent to which the media coverage of certain Aboriginal issues is able to tap into the two dominant tropes of the radical activist and the natural victim will in turn impact how receptive both the Canadian public and the Canadian government are in responding to these media constructions. Said makes the argument that "too often literature and culture are presumed to be politically, even historically innocent" Said, 1979:33). Through this thesis, the presumed innocence of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems will likewise be interrogated in light of its political and historical impact and subsequent culpability. The media's use of framing represents a hostile construction and imagining of Aboriginal social problems to the detriment of Aboriginal communities across Canada. This thesis argues that the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is not neutral. The visual discourse is in fact in many ways complicit in the propagation of destructive colonial attitudes and prejudices with negative consequences for the representation of Aboriginal social problems and activism in the media and also in how these events are responded to within public inquiries.

There is a close relation between legitimacy and framing which will be explored throughout this thesis by demonstrating that what is deemed legitimate is ultimately conducive with media constructions of Aboriginal social problems. This thesis will illustrate that if a media story is in accordance with the dominant tropes of radical activism and natural victimhood, the story will be awarded more legitimacy and validity. Through an analysis of the power of these dominant tropes, this thesis will demonstrate how the media constructions that support these tropes become more accepted,

recognizable and ultimately legitimate than any competing narratives of Aboriginal social problems.

I will shape my argument around two dominant frames of Aboriginal social problems in Canada: the trope of Aboriginal victimhood and the trope of Aboriginal activism. These two overarching tropes, as the following chapters will demonstrate, were chosen because they are inclusive of a number of existing colonial tropes and offer contrasting constructions of Aboriginal identity. These two tropes also, as further chapters will outline, appear to be deployed more consistently than other tropes and have stood the test of time, where other tropes appear to have lost some of their strength. After interrogating these two dominant tropes, I will contend that the success of these two frames lies in lingering colonial attitudes and understandings of not only Aboriginal social problems, but also constructions of Aboriginal identity more broadly. I will incorporate the concept of "frame setting" into my analysis to illustrate how the framing of Aboriginal social problems in the media is anchored to existing cultural norms and prejudice. Framing of Aboriginal social problems intersects with the legacy of colonialism that normalizes and legitimates the continuation of the subordinated and dependent Aboriginal subjects in this discourse.

I intend to analyze constructions of both Aboriginal victimhood and radical activism across news coverage of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries in the Canadian contemporary context. This thesis will focus in particular on news stories of Aboriginal issues and their associated images published between 1982 and 2012 that were distributed by Canadian news sources. The hot-button Aboriginal social problems chosen for analysis in this thesis all resulted in either federal or

provincial public inquiries (see chapter 4 for an explanation). This time period was selected for the purposes of this project as the time frame covers a period of both increased media access and prevalence in Canada and also increasing awareness and interest in Aboriginal activism and rights in Canada. This time period in terms of colonial theory also covers the time frame in which Aboriginal identity constructions and tropes began to gain more attention and academic interest. Once I have illustrated dominant characteristics of how Aboriginal social problems are framed in media, I will examine how these dominant tropes further appear within Aboriginal public inquiries.

In any discourse analysis, definitions are of incredible importance and are particularly difficult to accurately present. A primary definitional challenge that necessarily must be addressed at the forefront of this project is how to define "Aboriginal" as a deeply political social construction that is rooted in colonialism. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel offer a compelling explanation of the term indigenous by defining is as "an identity constructed, shaped and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism" (2005: 597).

This thesis will use the term "Aboriginal" as this is the generally accepted legal and policy language used to signify Indigenous identity and heritage in Canada. Although Aboriginal is a problematic and imperfect term, particularly in relation to whether or not individuals hold legal status according to the *Indian Act*, for the purposes of this project, Aboriginal will be used as it can be utilized to cover Metis, First Nations and Inuit identities and is broadly applicable in the Canadian context. However, "Aboriginal" throughout this thesis should be read in light of how Alfred and Corntassel identify Indigenous as a construct of contemporary colonial attitudes. The title

Aboriginal, although the current politically correct and legal name, is not neutral and certainly not removed from the colonial project.

The title of Aboriginal social problems is used throughout this thesis to unite a number of Aboriginal related hot button political and cultural issues that have gained wide spread attention and focus in the media. Aboriginal social problems in the case of this thesis are defined as hot button issues that resulted in formal provincial and federal government inquiries and commissions. The tropes and archetypes explored within this thesis are in fact present in the visual discourse in relation to an enormous number of Aboriginal related news stories, but the scope of this thesis demanded limiting Aboriginal social problems to issues that resulted in inquiries.

For selecting examples of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems for the analysis of this thesis, images that were published in Canada that were related to Aboriginal social problems which have led to inquiries and commissions were used. Although only a small number of "hot-button" Aboriginal issues were used, by using the inquiries and commissions criteria for selecting these issues, it was possible to investigate how tropes and constructions explored in colonial theory are reproduced and constructed in both the state inquiries and also in the visual discourse of these Aboriginal social problems. As a result of the research for this thesis, one provincial (Ipperwash Inquiry) , one federal (RCAP) and one proposed Aboriginal public inquiry (Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women) became critical examples.

This thesis will seek to apply the dominant tropes and constructions of Aboriginal identity exposed through colonial theory to the way in which Aboriginal social problems are framed in the visual discourse of Canadian media. Although more blatant in news

media, these constructions and framing also percolate throughout Aboriginal-state relations and impact the tone, structure and scope of negotiations, policies and programs that the state engages in with regards to Aboriginal populations. By treating the visual discourse found in Canadian media as a barometer for the prominence and strength of certain tropes and constructions of Aboriginal social problems, it will be possible to analyze how and why certain tropes found within contemporary colonial theory are impactful in the public inquiries of Aboriginal social problems.

Although previous scholarship has been produced detailing the presence of particular colonial tropes, there exists a research gap in regards to identifying how the legitimacy conferred onto particular tropes has allowed them to continue to influence state responses to Aboriginal social problems in the present day. A great deal of the research on colonial tropes is historical and seeks to track how particular constructed abetted the colonial project historically (for example, Lutz's construction of the "Lazy Indian"[2]) However, this thesis looks at broader and more all encompassing tropes that continue to operate and be legitimized in the state's contemporary public responses to Aboriginal social problems.

This thesis consists of four major components: a literature review that identifies a variety of existing tropes and their roles in maintaining colonial power imbalances, a detailed overview of the two dominant and overarching tropes, an analysis of Aboriginal

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[2] John Lutz identifies the way in which Aboriginal relations to labour and the economy during colonialism was shaped by the trope of the "Lazy Indian".
Lutz, John. 2008. *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

public inquiries during the selected time period, and a final section considering the potential of culture Aboriginal public inquiries.

The first chapter will offer a literature review of a variety of different scholarship that relates to colonial tropes, identity formation, colonial stereotyping and the power of tropes in negotiating power relations. Chapter two will outline the first trope of the Aboriginal victim, which will be identified in relation to the cases utilized in this thesis. Chapter three approaches the second trope, of the Aboriginal radical activist and likewise examines this trope in relation to the Aboriginal social problems and inquiries utilized as cases in this thesis. Following an overview of these two dominant tropes, chapter four introduces the history of Aboriginal public inquiries and royal commissions during the time period covered. This chapter will also identify the way in which the tropes of the Aboriginal victim and the radical activist are communicated during these inquiries. Chapter five identifies the discursive consistency found in relation to these two tropes over the time period covered and how these tropes function in order to solidify norms. Chapter 6, building on the findings in the previous chapter identifies what is at stake if the tropes are not effectively combated within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries in the future. Chapter seven highlights the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (herein RCAP) as an important case where the dominant colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity were not only identified but directly combated. The final chapter offers a perspective on future research in this area, particularly in regards to the present interest in establishing an Aboriginal public inquiry to address the large number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. The final conclusion grapples with the questions posed at the onset of this thesis and reflects

on the major findings of this research. Ultimately, this thesis seeks to establish the way in which dominant tropes of Aboriginal identity, as identified by colonial theory, continue to pervade both the mainstream media visual discourse and also public inquiries designed to address hot-button Aboriginal social problems.

Chapter 1: Postcolonial Theory and Colonial Tropes of Aboriginal Identity

This thesis contends that colonialism is not contained within a historical moment, but instead is an ongoing and all pervasive project that continues to inform contemporary Aboriginal-state relations in Canada. Sarah de Leeuw in her research on discourse within residential schools in B.C. notes that along with the economic and territorial expansion that it denotes, "[c]olonialism is also a practice and an ideological and discursive framework constructed to cast Indigenous peoples as othered in reference to Eurocolonial norms" (2007: 10). Critically, Canada must not be labelled a post-colonial state, as the media framing, government inquiries, and public response to Aboriginal social problems remain locked within a colonial understanding of identity and difference. An instrumental component of the colonial project is the application of racialized tropes of Aboriginal identity. Defining Aboriginal as "other" throughout the use of colonial identity tropes validates the subordination of Aboriginal peoples by non-Aboriginal colonizers. Postcolonial theory has highlighted the use of these tropes as a means of forwarding the colonial project and constructing racialized identities that are deeply rooted in prejudice and power inequality (Ashcroft, 2001a: 36). These tropes function to marginalize and subordinate the colonial other, including Aboriginal peoples, by constraining Aboriginal identity within the constructs of difference, inferiority, and primitivism.   This chapter will identify and analyze a number of the dominant colonial tropes already identified within postcolonial theory through a literature review and

conclude with an overview of the two tropes central to this thesis; the natural victim and the radical activist.

Colonialism as a Project of Identity Construction

Postcolonial theory advances that colonialism far surpasses the historical and economic relationships between the dominant country and its colonies. David Nock and Celia Haig- Brown note that, "[t]he persistence of Euro-Canadian dominance in social structures and the exclusion of perspectives of the original peoples and immigrant groups other than the Europeans indicate that we are still in colonial mode" (2006: 6). One of the fundamental components of the project of colonialism, as it continues to this day, is related to setting borders and boundaries between "US" and "Them". Yasmin Jiwani notes that, "[t]he legacy of Aboriginal representations in the Canadian context date back to early French and English colonization. Early representations were thus intimately tied to the process of colonization" (2010:3). As such, colonial theory seeks to highlight and work towards destabilizing the way in which the colonial mode persists in Canada, including the frequent invocation of prejudicial and problematic racialized tropes of Aboriginal identity.

Colonial tropes of racialized identity, as instruments of the larger colonial project validate and symbolically represent stereotypes and racialized inequality that were essential to the ongoing subordination of the colonial other, including Aboriginal peoples (Berkhofer, 1979: 3). Bill Ashcroft comments that "the colonized other was represented in terms of tropes which invariable justified imperial rule, no matter how benign it saw

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itself to be" (2001a: 36). Colonial tropes of identity construction persist to the present day and maintain their role within justifying and validating the power inequalities and colonial relations that Ashcroft and many other researchers have recognized in Canada (Ashcroft, 2001a; Ashcroft, 2001b; Harding, 2005; Alfred, 2008; Coulthard, 2007 and others) Tropes utilized to construct Aboriginal identity in relation to the dominant Colonizer are highly visual indications of how persistent the colonial project remains in so called post-colonial states such as Canada.

Colonial Tropes of Aboriginal Identity Construction and "Canadianness"

For scholars interested in Canadian identity narratives and the production of a national sense of self, the construction of Aboriginal identity is also of critical importance (Robertson, 2011; Lawrence and Dua, 2008). Constructing tropes in regards to Aboriginal identity effectively creates a boundary or border for "Canadianness" (Lawrence and Dua, 2008).   As Audra Simpson contends, "this binary maintained the ideological might and justification for claimed lands, contained peoples and the "social problem" of unassimilable differences" (2008: 254).   The creation of a boundary between "Canadian" and Aboriginal identity both draws strength from and simultaneously reinforces the colonial identity tropes of the Aboriginal colonial other as inferior to the non-Aboriginal majority. Constructing Aboriginal peoples as a monolithic colonial other allows for a clear and demonstrable demarcation between inside and outside of the border of membership within dominant society. As Wil Kymlicka acknowledges, "the usual way in which legitimacy was ensured amongst all members

was to exclude some people from membership" which in the case of membership in the "imagined community" of Canada, meant the exclusion of Aboriginal peoples (1989: 85). Accordingly, construction of the Aboriginal other is also a project of identifying and performing what it means to be dominant non-Aboriginal as much as constructing what it means to be Aboriginal.

As Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua contend, the lack of recognition of colonialism as an ongoing project means that "Aboriginal peoples are relegated to a mythic past, whereby their contemporary existence and struggles for decolonization are erased from view and thus denied legitimacy" (2008: 129).   Assuming that colonialism was a historical event with a discrete beginning and, more importantly, end makes Aboriginal activism appear unwarranted or excessive. By instead analyzing colonialism as a present-centered and ongoing project, the relationship between colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity and contemporary inquiries into Aboriginal social problems can be more closely examined. Stuart Hall, in his research on "The West and the Rest" made an important link between Orientalism and group identity construction in the West and North America, but he falls short by alluding to colonization as a past experience and a historical moment instead of an ongoing and dynamic project (Lawrence and Dua, 2008). As Lawrence and Dua contend, although Hall's work in linking Orientalism to the colonial experience in North America is important, Hall's work does not go far enough to identify colonialism as an ongoing and impactful project that continues to shape Aboriginal-state relations in the present day.

Common Tropes of Aboriginal Identity

There are a number of archetypes and tropes that are frequently deployed in the framing and construction of Aboriginal peoples, particularly in relation to racialized expectations surrounding Aboriginal work, morality and behaviour. Alfred aptly refers to these resilient and problematic tropes as "colonial stains" (2011: 3). Carmen Robertson and Lutz identify tropes that illustrate Aboriginal labour as slothfulness. Lutz in particular focuses on the trope of the "Lazy Indian" (2008: 7). He argues that this trope is a means for the state to erase the Aboriginal presence in and contribution to the Canadian market economy and to further reinforce the sense that Aboriginal peoples are chronic and inevitable state dependents (2008: 36). Richard Day finds a similar construction to that of the "Lazy Indian" by describing how Aboriginal peoples were characterized as "useless" within the colonial project (2000: 113). Both the useless and lazy stereotypes are invoked in order to exclude Aboriginal peoples from dominant society. The trope of the "Lazy Indian" is a vehicle within the colonial project for explaining and dismissing disproportionately high rates of Aboriginal unemployment and lower employment outcomes (Lutz, 2008:36). By invoking the "Lazy Indian" trope, it becomes inevitable that Aboriginal people, as unreliable and lazy workers would eventually become dependent on state benefits. Lutz comments on the impact of the trope of the "Lazy Indian" in shaping perceptions of Aboriginal peoples as outsiders by arguing that, "[i]t lies in the definition of 'Indian' as 'outside of the workforce'" (Lutz, 2008: 31). The trope on a broader scale validates the exclusion and marginalization of Aboriginal peoples within Canadian labour markets.

Similarly, Robertson in her analysis of Canadian identity formation references the archetype of the "whiny Indian" who is a nagging drain on the tax payer and who simply refuses to contribute to the good and moral society (2011: 246). Robertson's trope of the "whiny Indian" also normalizes the disproportionate rate of Aboriginal peoples that face unemployment and poverty in a similar way to the "Lazy Indian" trope. The trope of the "Whiny Indian" is particularly significant in regards to Aboriginal political voice, agency and activism. Robertson indicates that the "Whiny Indian" is frequently invoked to invalidate the claims of Aboriginal peoples for recognition of their rights, support for cultural revitalization projects and most centrally in the land claims and treaty negotiations process (2011: 246).

While Lutz's construction relates more to the way in which Aboriginal peoples are characterized in relation to economic relations, labour and trade, Robertson's trope also offers a construction of Aboriginal relations with the state. Robertson awards this trope the title of "whiny" in reference to the colonial attitude that Aboriginal peoples are a hassle or obstacle to be overcome, an archetypal thorn in the side of the state. This trope implies that not only are Aboriginal peoples predisposed to making demands against the state, but also that their demands are invalid or excessive.

Along with these tropes centred on sloth and "whininess", a popular trope is that of the "noble savage"" (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 4; Lischke and McNab, 2005: 14). This trope pivots on expectations of Aboriginal peoples in relation to land and the environment (Sharma and Wright, 2008: 120). The noble savage trope constructs Aboriginal peoples as stoic members of a dying race, who remain concretely anchored to an historical and fading land use pattern (Lischke and McNab, 2005: 14; Pearson, 2001:

1). This mythological figure is the center of much attention, particularly in the continued sense that Aboriginal peoples are opposed to modern society because the noble savage is a relic of the past who holds on to tradition. The noble savage archetype is highly romanticized and a source of continued myth and characterization of Aboriginal traditional practices and beliefs and has been illustrated and analyzed by countless authors, artists and theorists (Retzslaff, 2005: 611).

The noble savage is perhaps the most common and prolific trope of Aboriginal identity that continues to be invoked to this day (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 4). The noble savage construction portrays Aboriginal peoples as stoic and moral bound, but regretfully out of touch with modern conditions. The construction is romanticized and is frequently deployed in literature and in film (Lischke and McNab, 2005: 14; O'Conner, 1998: 27). The noble savage trope is particularly prevalent in contemporary popular culture, where "[t]he American Indian, described and portrayed in thousands of movies, television programs, books, articles and government studies, has either been raised to the status of the 'noble savage' or disparaged as the 'wild Indian' who resisted the Westward expansion of the American frontier" (Lischke and McNab, 2005: 14). Tangential to the "noble savage" construction, Alfred describes the imagining of the "mystic warrior" (2009: 101). In this construction, there is a supernatural element and the warriors are surrounded by spirituality, bravery and mystery (Alfred, 2009: 101). There is a similar romanticism wrapped up around this construction, which likely emerged as a trope from a variety of Aboriginal "warrior societies" (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 4).

Perhaps the most frightening of the constructed tropes of Aboriginal identity is that of the wild and dangerous savage (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 4; Belanger, 2010: 174;

Deloria, 1999: 249). Indeed, "images of aggressive and bloodthirsty savages continue to pervade Canadian society" (Belanger, 2010: 174). This trope functions within the larger colonial project in order to marginalize Aboriginal peoples as threatening and unpredictable, who require the punishment and discipline of the Colonizer in order to keep the dominant Settler majority safe. This trope contains a prejudice that the colonial other is fundamentally more prone to violence and deviance (Furniss, 1999: 70).

Another frequent trope relies on the construction of Aboriginal peoples as infantilized, naïve, primitive and utterly dependent. As Julia Emberley argues, at a foundational level, "colonial power operates through the metaphor of benevolent parenting" (2001:61). The child-like trope validates paternalistic state policy towards Aboriginal people. In the case of Aboriginal-state relations in Canada, colonial theory has found a consistent imagining of Aboriginal peoples as being fundamentally childlike and lacking the sophistication and decision making capacities of non-Aboriginal adults (Emberley, 2001: 61 and Cairns, 2001: 56). Ashcroft argues that "no trope has been as tenacious and more far reaching than that of the child" (2001a: 36). Primitivism and childhood interweave within the trope of the infantilized colonial other who is incapable of resisting base interests, paradoxically both naïve and susceptible to bad behaviour and unquestionably less developed and civilized than the dominant colonizer. David Campbell tracks a similar trope of infantilization in the presentation of famine victims in the Western visual discourse and explains the, "[t]he efficacy of the child as symbol flows from a number of associated cultural assumptions: children are abstraction from culture and society, granted an innate innocence, seen to be dependent, [and] requiring protection" (2012: 9).

This trope is particularly evident in the treatment of state-Aboriginal affairs in the style of "well-meaning paternalism" (Cairns, 2000: 15) where Aboriginal peoples are not competent enough to make decisions over their own affairs and must be legally dictated to and managed by the parental state. The "child-like" trope supports the colonial project by rendering the colonial other a naïve, innocent and corruptible ward that is not capable of looking after its own best interests. As such, this trope stands to validate paternalistic policies of state guardianship and the limiting of Aboriginal self-governance. Campbell finds that in famine discourse, "stereotypical photographs embody colonial relations of power that contrast an adult and superior global North with the infantilized and inferior global South." (2012: 9) Campbell's analysis is comparable to the infantilization of Aboriginal victims within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in Canada, which likewise embodies the colonial relations of power in Canada- where Aboriginal peoples (as childlike victims) are contrasted with the non-Aboriginal state (as mature protectors).

The trope of the infantilized colonial other also extends substantially into postcolonial critiques and analysis of the discursive links forged in the between children and colonial subjects of African descent, both in Africa and in North America (Ashcroft, 2001; Fanon, 1963: 149). Fanon describes this infantilization, describing how, "[t]he colonial mother is protecting the child from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune" (1963: 149). The trope validated and excused substantial institutional racism and similar racialized stereotypes were applied to people of African descent (Fanon, 1963: 147).

Creating Colonial Aboriginal Subjects

The construction of subjectivity is another project within identity formation that is deeply rooted in colonial attitudes and power relations. As Andres Krebs argues, "the dominant colonial subjectivity produces itself as a central point around which other subjectivities orbit, and from whose perspective they are judged" (2011: 319). Attempting to construct and reinforce subjects and subjectivity is inherently a question of power and authority, whereby the colonial other is relegated to the orbiting position around the central and dominant non-Aboriginal majority. As Robertson notes, "The classification of the racialized other has long been a tool for justifying control and inequality" (2011: 235). Defining subjectivity is essential to demonstrating and reaffirming power over the subordinate other.

Constructing subjectivities is not a project only found in popular discourse, but is also a project housed within institutions of the state, such as the *Indian Act* which is a tool for defining Aboriginal people and legally defining and constructing their subjectivity in relation to the dominant majority and the paternal warden of the state (Robertson, 2011: 235). Lawrence also comments on the way in which constructions of Aboriginal identity have an enormous impact on state responses and behaviour towards Aboriginal peoples by stating that, "As a regulatory regime, the Indian Act provides ways of understanding native identity, organizing a conceptual framework that has shaped contemporary Native Life in ways that are so familiar as to almost seem natural" (2003: 3) Lawrence contends that the *Indian Act*, by defining who can and cannot be considered an "Indian" and by legally constructing subjectivities, has had a measurable impact on Aboriginal world

views, particularly through denying the status of Aboriginal women before 1985 who married non-Aboriginal men (Lawrence, 2003: 4). Defining subjectivities and including and excluding individuals on the basis of colonial identity tropes and constructs has immediate implications for Aboriginal-state relations, such as in the invocation of public inquiries to respond to Aboriginal social problems and public inquiries. Steffi Retzslaff argues that, "[p]ublic policies were based on the assumption that the 'Imaginary Indian' corresponded to an actual reality, which in turn affected the social and individual construction of identities for Native peoples" (2002: 612). This link between identity construction and state responses to Aboriginal affairs will serve as an important component of this project.

Sunera Thobani in her novel theoretical perspective in *Exalted Subjects* explains the process of exaltation, whereby the dominant majority identity is demarcated and delineated in the Canadian context in relation to the constructed other (2007: 4). Thobani builds on the work of Fanon (1963, 1967), Razack (1998), Bannerji (2000), Day (2000) and Mackey (2002) to examine the way in which the constitution of the "other" connects to broader questions of national identity, sovereignty and state membership (2007: 5). Fanon's argument that, "[i]t is the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to* fabricate the colonized subject" is echoed in Thobani's work as well (1963: 2). Thobani argues that through the imagining of the "Indian" archetype, the diversity, complexity and agency of independent First Nations in Canada were erased (2007: 173).

The socially constructed "Indian" which was built through colonial prejudicial attitudes and the colonial "exaltation process" displaced the identity of a multiplicity of Aboriginal identities and made it possible to legitimize continued imbalances power

relations and perpetuate racial stereotypes. Thobani's work serves as a foundation for the work within this thesis, whereby the social construction of Aboriginal victimhood and activism serve to reinforce and validate the dominant position of the non-Aboriginal majority and the resulting subordination of Aboriginal peoples.

Although specifically theorizing on the colonial experiences outside of Canada, Fanon (1967) and Memmi (1965) analyze the role of Colonizer identity in constructing the Colonized Other that are applicable to the ongoing colonial project in Canada as well. Fanon and Memmi look at how tropes of racialized identity are used as vehicles to drive messages of colonizer superiority, dependency of the colonized other as subhuman, infantile or animalistic (Memmi, 1965: 86; Fanon, 1963: 149). They both argue that in order for the unquestionable dominance of the colonizer to persist, the colonizer is dependent on the tropes of colonized other identity in order to establish their superiority in relation to the "Native" or "primitive" (Memmi, 1965: 79; Fanon, 1963: 147).

Physically Distancing the Colonial Tropes of Aboriginal Identity on the Reserve

The frequent engagement of the phrase "third world conditions in Canada" in relation to Aboriginal experiences, especially life on reserves taps into what Robertson describes as "[o]ld colonial shibboleths" (2011: 241). This collection of shibboleths includes lack of clean drinking water, unemployment, poor shelter and poor nutrition (Robertson, 2011:241). Robertson's term "old colonial shibboleths" for this collection of highly familiar issues that the media focuses on as being "Aboriginal problems" stem directly from the natural Aboriginal victim trope, where a lack of basic necessities and an

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abhorrent quality of life are not only portrayed as quintessential to the reserve system, but also inevitable circumstances for all Aboriginal peoples. Thomas Abler tracks a similar trope expressed in the historical record left by missionaries in Atlantic Canada, which he refers to as the "poor Indian," who is in every sense vulnerable, tragic and doomed (Abler, 2006: 76). This construction of victimhood is seemingly natural and blameless and as Furniss points out, "[s]uch stereotypes display a fundamental misconception about the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state" (2001: 11).

Tropes of Aboriginal Identity and Irreconcilable Difference with Dominant Canada

Colonial theory also focuses on how Aboriginal nations throughout Canada are portrayed as being in a hierarchically lower position in development and the process of civilization. Abler identifies the characterization of all Aboriginal peoples belonging to a mythical "hunter-state" (2006:73) and due to their pre-civilized existence, are ultimately a dying race doomed to extinction (Abler, 2006:76; Regan, 2006: 89). This constructed incongruence between Aboriginal peoples and the modern state allows for marginalization and paternal relations to be seen as acceptable and valid approaches to Aboriginal-state relations. At its most extreme, the "dying race" made the disappearance of Aboriginal peoples inevitable and a natural process (Regan, 2006: 89). Dickason notes that, "[t]he confident expectation of Europeans that Indians were a vanishing people, the remnants of whom would finally be absorbed by the dominant society, has not happened" (2006: 296). When Aboriginal people in Canada failed to meet this trope's expectation of entirely disappearing, the evolutionary theory of civilization (where Aboriginal peoples

are found to be in a pre-civilized state therefore subordinate to the civilized non-Aboriginal) validated state responses to Aboriginal peoples (Taylor, 1994: 26). Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri examine the connectivity between the crisis of modernity and the project of colonialism and specifically look at the persistence of the trope of the hunter state, uncivilized or living fossil tropes (2000: 70). They demonstrate the importance of this trope by describing how "The anthropological presentation of non-European Others within the evolutionary theory of civilization served to confirm and validate the eminent position of Europeans and thereby legitimate the Colonial project as a whole" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 127). The trope served the purpose within the colonial project of validation by showing, in supposed evolutionary terms, that the Colonized Other was simply as lesser developed, more primitive class of man, making their subordination and exploitation legitimate and defensible. However, "the category 'Indian' had less to do with phenotypical features that it did with the relationship Europeans wished to have with Aboriginal peoples" (Lutz, 2008: 32). Here again, the construction of Aboriginal identity (as aided through the visual discourse) at its root is about power and defining an imbalanced relationship between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal Canada.

Nock and Haig-Brown find a similar sense of incompatibility between Aboriginal peoples and the contemporary Canadian state by indicating how Aboriginal peoples are frequently presented in the popular discourse as obstructions to progress and obstacle to be avoided, whether due to inefficient use of natural space and resources or due to the physical obstacle of large scale occupations and protests (Nock and Haig-Brown, 2006: 14). This trope has a variety of titles including "living fossils" "pre-civilized peoples"

and "savages" and at its core, this trope speaks to a colonial attitude that Aboriginal

peoples are part of a fading history and have no place within contemporary society. As

Lutz contends, the non-Aboriginal majority "presented 'Indians' as unassimilable, and

thus, as obstacles to economic development or 'progress' in order to further exclude and

marginalize Aboriginal peoples. This trope places considerable distance between

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and also implicitly excuses the ongoing exclusion

and marginalization of Aboriginal people from dominant society.

Postcolonial theory problematizes the static categories of identity generally known as the

colonizer and the colonial other (or more specifically, in this case Aboriginal) and

identify the problematic dominance of the non-Aboriginal/ colonizer (Robertson, 2011:

238; Krebs, 2011: 319; Deloria, 1969: 2; Dhamoon, 2009: 40, Ashworth and Graham,

2007: 2). These identities are more closely represented as spectrums of hybridity as

opposed to fixed and constrained monoliths. Homi Bahba notes that, "[a]n important

feature of colonial discourse it its dependence on the concept of 'fixity' in the ideological

construction of otherness" (1994: 94). Fixed identities are problematic, particularly in so

called "post-colonial" states such as Canada, where a variety of different cultural

affiliations, including Aboriginal cultural affiliations result in a "strange multiplicity"

(Tully, 1995: 3). Cultural identity is contested space and as a result, the process of the

politics of recognition is a constant and discursive process of labelling, identifying and

characterizing multiple cultural identities (Tully, 1995: 15). Rita Dhamoon indicates that

Jim Tully's work to create a "shift to culture as contested terrain" in political theory

allowed for a "characterization of culture as an activity" which is central to this thesis

(Tully, 1995: 15 as referenced by Dhamoon, 44).

This relates closely to the use of dominant tropes and constructions of Aboriginal social problems as it emphasizes how constructed tropes of Aboriginality reflected in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems are fundamentally unrealistic, oversimplified and stereotypical. Postcolonial theory offers a number of overlapping critiques of the artificial binary of "us" and "them" in terms of colonial power relations and ongoing racialized inequality. Nock and Haig-Brown, argue that Canadian postcolonial theory must focus on the task of beginning to "reimagine them and us" as not fixed and racialized opposites but as mutually constructing, interrelated and varied hybridities (2006: 2). Scholars such at Robertson and Thobani contend that the Canadian state continues to be complicit in the propagation and regurgitation of these static categories of identity and colonial tropes in order to maintain the power imbalance that locks Aboriginal people into the subordinate and dependent position within intergovernmental relations (Robertson, 2011: 235; Thobani, 2007: 25).

Biological to Sanitized Racism

Colonial theory tracks the gradual transition in the attitudes and actions of non-Aboriginal society from active and blatant biological racism to a current condition of "passive and sanitized" racism (Harding, 2006: 206). Harding describes passive and sanitized racism as "characterized by a creed of 'identical treatment' which emphasizes equality of opportunity and cultural pluralism, while denying the existence of contemporary racist practices, attitudes and outcomes" (2006: 206). Anne Phillips discusses the shift away from biological determinism and a more biological racism to a

still problematic sanitized racism by analyzing how "culture" has replaced "race" for assigning expectations on groups of people based on their heritage alone (Phillips, 2007: 56). As Phillips notes, passive racism through the guise of "culture" has concerning implications for the over reliance on identity tropes, stereotypes and over determinism to fix rigid identities onto groups of people (2007: 56). Phillips argues that, "it will often reproduce the fixity that has been the marker of more classical racism. When culture is treated (as in much popular usage) as something from which we can predict a whole swath of human behaviour, this edges disturbingly close to the racist treatment of skin colour or physiognomy as predictors of human behaviour" (2007: 56). This shift is particularly relevant to the analysis of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems because this sanitized racism, although not as blatant as historical racism, continues to legitimize constructions of Aboriginal peoples that emphasize a universal subordination and inferiority to the non-Aboriginal majority. Anderson and Denis echo Phillips by contending that the rhetoric of race has been replaced by a rhetoric of cultural difference (2005: 377). As Phillips contends, Anderson and Denis find that although the rhetoric has shifted, "[i]n general, these understandings of race and culture are bound together in the same notion of difference" (Anderson and Denis, 2005: 377). Perhaps sanitized racism is harder to detect than the blatant biological racism more common in the past, but the impact of both rhetorics to clearly demarcate dominant and subordinate groups and in defining insurmountable difference remains just as damaging.

The tropes that appear within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems are evidence of a continued "sanitized racism" where racial stereotypes are so normalized and frequent that they are rendered largely invisible within the visual discourse. Tropes

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of identity, by their very nature as familiar and stereotypical constructions, become so normalized and are used so frequently that it becomes difficult to recognize the colonial and prejudicial attitudes from which these tropes emerged. Colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity are critical in the current "passive racism" found in Canada because these tropes enforce a sense of Aboriginal inferiority without the blatant appearance of racism. These tropes are so familiar and common that they become difficult to detect, allowing for a stabilisation of tropes of identity, which are repeated and consumed as taken-for-granted representations of Aboriginal identity. Part of what makes these tropes so difficult to identify is also how, as Richard Brock describes, frames themselves are often invisible or undetectable (2011: 102). These invisible frames, while constraining how the media constructs Aboriginal social problems according to colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity are so familiar and normalized that they are rendered undetectable (Brock, 2011: 102). Postcolonial theory, by unpacking colonial tropes of identity analyzes the political function that these tropes play in maintaining colonial power inequalities and marginalizing the colonial other in contemporary society. It is through the images of the discourse that these constructions subtly function to reinforce and regurgitate lingering colonial attitudes.

Racial Projects in the U.S. and Colonial Identity Construction

To support the work in this thesis in relation to the project of constructing race and racialized difference, Michael Omi and Howard Winant's work on constructing blackness in the U.S. will be used as a foundation (1986: 56). Although Omi and Winant

are specifically theorizing about African American racialization in the U.S., the critical lens that they use in their analysis is beneficial in the Canadian context as well. They contend that "racial projects" involve both micro and macro levels of racialized identity construction and that the micro and macro levels are in a reciprocal relationship of reaffirmation, construction and modelling (Omi and Winant, 1986:56) Omi and Winant question and problematize how racialized difference and stratification persists in so called "post-colonial" states, particularly in light in their official policies of inclusion, multiculturalism and tolerance.

Winant contends that the future of racial theory must "link the micro- and macro-aspects of racial signification and racialized social structure" and in doing so, recognize that the social construction of race persists and validates power inequalities between racialized Others and the dominant majority population (Winant, 2000: 181). Winant makes the observation that, "the theme of race is situated where meaning meets social structure, where identity frames inequality" (2000: 171). Winant argues that in order for the US to maintain its existing social structure, the construction of race is necessary (2000:175). This locating of race as a point of conversion between meaning and structure is central in the approach taken throughout this thesis.

Similarly to Omi and Winant's focus on African American racialization in the U.S., Slavoj Zizek explores the power of social construction and symbolic displacement in his analysis of the single black female mother as the universal trope for the US welfare state as a whole (1999: 176). He finds that the single African American female, as an intersection between numerous points of subordination (gender, race, relationship status, and class all demonstrate her "Otherness") becomes the quintessential visual cue of

inherent dependence as a benefactor of state paternal benevolence and guardianship (Zizek,1999: 176).

Zizek indicates how as soon as this trope is deployed, the associated prejudicial understandings of blackness, femininity, and single parenthood are knee-jerk triggered for the viewer (Zizek, 1999:176). Notably, the African American single mother collecting social assistance is the perfect foil to the White dominant majority who is none of the Others that she represents. The poor, dependent, African American, single mother is about as far removed from the wealthy, independent, white, married man as possible and again reinforces a clear and impenetrable border, supported by class, race and gender based inequality, between Us and Them. This othering and distancing is strikingly parallel to that of the trope of the natural Aboriginal victim, which almost identically is deployed to demonstrate how Aboriginal social problems are far removed from the lived realities of members of the dominant majority and that the insurmountable difference of the colonial other makes their victimization not only inevitable but excusable. Similar to Zizek's case of the African American single mother on welfare, in Canada the poverty stricken Aboriginal child on a reserve becomes the perfect symbol of Aboriginal inferiority and reliance on the state. Jiwani makes the argument that the concerted effort in media discourse to distance the victimization of Aboriginal peoples from dominant Canada is necessary to "obfuscate if not evacuate the issue of our complicity in upholding the existing scheme of things" (2010: 10).

Zizek's analysis of this particular symbol is comparable to the dominant tropes constructed in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in that it assumes a set of prejudicial colonial attitudes about the racialized other. The symbol of the African

American woman signposts for the welfare state system and dependency on the state as a whole due almost entirely to the prejudicial baggage that is silently affixed to the image. If there was not an implicit acknowledgement within the image that African American people are perceived as being more prone to state dependence, the symbol simply would not work as a signifier. Zizek utilizes this familiar image to tap into the way in which public opinion and awareness is both the product and project of media discourse and how the way in which these images and signs are deployed has deeply political consequences (1999:176). Zizek implicitly poses the question of why the image of the African American single mother on welfare is so evocative and also to what end this symbol is used within the broader discourse of state dependency that is symptomatic of the welfare state (1999:177).

In their analysis of framing emotional response, Kim Gross and Lisa D'Ambrosio identify how the stereotype of welfare recipients as lazy dependents "violates American cultural norms of self-reliance" (2004: 2). As this stereotype violates cultural norms, "[m]edia coverage that highlights this perception in its framing of welfare policy would help to create and reinforce this anger" (Gross and D'Ambrosio, 2004: 2). Gross and D'Ambrosio's analysis of how perceived violations of cultural norms through media framing generates anger in viewers relates to the way in which the framing of Aboriginal peoples as helpless dependents and lazy recipients of state support can in turn lead to anger within the public response to Aboriginal social problems. Framing of Aboriginal social problems, similar to the framing of welfare recipients described by Zizek, rests on the iconic (and racialized) tropes of dependency and helplessness (1999: 177).

Colonial Identity Tropes and Validating Power Imbalance

According to a number of postcolonial theorists, the ongoing project of identifying and constructing the colonial other continues to legitimize and validate racialized power inequalities as well as the ongoing role of the state in dictating to Aboriginal peoples. Alfred contends that tropes and stereotypes of Aboriginal identity validate continued marginalization of Aboriginal peoples (Alfred, 2005: 23). He utilizes the concept of "Aboriginalism" as meaning "the ideology and identity of assimilation in which Onkwehonwe [original people] are manipulated by colonial myths into a submissive position" (Alfred, 2005: 23). Alfred continues by arguing that "Aboriginalism, with its roots in this dichotomizing essentialism, plays the perfect foil to the Euroamerican mentality. Settlers can remain who and what they are, and injustice can be reconciled by the mere allowance of the Other to become one of Us. What higher reward or better future is there than to be finally recognized as achieving the status of a European?" (Alfred, 2005: 135). Colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity are powerful tools in the ongoing defence of power inequalities that favour the dominant majority at the expense of Aboriginal peoples as they normalize a sense that the colonial other is by default inferior to the colonizer and as such requires the ongoing guardianship and dictation of the state. Tropes that are particularly instrumental in negotiating this power relation include the "infant colonial other" and the living fossil tropes. Bahba identifies the purpose of stereotypes (within colonial discourse) "to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and establish systems of administration and instruction" (1994: 101). It is in this function

that colonial tropes of identity are part of a larger "apparatus of power" (Bahba, 1994: 100).

    The Imaginary Indian by Daniel Francis (2004) makes several important claims and observations on how the dominant tropes of Aboriginal identity are purposeful and deeply colonial constructions, designed and repeated in accordance with a fundamental power imbalance between Aboriginal peoples and the non-Aboriginal majority. Francis contends that "The Indian is the invention of the European" and this central claim is an important starting point for the claims within this thesis (2004:4). The "Indian" constructed and framed in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems through both the radical Aboriginal activist and the natural Aboriginal victim is the product of Western colonial expectations and stereotypes. These expectations of Aboriginal identity are completely detached from their political and social context. Robertson and many other scholars contend that the Canadian state continues to be complicit in the propagation and regurgitation of these static categories of identity and colonial tropes in order to maintain the power imbalance that locks Aboriginal people into the subordinate and dependent position within intergovernmental relations (2004:4).

    Postcolonial theory demonstrates that "colonial power inequality and prejudicial attitudes have a lasting impact on politics and society that percolate through both public attitudes and validate the eminent position of Europeans and thereby legitimate the Colonial project as a whole" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 127). Postcolonial theory, whether analyzing cases in North America or in other regions around the world, analyzes the use of tropes to establish the colonial other as a foil to the dominant colonizer is frequently analyzed as a barometer to gauge the ongoing impact of colonialism on identity.

Important crosspollination is also found between postcolonial theory and poststructuralist thought, especially in relation to the analysis of racialized tropes of colonial identity. Neither the postcolonial nor poststructuralist literatures utilized within this thesis are written in vacuums and therefore both collections of literature contain a great deal of intersection, commonality and cross talk. Although the specific project of this thesis is an analysis of contemporary constructions of Aboriginal social problems in the visual discourse and in the resulting public inquiries, a broader collection of theoretical literature is instrumental as a springboard for the theoretical approach of this project.

The literature in the area of postcolonial theory intersects with poststructuralism, postmodernism, feminism and a variety of other critical lenses. Tangential to the project of this thesis, subaltern studies, including Gayatri Spivak's (1988) work also unpacks important issues of representation, identity, voice and agency. Although the themes and areas of inquiry for these theoretical perspectives and lenses are diverse, as critical perspectives they consistently problematize fixed binaries, unpack seemingly "natural" assumptions, expose invisible actors and destabilize power inequalities through meaningful critique and interrogation. There is a questioning and unsettled dynamism within these perspectives that are entirely productive to discourse analysis of Aboriginal social problems and public inquiries.

Orientalism and Colonial Identity Construction in Canada

Said's groundbreaking book *Orientalism* (1979) broadened the discourse of colonial theory to advance that identities must be viewed as social constructions built and

defended to some end of the dominant majority. Said forwards that colonial identity constructions are therefore not simply reflections of some objective reality. Said critically argues that in making the Oriental colonial other, the Western dominant majority was in fact attempting to perform, construct and reaffirm its own identity as superior (1979: 2). According to Said, and repeated frequently within the international postcolonial canon, to know and label the other is to know and understand the majority simultaneously (1979: 1-2). As Said contends, "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" (1979: 1-2). Said specifically deals with constructions of the Oriental other in popular mythology of the Orient and the Occident, but a number of his conclusions can be applied more broadly to account for the problematic and fiercely protected boundary between Us and Them in the North American colonial context as well. Said explains his concept of orientalism by noting that, "Orientalism was the distillation of essential ideas about the Orient-its sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness-into a separate and unchallenged coherence" (Said, 1979: 205). Said finds the depiction of the Oriental to be consistently animalistic, naïve, motivated by base appetites, hypersexualized and totally and irrecoverably dependent on the Colonizer for care and guidance (1979:12). Strikingly similar to the "Imaginary Indian" of North America (as identified by Francis, 2004 and King, 2012 among others), the Oriental other cannot be found or observed outside of the cultural construction and framing of the popular discourse and mythology of the dominant non-Aboriginal majority. Extending Said's concept of Orientalism to Aboriginal constructions in Canada was certainly not the

original intended application of the concept, but nonetheless it acts as an effective springboard for entering into an interrogation of how the constructions and tropes found within the discourse of Aboriginal social problems tap into broader narratives of meaningful contrast and hostile encounter between dominant colonizer and subordinate colonized Other.

Both the Aboriginal natural victim and the Aboriginal radical activist trope pick up on characteristics that Said identifies with Orientalism. Said, particularly in terms of gender, identifies the constructed innocence, ignorance, vulnerability and corruptibility of the Oriental that is particularly magnified in the construction of the Oriental She (1979:14). These traits are also applied to Aboriginal women to demonstrate how they are hyper vulnerable to victimization on the basis of their status as the colonial other alone (Jiwani, 2009:3). Due to their naiveté and vulnerability, Aboriginal women, like Said's Oriental women, are the ultimate subjects of male dominance and subordination. Not only does the construction of Aboriginal women indicate that they must be protected because they cannot protect themselves, but also that, they are the untainted, innocent, exotic and desirable possessions of non-Aboriginal men.

Said identifies the enormous degree of hyper sexualization and fetishism wrapped up in the discourse of Orientalism (1979: 188). The colonial other, constructed as a subordinate and lesser form of human, is unquestionably motivated by base appetites and impulses than the more advanced and refined colonizer. As such, the Oriental female is often depicted as blatantly sexual and deviant. This hyper sexuality, although seemingly in conflict with the concurrent construction of innocence and ignorance is actually heightened by it as it becomes the right and responsibility of White (dominant) men to

constrain and contain female sexuality. The construction of the Aboriginal natural victims frames female Aboriginal victimhood as inevitable not only because they are constructed as incapable of looking after themselves, but also because they are constructed as being complacent and willing victims, who through their blatant and deviant sexuality make themselves vulnerable and categorically prone to abuse and violation. Furniss points out that, "[t]he belief that sexual immorality and violence are inherent features of Aboriginal life- while completely unsupported by historical evidence- is often heard" (2001: 10). Furthermore, the construction of the Aboriginal whore/ prostitute in particular relates back to Said's analysis of fetishism within Orientalism as Aboriginal women are stereotyped as either the "Indian princess" or the "Indian whore" and are either an object of sexual desire and exotic curiosity or a constant threat to White man's morality and moral (dominant) society (Jiwani, 2009:3).

Said identifies the way in which the Oriental other is depicted as being socially disruptive, criminal and untrustworthy. The Oriental other, much like the colonial other of the Aboriginal in Canada is stereotypically a delinquent who is incapable of conforming to laws and expectations of dominant society. Said illustrates how in art and popular discourse there is a consistent narrative that Oriental other is sneaky, immoral and inevitably prone to criminality (1979: 286). The trope of the Aboriginal radical activist is anchored within this broader colonial prejudicial construction as any Aboriginal activist is likely to be framed as volatile, rage fueled and dangerous (This trope will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis). Even peaceful protest by Aboriginal people, through the framing of the media visual discourse is presented as a reaffirmation that the colonial other has always been and will always be outside of the

law and more broadly outside of moral and correct society (Corrigal-Brown and Myers,

2010: 332). Understanding and observing Aboriginal activism through the lens of the

colonial narrative of the unworthy and immoral colonial other dictates and triggers a

highly negative response that is in turn reflected in the Canadian visual discourse to hot

button Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries.

Derrida and the Construction of the Aboriginal Subject

Derrida's exploration of the subject/ object or viewer/ viewed binary is

particularly meaningful to the analysis of the construction and framing of Aboriginal

social problems found within the dominant visual discourse (1974: 35). The framing and

construction of the victim and the radical activist tropes within the discourse is a

concerted effort to cement a stereotypical and colonial caricature of Aboriginal peoples

within the frame of the photograph, not as an equal, but as an anonymous, powerless and

voiceless object available for observation and curiosity. These constructions exist

because of and for the observation and response of the dominant majority. Derrida

critiques how the subject and object are constructed as discrete and impenetrable

opposing positions (1974: 35). He dismisses the rigid binary of subject and object and

suggests that all identities are continually in a process of being determined and changed

(1974: 35). Instead, Derrida contends that in discourse, especially the process within

discourse of attempting to negotiate identities, these categories are increasingly infiltrated

and fluid (1974:35). Derrida rejects the proposition that one in a singular identity or

position and that all identities are interdependent and intersectional (1974: 35).

Furthermore, Derrida's argument that there is no such thing as "outside of text" (1974: 158) is compelling in analyzing where and how the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is anchored and immobilized within a larger framework (text) of settler /western dominance , colonial prejudice and subordination (see Chapter 7 for more). The images within the visual discourse, as only small interconnected components of a larger text demonstrate how the construction of Aboriginal social problems surpass the confines of the photograph frame. The viewer of the images of the visual discourse is as much a part of the construction as the Aboriginal object/ victim or Aboriginal object/ activist framed within the photograph.

Deleuze and Guattari and Postcolonial Theory in the Analysis of Identity Tropes

The decision to include Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari within this collection of theorists and literature may not seem like an obvious one. Many within Deleuzian theory and postcolonial theory including Miller (1993), Spivak (1988), and Holland (2003) have made numerous arguments for why the two just don't belong together, but for the purposes of this project, Deleuzo-Guattarian concepts are particularly useful. Arguments have been made that have contended that Deleuze and Guattari almost entirely ignore postcolonial theory (Bignall and Patton, 2010: 1). Some scholars have even pressed their case so far as to suggest that the pair are complicit in the continuance of colonial attitudes vis-à-vis their concepts of nomadicism and the nomad which some have read as a romanticized curiosity of Indigenous traditions and even as an expropriation (Bignall and Patton, 2010: 1 and Kaplan, 1996: 88). However these arguments are reductive and put

up unnecessary barriers to meaningful conversations across perspectives and backgrounds.

Considering postcolonial theory and Deleuzian theory at appropriate points in tandem is beneficial for this thesis and is critical to destabilizing the tropes and constructions that have become so normalized that they are almost invisible. Even if Deleuze and Guattari are not specifically speaking to colonial others, they are offering a powerful and rich critique of dichotomous thought, rigidity, hierarchy, boundaries and fixedness (1983: 238). These interjections are beneficial to postcolonial critiques in the same way they are beneficial to postmodern, poststructual or even posthuman analysis of modernity as well. Deleuze and Guattari through their work resist the constraining and artificial nature of modern thought and this larger criticism can be aptly applied to discourse analysis of Aboriginal social problems as well (1983: 236-240). Furthermore, a number of Deleuzo-Guattarian style critiques, concepts and propositions are routinely borrowed either intentionally or inadvertently within postcolonial theory such as explorations of multiple identities, haecceity, history and narrative (Bignall and Patton, 2010: 129).

Although, confessedly unlikely bedfellows to some, Deleuze and Guattari and postcolonial theorists share valuable perspectives and entryways into a new interrogation into the way in which the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries relate to the dominant tropes and constructions of lingering colonial attitudes. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming and hybridity teases out some central tenets of colonial theory that relate to this project (1983: 236). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari complicate identity, particularly at points

where identities come into contact with each other and in doing so, transform one another (1983:236). The colonial other is not a fixed category or a singular in the way that the framing and constructions of the visual discourse presents. Instead, the colonial other is a mythical trope that is a cumulative project of subordination and lingering colonial prejudice. However, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming illustrates that in recreating and projecting expectations of interactions and identity, the identity itself changes and molds through endogenous and exogenous pressure and stress (1983: 236-240). The visual discourse is a physical and discursive space where becoming moves at an almost undetectable pace. Imagery is repeated and normalized so commonly that it becomes difficult to detect the active shaping role that the visual discourse plays in defining power relations. The familiar imagery, although repetitive, has an enormous and constant influence on how the dominant majority understands both the excluded other and also what membership within the dominant majority looks like.

Deleuze and Guattari's problematizing and unsettling of the unquestioned dominant human subject also informs the analysis within this project of the seemingly fixed categories of subject/ object that the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems hinges on (1983: 236 see critique of totemism). The taken for granted centrality of the human subject in modern thought and discourse is inherently colonial in that a component part of the colonial project is naming the colonial other as a lesser man or subhuman. The other is characterized as closer to a beast than to the colonizer and through a symbolic and discursive effort, the colonization project works to dehumanize the other (Fanon, 1963: 8). By unsettling the centrality of the human subject, the discourse can be cracked open to hear previously ignored or silenced voices. By

contending that the centrality of the human subject is problematic, Deleuze and Guattari

are simultaneously deconstructing the colonial narrative of Colonial dehumanization.

Upending the central human subject renders the anthropomorphic and dehumanizing

strategies of the colonial project impotent. Toppling the human subject from the

hierarchical point of absolute collapses the power of comparing colonial others to animals

and brings the unchallenged authority of the colonial man under scrutiny.

Baudrillard, Simulacra and the Construction of Colonial tropes of Aboriginal Identity

Baudrillard's concept of simulacra intersects with colonial theory on several

levels, but for the purposes of this project, the most critical intersection is found in how

the simulacra, like the constructed Aboriginal victim or radical activist displaces and

erases "reality" or the original. In the hyper-real, the simulacra becomes more real than

the original and through this process, the construction/ simulacra becomes undetectable

and engendered (Baudrillard, 1981: 2). Baudrillard's example of Disneyland has now

firmly surpassed its role as a symbol and has instead moved into a condition of hyper

reality (1981: 12-14). In the case of the colonial other, the constructions are so familiar

and so intense that they become easier to understand and more recognizable than the

volatile and complicated identities and encounters that mark postcolonial identities.

Here, as Baudrillard recognizes with simulacra displacing their signifiers, the tropes of

Aboriginal identity used in relation to the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems

are displacing the initial Aboriginal social problem and all potential counter narratives.

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Baudrillard examines how and why the media functions to construct, frame and distort current events and furthermore, the implications the media's role has for public opinion and perceptions (1981: 81). Baudrillard identifies how both the message and the medium are equally important and interconnected in the media discourse (1981: 80-81). The persistence and dominance of certain tropes in regards to Aboriginal social problems serve as an illustrative example of Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony (1980: 145). According to Gramsci's concept of hegemony, society gives spontaneous consent to the ideas of the ruling class (1980: 145). As David Trigger argues, "Gramsci drew attention to the aspects of class rule in capitalist society that are non-coercive, in that they rest on consent engendered from the subordinate groups" (1992: 9). The ruling class develops hegemony by constructing a sense of reality that is in turn consented to by subordinated classes, allowing for a reproduction of this consented to construction of reality, which functions to maintain the existing power relations and imbalances. The way in which certain metanarratives and tropes have held dominance, while other opposing narratives and constructions are marginalized in the discourse indicates the centrality of the hegemon within the process of framing and construction as well. These tropes have become so normalized and have been consented to by the non-Aboriginal dominant majority throughout colonialism that they have now become the sort of "common sense" constructions that Gramsci describes (1980: 145)

The hegemonic tropes and constructions are then able to leverage their power to validate their continued dominance and in turn translate this authority in order to influence government responses. Fairclough argues that, "[t]he concept of hegemony implies the development in various domains of civil society (eg. work, education, leisure

activities) of practices which naturalize particular relations and ideologies, practices which are largely discursive" (1995: 94). Through this process it is possible for hegemonic tropes to have a meaningful impact on the inquiries of Aboriginal social problems. Hegemony extends to the media, where decisions on content, editing decisions, style and tone all reflect the cultural hegemon (Skea, 1993/4: 1). As Warren Skea contends, "[h]egemony, or the successful construction of popular consent, exists not only in the larger society and in professional vocations such as law and medicine, but also among journalists. The media elite are required to preserve and honour the political-economic system because their power and prestige depend on its success" (1993/4: 17). The framing of Aboriginal social problems and the use of colonial tropes reveal the nature of the power imbalance between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Canada. As Bloomaert and Bulcaen contend, "[t]he way in which discourse is being represented, respoken, or rewritten sheds light on the emergence of new orders of discourse, struggles over normativity, attempts at control, and resistance against regimes of power" (2000:449).

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities relates to the importance and centrality of identity construction to broader narratives of national identity, membership in community and constructed and imagined difference (1991: 4-6). The framing of Aboriginal social problems continues to be a question of cementing inside and outside, or to put it into Anderson's language, the mutual recognition of belonging in the imagined community of Canada (1991: 6). Taking non-Aboriginal Canada as an imagined community allows for a more thorough investigation of what is at stake in the continuous effort to repeat and validate the dominant tropes found within the visual

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discourse of Aboriginal social problems.   The way in which individuals within the dominant majority relate to one another as mutually accepted members of the imagined community and also how they relate to the excluded colonial other is negotiated through symbolic cues, such as the dominant tropes found within the discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries.

A similar concept to colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity can be seen in Terry Goldie's concept of "commodities" (1995:175). Goldie analyzes the "commodities" of representation of sex, violence, orality, mysticism, and the prehistoric in relation to Indigenous populations in Australia (1995:175). Although Goldie doesn't present these "commodities" as tropes, their function is very similar to the tropes found within North American postcolonial theory. Goldie describes the power of these commodities in articulating the colonial other by contending that they are "poles of attraction and repulsion, temptation by the dusky maiden and fear of the demonic violence of the fiendish warrior" (1995: 175). These commodities, or elsewhere tropes are the discursive signposts that demonstrate the lasting and detrimental role of colonial racialized identity construction on contemporary states.

The literature covered represents a mere crumb of the enormous variety and range across poststructuralist and postcolonial theory and is inevitability not done justice within the scope of this project. However, the ethos stemming from these critical lenses and theoretical works that will be highlighted throughout this thesis is that all identities, categories, exclusions, inclusions, symbols and discourses are the project of ongoing cultural and social construction. There is, as Derrida contends, no outside of text or outside of frame and within the framing of Aboriginal social problems. The narratives

and dominant tropes are as much a reflection of the non-Aboriginal subject as the victim or activist object within the visual discourse. The non-North American literature cited, although not directly addressing the colonial experience in Canada, are complimentary to the existing literature and colonial theory in North America that deal more directly with the construction of Aboriginal identity and social problems in Canada and will serve as an anchor and foundation for the analysis of this project. By scanning a broad panorama with these international theorists and perspectives, narrowing the lens through the contemporary North American colonial theory and finally focusing in on specific cases of Aboriginal social problems that resulted in public inquiries, it is clear to see that lingering colonial attitudes, as embodied in the dominant tropes of the Aboriginal natural victim and radical activist continue to have a powerful impact on public perception of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries.

The Aboriginal Victim and the Radical Activist

This thesis builds on the existing postcolonial theory of identity and racialized tropes of the colonial other but introduces two new overarching tropes distinctive to the construction of Aboriginality in Canada. These two tropes are the Aboriginal natural victim and the radical activist, both of which appear frequently within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries. These two tropes are worthy of further analysis as they are dominant features of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries. Where the "Noble Savage' or the sexualized and exotic "Indian Princess" are often presented as a visual cue

for sympathy, curiosity or entertainment, the radical activist and natural victim fulfill a more blatantly political role within the visual discourse.

These two tropes define Aboriginal peoples within the visual discourse as at once helpless inevitable victims of their circumstance and simultaneously unreasonable and violent obstacles to productive society for the government to contain and diffuse. The natural victim trope validates the lingering colonial attitude that Aboriginal peoples are wholly incapable of managing their own interests. On another level, the victim trope presents Aboriginal social problems as inevitable circumstance and the organic result of their natural condition. As such, Aboriginal social problems are depoliticized, Aboriginal "victims" are stripped of their agency and perhaps most politically charged, the state is removed from culpability within the continued social justice issues that impact Aboriginal peoples across Canada. Through the lens of the natural victim trope, Aboriginal social problems are framed and constructed as comparable to any other natural disaster. This is perhaps at its most blatant in relation to the visual discourse of Aboriginal reserves, that focuses on such things as the lack of access to potable water, adequate housing and essential nutrition. The victimhood trope is strikingly similar to that of famine victims within Sub-Saharan Africa, as described by Sorenson, in his research on the treatment of famine victims within the Western visual discourse (1991: 228). In both cases, the victim is framed as helpless, suffering and entirely dependent on Western (and Colonial) intervention (Sorenson, 1991:228). Notably, in either the famine discourse of Africa or Aboriginal social problems in Canada, the political context from which these conditions exist are footnotes at best. In this respect, the trope of the natural victim legitimizes Cairns' observed "well-meaning paternalism" (2000: 15) and also an

ongoing racialized stereotype that Aboriginal victimization is to be expected and unpreventable.

The radical activist trope exists alongside the natural victim and is invoked within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries as a way of demonstrating the illegitimacy of Aboriginal political agency and civil disobedience. The way in which instances of radical Aboriginal activism, including occupations at Ipperwash, Oka and Caledonia are framed within the visual discourse and eventually within the public inquiries that often result from these events rely heavily on the trope of the radical activist that threatens and inconveniences the law abiding dominant society. The use of roadblocks is important to this trope, where radical activists, in a highly visible and measurable way are obstacles that prevent the efficient and normal activity of non-Aboriginals (Lischke and McNab, 2005: xvii).

The radical activist trope is illustrated utilizing combatant Aboriginal protestors, frequently carrying weapons, concealing their faces and dressed in military fatigues (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 16). The sense that this trope invokes is that radical activists are simply violent and unpredictable criminals. To be feared and neutralized, the trope of the radical activist detracts from the underlying social justice issues, rights claims and advocacy housed within Aboriginal activism and civil disobedience. What emerges from cases such as Oka is not a thoughtful reflection on the land and rights based conflict that was at its core, but instead an image of an Aboriginal man, nose to nose with a member of the armed forces, both dressed as warriors (See Chapter 3). This trope fosters a sense that Aboriginal activism is always violent and criminal which is a direct attack on the validity and legitimacy of their activism. As Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Ricard

contend, Aboriginal " actors' concerns are illegitimate, not merely because they are criminals but also because as criminals they do not adhere to the rules of community membership the way other citizens do", placing Aboriginal protestors firmly outside of the membership in the imagined community (2010: 54). Instead of viewing Aboriginal activism as political agency and a form of response to lingering colonial attitudes and institutionalized inequalities, Aboriginal activism through this trope closer resembles the visual discourse of crime and deviance.

The tropes of the natural victim and the radical activist intersect with a number of the colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity found within postcolonial theory. They are instruments of the continuance of lingering colonial attitudes and the maintenance of status quo power relations that marginalize Aboriginal peoples. These two tropes, along with the tropes explored within this chapter demonstrate the deeply political consequences of persistent colonial tropes on the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries.

Chapter 2: The Trope of Aboriginal Natural Victimhood

One of the most common tropes within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in Canada is that of the Aboriginal victim. In Robert Harding's content analysis of Aboriginal articles in Canada, he found that a victim stereotype was found in 44% of articles and a warrior stereotype was found in 31% of articles (Harding, 2005: 322). As Harding describes, the two tropes of the victim and the radical activist are the most common constructions found in his research (Harding, 2005: 321). In the articles Harding analyzed, 34% were framed in such a way to present Aboriginal peoples as "survivors" and victims (2005: 321). The victimhood trope has many distinctive features which are immediately recognizable in terms of visual composition, style and utilization of certain symbols. The most important component of the trope of Aboriginal victimhood lies in its inherent commentary on power and powerlessness.

The Aboriginal victim trope embodies connected colonial assumptions surrounding victimization, vulnerability and weakness of Aboriginal peoples. Through symbolic representation, the Aboriginal victim is completely stripped of their agency and individual identity (Krebs, 2011: 325). They become solely a visual cue of Aboriginal social problems in Canada. According to the trope of Aboriginal victimhood, "numerous stories entrenched this image of Aboriginals as poverty stricken, drug-addicted victims of violence" (Jiwani, 2009: 6). The trope of victimhood reiterates colonial understandings of Aboriginal dependency and weakness. As Pile and Thrift suggest, "the individual is mapped as a subject through practices of the body and subjectivity; practices which come to be seen as natural through spatial referents, such as position, movement, practice, encounter, vision" (1995:48). Through the utilization of the Aboriginal victim image, the

actual subjects of the images are wrenched from their context and are artificially

constructed as timeless, nameless, voiceless illustrations of suffering. Harding argues

that by "unhinging the present from the past in its coverage of contemporary Aboriginal

issues, the news media perpetuate damaging stereotypes of Aboriginal people and create

a supportive environment for state structures and practices that reproduce material and

social inequality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people" (2006:206). The

constructed Aboriginal victims in the visual discourse of public inquiries and royal

commissions become symbols of powerlessness and weakness and are referential of

colonial power relations. Their very presence within these inquiries reinforces existing

power imbalances.

Sympathy, the Victim Trope and the Stripping of Agency

A major component of the power of the natural victim trope is the role of

sympathy and guilt. The trope identifies victimization of Aboriginal peoples as an

inevitable but regrettable reality. By invoking this trope, there is a sense of sympathy

expressed in the dominant discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their related

public inquiries, but nonetheless, the trope functions to limit the voice of Aboriginal

peoples as political actors. Krebs contends that the there exists a "relationship between

sympathy and the stripping of agency" in the treatment of Aboriginal peoples within the

dominant discourse (2011: 325). Krebs contends that lurking just below the surface of

the dominant discourse of Aboriginal social problems in Canadian media is a "honey-

toned pit of sympathy for those who cannot help themselves, who are victims of

circumstances beyond their control—but not beyond the control of the Canadians who came to help them" (2011: 326). This analysis is applicable to understanding how the trope of the Aboriginal natural victim functions to sustain lingering colonial attitudes and power relations. Sympathy without culpability, victims without a clear or intentional victimizer; the trope serves the purpose of demonstrating that not only are Aboriginal peoples universally and inevitability victimized, they are victimized simply by circumstance, not by any concrete social or political inequalities. In this way, the natural victim trope is reminiscent of the construction of famine victims in Sub-Saharan Africa identified by Sorenson (1991: 228). In both cases, there is an assumption of "natural causes" to their victimization and virtually no indication of any underlying structural and political causes for the conditions they are subjected to (Sorenson, 1991: 228). Sorenson explains the process of "naturalization" within the visual discourse as how the imagery effectively evacuates any political context in favour of highlighting a seemingly natural cause (Sorenson, 1991: 225).

The Victim Trope and Orientalism

A major component of the Aboriginal victimhood trope relates to Edward Said's concept of Orientalism in which Said comments on how the colonizing state constructs the "colonial other" through assigned characteristics of ignorance, overt sexuality, helplessness, primitivism, irrationality, submissive behaviour and dependency (Said, 1979:26). As Valerie Walkerdine suggests, "Edward Said argued in *Orientalism* that those Western stories of the Orient told us more about the fantasies of the West than

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anything about the East" (1995:317). Said's concept of Orientalism is well exemplified by the media framing and construction of Aboriginal victimhood in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems. The images produce a sense of Aboriginality that deeply reflects the orientalist perspective of the colonial other. As Walkerdine suggests, orientalism is intertextual- both a productive process of constructing the inside and the outside of the frame in which both the colonizer and colonized other sides of the binary are created (1995: 317).

Said contends that, "the sense of Western power over the Orient is taken for granted as having the status of scientific truth" (Said, 1979:46). This taken for granted nature of power inequalities is also found in the treatment of Aboriginal peoples of Canada as the colonial other. The process of orientalism can be seen in how, as Said comments, "they characterize either attractive, familiar, desirable virtues or menacing, peculiar, disorderly defects" (Said, 1979:47). Said makes the important point that orientalism does not solely function to construct difference and inequality between the Occident and the Orient, but also functions "as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other" (Said, 1979:48). Said's analysis is directly relevant to an analysis of tropes of Aboriginal identity within public inquiries because the tropes of the victim and the radical activist, as Said similarly finds with the Oriental, are taken for granted within the visual discourse as near-truth. They are accepted and totally normalized, although they are prejudicial and unrealistic. Said's analysis of how the process of Orientalism validates the West's role in containing and controlling the Oriental Other rings true with how colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity validate the state's warden role over Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Composition Choices Within the Visual Discourse of Aboriginal Public Inquiries

The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems reflects the trope of Aboriginal victimhood in how the images that make up the discourse, as seemingly frozen scenes or moments of victimhood, are composed. Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes make a distinction in their discourse of analysis of news coverage of Aboriginal protest between the manifest and latent levels of messaging cultivated through framing (2012: 225). The latent level of messaging found in the framing of Aboriginal social problems is found in the composition choices made to create the images of the visual discourse (Corrigal-Brow and Wilkes, 2012: 225). Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes note that, "[a]t the manifest level, framing occurs by selecting which individuals are shown and what these individuals are shown to be doing"(2012: 226). Overwhelmingly, Aboriginal people are photographed in a static position or pose, meaning that they are frequently represented in seated, lying down or standing positions (Harding, 2005: 221). The Aboriginal victim is symbolically and physically immobile in the visual discourse. These fixed positions also work to strip the object/victim object of power and agency as they are permanently immobilized and passive in the visual record. Frozen by the construction and frame placed upon them and as an unnamed and unknown object within the visual record, there is no opportunity for dialogue. The Aboriginal victim is effectively immobilized. Due to their immobilization through the visual record, there is no opportunity for the Aboriginal victim to refute their position, forcing them into passivity. Immobilization removes any

opportunity to challenge the power imbalance which lingers from colonial systems of power imbalance and marginalization.

Through the construction of the Aboriginal victimhood trope, the natural victim within the images of the visual discourse loses individual identity and is disempowered. Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes find camera angle and the gaze of the Aboriginal person being photographed (and their relative size) to be important visual cues that establish the power or powerlessness being communicated through the image (2012: 226). Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes suggest that, "camera angle, whether the subject is looking at or away from the camera, and the relative size of the subject in relation to other subjects all serve to communicate underlying meanings about the power of different individuals with a photograph" (2012: 226). These very subtle decisions in composition are important cues that establish the trope of the natural victim. By utilizing the composition of the images to indicate the subordinate position of the natural victim, images become silent affirmations of the existing power relation- Aboriginal victims are the helpless and vulnerable wards of the state.

The composition of the images of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems also establishes an anonymity of the individuals within the discourse. The trope of the natural victim renders the photographed Aboriginal peoples interchangeable and homogenous. The destruction of the individual through the trope results in Aboriginal victims being seen only as "a people", not individuals, and more importantly, not independent political actors with independent identities and agency (Patterson and Fullerton, 2010: 183).   As Said finds within Orientalism, Aboriginal social problems are likewise seen as removed and distanced from "human experience" and it is inconceivable

that Aboriginal social problems may in fact represent elements of human experience that can be and are experienced beyond Aboriginal communities alone (Said, 1979:328).

Gendering the Victim Trope

Gender also plays a critical component in the construction of the Aboriginal victimhood trope in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems. Aboriginal women and the Aboriginal girl child are overrepresented in the photographs that depict victimization and suffering (Jiwani, 2009:5). Jiwani comments that, "Aboriginal women are largely portrayed as abject victims of poverty, their lives marked by alcohol and drug addictions, homelessness, high infant mortality and morbidity rates, greater incidence of HIV, Hepatitis infections and gynecological cancers. In effect, they are represented as one of the most hopeless segments of society" (2010:6). The visual discourse connects the Aboriginal victim with the female victim in order to exploit a double layer of victimhood and marginalization. As noted in the report from RCAP, "The stereotyping and devaluing of Aboriginal women, a combination of racism and sexism, are among the most damaging of attitudes that find expression in Canadian society" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 2:57). There is a common treatment of gender within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in order to establish Aboriginal women as the most helpless and vulnerable examples of the Aboriginal victimhood trope. Anderson and Robertson comment that through the visual discourse, "the press tells stories of violence against Aboriginal women by constructing them as weak, backward, sexualized objects- anonymous replaceable bodies" (2011: 205).

The female victim is particularly important in the visual discourse in projecting a sense of responsibility and custodial care over the female victim. According to myths found in the patriarchal understandings of gender relations, men are obligated and feel a sense of duty to protect women as they are viewed as weak, vulnerable and unable to help themselves (Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 46). Myths of colonialism and racial superiority only further aggravate this "white man's burden" of saving the lowly Aboriginal woman (Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 55). Gender is particularly critical in the framing of Aboriginal social problems as "Aboriginal women, marked both by race and gender, as proverbial canaries in the coal mine of Canadian inequality" become symbolic of the multiple intersections of inequality and victimization that are represented in the media construction (Anderson and Robertson, 20111 :192). The trope of Aboriginal victimhood, by utilizing images of women and girl-children, is able to invoke the construction of femininity as being inherently weak, helpless, dependent and reliant on men for protection, support and guardianship. The patriarchal binary between the archetypal masculine and feminine characteristics are strikingly similar to the binary of characteristics that the media framing of Aboriginal social problems assigns to the Aboriginal victim and the non-Aboriginal protector. One case where the intersection between gendered and colonial racialized constructions of Aboriginal women's identity is particularly blatant is in the case of the Missing/ Murdered Aboriginal women and the Pickton murder case. As Jiwani argues, "symbolic and discursive violence was used to mediate representations of the missing and murdered Aboriginal women" (2010: 1).

Said tracks a similar intersectionality between gender and Orientalism when he recognizes that "women are usually the creatures of a male power-fantasy" (Said, 1979:

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207). The subordinate position of the "colonial other" is magnified when it intersects

with gender norms surrounding archetypal characteristics of femininity and female

sexuality (Said, 1979: 207). Within Orientalism, the characteristics applied to the

Oriental other are further demarcated along gender difference too as female Oriental

others are constructed as bodies of "unlimited sensuality; they are more or less stupid,

and above all they are willing" (Said, 1979:207).

The willingness of the female victim is of central importance in the trope of

Aboriginal victimhood as it constructs Aboriginal women and girls as being complacent

in their perceived victimization. The gendered construction of the Oriental other, or in

this case, the Aboriginal victim feeds into how, as Said recognized, "the oriental was

linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor)

having in common an identity, best described as lamentably alien" (Said, 1979:207).

Said describes the undesirables within Western society as "lamentably alien" in order to

indicate that they were pitiable, but deplorable. Said's language awards a sense of

inevitability and permanency in their condition: they have always been and will always

be, alien. Said forms a bridge here between the construction of the Oriental as alien and

the regrettably similar foreignness of undesirables in Western society. Based on their

race and gender, Aboriginal women are assumed to already be "lamentably alien" and as

such, viewed as much more susceptible and vulnerable to violence, abuse, substance

abuse issues, mental health problems and deviance. The construction of Aboriginal

victimhood in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems presumes complacency

on the part of Aboriginal women, based on their race and gender. Gender becomes an

essential visual cue in the construction of the trope of Aboriginal victimhood.

The construction of the Aboriginal female victim is striking in the discourse of the Highway or Tears, the murder trial of William Pickton and the broader social problem of substance abuse, homelessness and prostitution on Vancouver's downtown Eastside (Jiwani and Young, 2006: 896). In most of the images utilized in the visual discourse in relation to these themes, women are framed as the victims and also criminals within the images (Jiwani and Young, 2006: 898). A number of the images present a double layer of victimization, where the surviving female family member is photographed mourning the loss of a victimized female family member (Moores, 2006: 50). This frame within a frame (literally and metaphorically) amounts to a sense of heightened victimization and vulnerability that is directly tied to gendered difference.

Yasmin Jiwani and Mary Lynn Young, in their study of news coverage of the murdered and missing women of Vancouver's East Hastings neighbourhood highlights one component of the visual discourse associated with this case: the mug shots of the missing women (2006: 898). A poster was developed by the police to circulate widely and the poster featured the mug shots of missing women, taken during previous arrests (England, 2000: 97). Jennifer England notes that in the spring prior to the mugs hot poster being distributed by police, the *Vancouver Sun* published 18 of the images with the caption, "The Missing: Tragic Portraits of Women from the Downtown Eastside" (2000: 97). England identifies the similarities between the imagery of missing and murdered women in the visual discourse and the imagery of a Wanted poster (England, 2000: 97). Jiwani and Young argue that because the photographs of the missing women were in fact mug shots, being circulated by the police, the missing and murdered women were inextricably linked to criminality and deviance (2006: 898). Jiwani and Young make an

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important observation in how the type of imagery utilized reflects how the victims of violence are being characterized and will ultimately shape public responses to the violence (2006: 898). In the case of the murdered and missing women-described as drug-addicted homeless prostitutes and captured in the visual discourse by mug shots- the narrative of this case became about women at risk, who by their own criminality, became victimized (Jiwani, 2006: 898). The Pickton visual discourse in particular relies on a framing of Aboriginal female victims as both being at heightened vulnerability for violence and abuse at the hands of predators such as Pickton, but also places the Aboriginal female victim as a vector of racial and gendered difference that culminates in heightened susceptibility for social conditions that place put them at risk for such things as drug abuse, homelessness and prostitution (Jiwani and Young, 2006: 898). The Pickton visual discourse is revealing of the way in which the visual discourse both reflects and impact public opinions and attitudes that intersect class, gender and race (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 200).

The Indian Princess/ Slut Binary and the Willing Victim

The complacency or the "willing victim" that is constructed around Aboriginal women in the visual discourse can be seen clearly in the images associated with the stereotyped opposing characters of the Aboriginal "slut" and the Aboriginal princess (Henry and Tator, 2002:224). Anderson and Robertson illustrate that "Newspapers have long imagined Aboriginal women within the stereotypical binary of the Indian princess/ Indian "squaw" (2011**:**193). The construction of the Aboriginal slut is fundamentally

racist and belittling. As Garcia-Del Moral contends, "the civilized/ uncivilized divide between white settlers and Aboriginal peoples was hinged to the conceptualization of Aboriginal women as 'dirty slut drudges' who threaten the morality and health of the colonial order" (Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 38). Jiwani explains the stereotype of the slut in relation to its foil, the "Indian Princess" by arguing that "the slut represents the 'primitive' woman relegated to servicing the sexual needs of white settlers, whereas the princess represents the good and rescuable Aboriginal woman who could be tamed through Christian conversion and domestication" (Jiwani, 2009: 4). This stereotype centers on the assumption that Aboriginal women are an immediate threat to Western morality. Jiwani notes that, "In popular culture, representations of Aboriginal women have oscillated between Indian princesses and lascivious sluts" (2010:3).

They are viewed as wholly corrupt, amoral, licentious, criminal, slothful, animalistic, volatile and deviant. Through the media discourse, news narratives "reposition Aboriginal women as criminals, victims of sexual crimes, militant rebels and as inassimilable others" (Jiwani, 2009: 1). Aboriginal peoples are arbitrarily labelled as "incapable of self-control" within the media framing of Aboriginal social problems (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 250). Often, this construction is characterized by reference to substance abuse, abnormal sexual appetite, corrupting influence on White men and total and complete incompatibility with moral and Western society (Jiwani, 2009: 1; Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 250). Anderson and Robertson argue that the construction of the Aboriginal "slut" acts as a symbolic roadblock and anathema to the project of decolonization (2011**:**193).

According to this stereotype, Aboriginal women are inclined to criminality based on their race alone. Anderson and Robertson comment that "the idea that Canadians of Aboriginal ancestry epitomize moral depravity is as old as the press in Canada" (2011: 7). This traditional invocation of the stereotype of criminal and deviant Aboriginal women in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems reinforces the lingering colonial attitudes that intersect with gender archetypes. The intersection of gendered and racialized stereotypes culminates in the symbolic representation of the deviant Aboriginal woman in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems. Jiwani notes, that in general, "stories seem to imply that Aboriginal peoples have an essentialized proclivity to violence" meaning that violence by and against Aboriginal peoples did not only appear "normal" but also inevitable (Jiwani, 2009: 6). The trope of Aboriginal victimhood leads to a sense that victimization is understandable when Aboriginal peoples have a proclivity to violence themselves (Jiwani, 2009: 6). As Jiwani contends, "[t]he resulting impression is one of 'blameworthiness'" (2010: 7). According to this construction of female deviance, a common sentiment found in colonial constructions of female Aboriginal identity found that the victimization of Aboriginal women was often a case of them getting what they brought on themselves or deserved (Jiwani, 2009: 4). Sherene Razack comments that there exists "a conflation between Aboriginal woman and prostitute and an accompanying belief that when they encountered violence, Aboriginal women simply got what they deserved" (2002:130). As both prone to criminality and categorically regarded as inferior, Aboriginal women are constructed as less than innocent victims and transcend into the construction of the "slut." As Jiwani argues, "[i]t is the connection between this devalued status and culpability that ultimately marks Aboriginal women as

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less deserving or unworthy victims" (2001: 4). The conflation between Aboriginal woman and prostitute is a powerful and long standing colonial stereotype, which Jiwani explains "has been an entrenched feature of the Canadian moral economy and widely distributed through popular culture" (2010: 4).

This construction of the "slut" and their willing victimization directly relates to the trope of Aboriginal victimhood found within the Missing Women Inquiry and the Pickton murder trial in B.C. The visual discourse of this inquiry was populated by images of the Aboriginal missing women, with special focus paid on their "high risk lifestyle" as drug users, homeless people and prostitutes (Jiwani, 2009: 5). Garcia Del-Moral notes in her research on Canadian media, "the eroticization of women's experience of violence" in the case of the missing and murdered Aboriginal women along the Highway of Tears and in the Pickton murder trial was a feature of the mainstream media coverage of these cases (2011: 54). The treatment of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in the visual discourse highlighted their "high-risk behaviour" and eroticized the violence they experienced are characteristics of the natural victim trope. The predictable presentation of Aboriginal women according to the trope of the natural victim makes these cases newsworthy and further highlights the vulnerability of Aboriginal peoples (particularly women) without placing the blame on non-Aboriginal society, or more importantly on the lasting impact of colonialism.

Jiwani's quantitative research on newspaper articles in the *Globe and Mail* between January 1 2000 and September 7 2007 about Aboriginal women found that, "the articles clustered around the following themes: violence against Aboriginal women, dissension in Aboriginal communities between the women and the band leaders,

Aboriginal women asking (read demanding) for funding or protesting government decisions, custody cases involving Aboriginal children, Aboriginal women's vulnerable health status and high fertility rates, and the benevolence of various levels of government in responding to Aboriginal issues" (Jiwani, 2009: 5). Jiwani's findings indicate a concentration in this newspaper's stories on Aboriginal women relating to Aboriginal women as either victims or wards of the state. All of the clusters of these stories indicate a sense that Aboriginal women live in a world that is far different to the experiences of the majority of Canadians and that they are in need of state protection as a result of their perceived tragic circumstances.

Alternatively, the construction of the "Indian Princess" is at the surface level a much more romanticized construction of Aboriginal women, but ultimately it is no less colonial and patriarchal than the Aboriginal slut construction (Alia, 2012: 35; Deloria, 1994: 53). The Indian Princess, perhaps most obviously rendered through the Disney movie and literary character construction of Pocahontas is the epitome of White/ Western male fetishization of Aboriginal women (King, 2012: 40; Deloria, 1969: 27). The Indian Princess is submissive, modest, beautiful, sexually innocent and noble (King, 2012: 40)**.** This stereotype connects to the Aboriginal victim trope as they are framed as damsels in distress, nobility of a dying race that are ranked and rewarded for their beauty. Anderson and Robertson find that the Indian Princess construction is "not just unthreatening but sexually attractive as a paternalistic and patriarchal construction" (2011**:**193). Delicate and innocent, the Indian Princess construction demonstrates that Aboriginal women appear to occupy a conflicting moral and social position. Aboriginal women through the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries

simultaneously are constructed as noble and innocent as the Indian princess and quite conflictingly also as lowly and deviant as the "slut", depending on the nature of the social problem being highlighted.

Morality/ Immorality and the Us and Them Binary in Colonial Identity Construction

Garcia-Del Moral, in her comparative analysis of the media discourse in Mexico and Canada on murdered and missing women, argues that the construction of murdered and missing women (Indigenous women in Mexico and Aboriginal women in Canada) is essential in order to defend the boundary between the colonial Us and Them (2011: 35). Garcia Del-Moral contends that, "[g]iven its fragility, this boundary must constantly be redrawn, and violently so, through sensationalist and increasingly graphic accounts that mark Others as worthless and disposable in life and death" (2011: 35). White women and Canada are constructed as "clean and proper subjects through these Othered women" (Garcia Del-Moral, 2011: 54).

Framing Aboriginal victims as being diametrically opposed to members of the non-Aboriginal majority solidifies the pre-existing colonial boundary between Us and Them or Same and Other (Oktar, 2001: 313). The Us and Them binary is also important as it situates the colonial non-Aboriginal male as the caretaker or warden of the helpless and hopeless colonial other, who without Euro-Canadian intervention is exceedingly vulnerable to all forms of physical and sexual violence and immorality (Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 38). As Garcia-Del Moral argues, "the production of difference is one of the most salient features of colonial relations" (2011: 38). It is through this repeated and

blatant defining of difference that colonial tropes such as the Aboriginal natural victim persist.

Dehumanizing the Aboriginal Victim

A powerful component that is particularly evident in the treatment of murdered and missing women on the Highway of Tears and the Pickton murder trial is the process of dehumanizing the Aboriginal women and subjects of the discourse (Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 54). As Garcia- Del Moral notes, "[t]his sensationalist way of covering theses stories goes beyond undermining the seriousness of the crimes and negating social responsibility for them: it is part of the ongoing process through which these women are dehumanized" (2011: 54). Instead of "victimless crimes", in the visual discourse, missing and murdered Aboriginal women are constructed as "crimeless victims" who are less than human. This is accomplished through the glorification of violence against these women, a sensationalism of the story as entertainment instead of serious criminal offences and the characterization of Aboriginal victims not just as fallen women, but as women who behave like animals and brought their suffering on themselves (Garcia- Del Moral, 2011: 54). Gender alone places Aboriginal women at a subverted position relative to men, but the added layer of colonial inequality based on their Aboriginality means that these women become supravictims of both race and gender (MacMillan, 2009:42). Where race, gender and other vectors of inequality converge on a particular group of people, in this case low income Aboriginal women, Lorraine MacMillan's concept of supravictimization addresses how these women face a heightened level of subordination

and prejudicial treatment (MacMillan, 2009: 42). Pair this supravictimization with substance abuse, chronic homelessness, mental health issues and unemployment and suddenly the Aboriginal women of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver are dehumanized to a point where their victimization becomes an inevitable symptom of their social position.

Gender is an important component of how the trope of Aboriginal victimhood is constructed within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems. Images of Aboriginal social problems, including the images of women associated with the Murdered/Missing Aboriginal women case and the Pickton murder trial are iconic (Jiwani, 2009: 9). As Jiwani argues, "[l]ables such as 'drug-addicts', 'alcoholics', and 'prostitutes' then carry enormous semiotic weight freighting the iconic image of Aboriginal women as both hopeless and helpless" (2010: 9). Immediately recognizable, victimized Aboriginal women are important symbols within the colonial trope of the natural victim.

The Lazy Indian and Aboriginal Victimhood Tropes

The sentiment of Aboriginal peoples as willing victims, complacent in the injustices and social disorder represented in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is connected to a further stereotype that John Lutz recognizes in the construction of the "Lazy Indian" trope (2009: 7). Here, not only are Aboriginal peoples victims of crime, abuse, poverty and social deviance, but they are also universally unwilling to participate in labour and the Western capitalist economy (Lutz, 2009: 31).

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The "Lazy Indian" further emphasizes that Aboriginal people as a whole are also culpable for their "social problems" as they are racialized as being slothful and overwhelmingly less productive than non-Aboriginals (Lutz, 2009: 36). Lutz identifies that the "Lazy Indian" trope acted as a validation for state policies towards Aboriginal people (2008: 36). Lutz contends that, "[s]o long as "Indians" were defined as "lazy" or "vanishing" (preferably both), their displacement by the virile, enterprising white race was seen as legitimate (2008: 36). Lutz also recognizes the role of the "Drunken Indian" trope played in demonstrating the "otherness" of Aboriginal people and in explaining their marginalization (2008: 88). Lutz finds the "Drunken Indian" and "Lazy Indian" tropes were commonplace in the characterization of Aboriginal peoples and in relation to their role within the labour force (2008: 88). By extension, Aboriginal peoples in poverty, homeless, unemployment and alcohol abuse would be seen as inevitable circumstances according to the normalization of these two tropes.

Furthermore, the Aboriginal victim is often photographed against a scene of social discord, loss and entropy. For example, the corner of Main and Hastings in Vancouver's Downtown Lower Eastside that Calhune uses as an example of a location frequently used in photographs depicting the victimization of Aboriginal women in this neighbourhood is a typical and highly emotive setting where homelessness, substance abuse and poverty are evident (2003: 592). Calhune notes that this particularly frequently photographed location has been nicknamed the corner of Pain and Wasting (in place of Main and Hastings) (2003: 592). In this nickname, it becomes clear that more than a neighbourhood, the Vancouver's East Hastings has become a space for constructing and framing victimization, including the victimization of Aboriginal peoples. Frequently

utilized backdrops include collapsing buildings, garbage, polluted natural resources, sites

of violence or other manmade and natural spaces of insecurity, such as the dilapidated

low income housing and dirty alleys of East Hastings (Calhune, 2003: 592). These

backdrops stand as powerful metaphorical devices in bolstering the trope of Aboriginal

victimhood as it allows for an immediate visual association between the collapse and

breakdown of the setting with the perceived collapse and breakdown within Aboriginal

social communities. Razack refers to these places as being "spaces of degeneracy"

(1998: 337). Razack identifies a space of degeneracy as locations where assumptions

surrounding the other (in terms of race, class, sex etc.) culminate to make people within

these spaces appear worthless and hopeless (1998: 337). Identity, particularly the

construction of the identity of the colonial other is advanced by constructions of space,

especially spaces that are unlike those experienced by the dominant majority. As

Osborne notes, "abstractions of identity are often narrated in mythic narratives that are

grounded in iconic sites" (2006: 153). These sites, through their frequent deployment in

the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems have become "iconic" (Osborne, 2006:

153). Consumers of Canadian media will likely be able to conjure an image in their

minds of a space that is immediately recognizable as being a site of Aboriginal social

problems; the reserve, the residential school, East Hastings; and the like. All of the

spaces in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems conform to the trope of

Aboriginal victimhood by demonstrating a direct collision between Aboriginal

victimization and places within Canada that are framed as dangerous, ugly, frightening

and damaged.

Space, Setting and the Victim Trope

Said finds space, location and geography also important in his concept of Orientalism, particularly in the metaphorical and physical distancing between the Orient and the Occident (1979: 201). He comments that, "The boundary notion of East and West, the varying degrees of projected inferiority and strength, the range of work done, the kinds of characteristic features ascribed to the Orient: all these testify to a willed imaginative and geographic division made between East and West, and lived through during many centuries" (Said, 1979: 201). This connection between social problems and physical setting in the visual discourse works to increase the power and consistency of the trope of Aboriginal victimhood in relation to Aboriginal social problems.

Aboriginal victimhood exists outside of the bounds of the imagined community of "Canadianness" (Henry and Tator, 2002: 224). As Henry and Tator suggest, Aboriginal peoples are constructed and framed in the visual media discourse "as existing outside the symbolic boundaries of the imagined community of Canada" (Henry and Tator, 2002: 224). This exclusion is represented through a number of stylistic and visual techniques within the discourse of Aboriginal social problems and is further demonstrated in the language and discourse of the resulting public inquiries and commissions of these Aboriginal social problems. Jiwani argues that, "[b]y focussing on issues 'out there', the media can overlook the issues 'over here'" (2010: 10). The exclusion is both metaphorical and physical; Aboriginal people occupy a world apart within Canada and this is evident in the way in which Aboriginal social problems are framed within the dominant visual discourse.

The Trope of Aboriginal Victimhood and State Dependency

The trope of victimhood in Aboriginal social problems is anchored to a discourse of dependency and distress that fosters an imagining of the Aboriginal victim that is overwhelmingly infantilized (Harding, 2006: 209). A part of this infantilization is literal- the Aboriginal victim/object is often presented in both text and images in media accounts of Aboriginal social problems as a young child (Harding, 2006: 209). The image of Aboriginal children in distress or a position of heightened vulnerability is the locus classicus of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in much the same way that the "childish primitive" provides a critical symbolic value for the construction of the Orient, as described by Said (1979: 247). This draws to the surface all the implicit Western assumptions tied to the social construction of childhood, innocence and naiveté which only add to the power of the trope of Aboriginal victimhood. Deleuze and Guattari argue in *A Thousand Plateaus* that the very idea of "childhood" is linked inextricably to the idea of being animalistic or becoming more like an animal (1983: 14). This relationship meshes with the way in which metaphors and other comparisons to animals were important in the construction of colonial others (Said, 1979: 185). By using images of children, the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is simultaneously signifying childlike innocence and also animalistic impulse and wildness (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983:14). However, even when the images within the discourse feature older victim/objects, the infantilization continues. For example, in James Martin's discourse analysis of the media coverage of half-Aborigine children being seized and placed in

foster homes in Australia, he identifies the images of small Aborigine children lined up

together in order to be selected by foster parents (Martin, 2004: 35). Martin identifies

how the Aborigine children are all lined up in matching white (almost Christening)

dresses and are all frowning at the camera (2004: 35). The physical positioning or posing

of the person in the photo might resonate as being particularly childlike such as a prone

or vulnerable position (Martin, 2004: 35). Alternatively, they may be photographed in a

particularly emotionally wrought moment in order to implicate the Aboriginal victim as

being irrational and overly emotional which is also tightly associated with childhood and

infancy. Showing children in the photograph, such as the case identified by Martin of

Aborigine children seized by the state and adopted out to White families also fits well

with the dominant colonial narrative that the colonial other makes for an unfit parent and

that it is up to the Colonizer to act as warden to colonial children (Martin, 2004: 33).

The infantilization of the Aboriginal object/victim is essential in how it engages

with the understanding that young children and infants are ultimately reliant on their

parents or guardians for their safety, care and well-being. As a result, by invoking the

infantilized Aboriginal victim/object, the visual discourse reinforces the framing of

Aboriginal peoples as being incompetent or helpless in addressing Aboriginal social

problems (LaRocque, 2010: 137). Cairns observes that Aboriginal peoples are

"described as wards, likened to children, and assumed to be unready for full citizenship"

(2000: 21). By illustrating that in diametric pairings, the Aboriginal is to child as White

is to guardian, the visual discourse is making a clear comment on the near-parental

obligations of the Canadian state in addressing Aboriginal social problems.

This constructed child/ward distinction in the framing of Aboriginal social problems illustrates the ability of the trope of Aboriginal victimhood to resonate with cultural norms surrounding state obligations, normative claims and the prejudicial stereotypes concerning Aboriginal dependency and reliance on the state. Cairns describes the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the state that is the product of this colonial infantilization as "well-meaning paternalism" (2000: 15).

The act of characterizing and constructing the colonial other is a dual process of defining both the other and self, which Said describes as the "construction of opposites and "others" whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and reinterpretation of their differences from 'us' (Said, 1979:332). In the case of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems, the construction of the trope of Aboriginal victimhood is simultaneously the construction of the dominant Western guardian and saviour trope as well. Said contends that the very reason that Orientalism (and similarly the trope of Aboriginal victimhood) is viewed as making sense or being reasonable by the majority has little to do with the Orient (or Aboriginal communities) and is much more reflective of the way in which the majority and dominant population self-defines and constructs identity (Said, 1979:22).

Hardt and Negri argue a similar process by contending that, "the nation-state is a machine that produces Others, creates racial difference, and raises boundaries that delimit and support the modern subject of sovereignty" (Hardt and Negri, 2000:114). The act of reinforcing and reimagining the barrier between Us and Them is a constant and essential process for the continued strength and development of the modern dominant subject. This binary between Us and Them is something that Jiwani found particularly clear in the

differential treatment of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian women in Canadian media (Jiwani, 2009: 3). Jiwani notes that, "[w]hite women's presence was used as a marker to outline the boundaries between Indigenous and settler peoples, and to exemplify the latter's moral and cultural standards of acceptability" (2010: 3). The Aboriginal victimhood trope sets a clear boundary and defines the limits of the Canadian imagined community. Ultimately, the Western dominant subject is reliant on the Other, such as Aboriginal peoples in Canada for relative self-definition and construction. As Hardt and Negri explain, "colonialism constructs figures of laterite and manages their flows in what unfolds as a complex dialectical structure" (Hardt and Negri, 2000:124). The existence of the constructions of the dominant majority and the subordinate Aboriginal victim are interdependent and entirely responsive.

The Disassociation of the Aboriginal Victim from Material and Structural Inequality

Garcia-Del Moral argues that the news coverage of missing and murdered Aboriginal women isn't just ignorant or inappropriate, but that it should be considered "violent journalism," where the media actively constructs Aboriginal women in such a way as to promulgate colonial power inequalities and racial and gender based stereotypes that limit the ability of Aboriginal women to be fairly represented in the media (2011: 54). In the construction presented by the media of murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada, particularly during the Pickton murder trial and the resulting Missing Women's inquiry in B.C., the systemic problems and colonial legacy are entirely omitted

from the media story (Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 54). The women are victims of crime because they are homeless and because they are prostitutes, but there is no connection drawn to the disproportionate number of women that encounter these circumstances and why (Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 54). Garcia-Del Moral argues that "such violent journalism... ultimately severs any relation that the murders and disappearances of Aboriginal women in Canada may have to the material and structural conditions that have rendered these women vulnerable to violence" (2011: 54). Colonialism is not part of the framing of the murdered and missing Aboriginal women that most closely mirrors the "Indian Slut" stereotype in their construction of the female Aboriginal victim (Jiwani, 2009: 2 and Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 46). Almost across the board, "these articles fail to mention Canada's colonial background to explain why many Aboriginal women live in poverty or become sex-workers" (Garcia- Del Moral, 2011: 46).

The trope of Aboriginal victimhood is a clear visual demonstration of how the power imbalance between Aboriginal peoples of Canada and the dominant majority is understood and validated. The trope of Aboriginal victimhood occupies a dual responsibility of significance and symbolism. It simultaneously constructs Aboriginal weakness and dependency while also constructing colonial dominance and power. As Gilchrist argues, "[i]n order for there to be a "bad," "unworthy," "impure," "disreputable" woman/victim there must simultaneously be a "good," "worthy," "pure," and "respectable" woman/victim against whom she is judged" (2010: 3). The Aboriginal victimhood trope is reliant on African American and white binaries of morality, racialized assumptions of behaviour and colonial understandings of identity.

The natural victimhood trope appears frequently in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in Canada and also bleeds through into the commissions and public inquiries that are called in response to these issues. The natural victimhood trope is at times difficult to detect because it is often constructed regardless of the best of intentions. In an effort to highlight inequalities, the trope of the natural victim is used as a crutch, but instead of drawing attention to areas of inequality for Aboriginal people, the trope functions to depoliticize and decontextualize these inequalities.

Chapter 3: The Trope of Aboriginal Radical Activism

This chapter examines a second powerful colonial trope that is present throughout the media visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and protests and also in their resulting public inquiries: the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist. This trope contrasts with the Aboriginal victim trope described in the preceding chapter, with many key differences between the two constructions. According to the radical activist trope, Aboriginal political voice and agency are categorically assumed to be constituted by acts of radical (and often violent) activism. This trope is reflected in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in the way in which Aboriginal political elites, activism, and civil disobedience are illustrated in the media.

Aboriginal voice is illustrated in the visual discourse as being dangerous, unpredictable, and frightening. The forms of activism and political engagement that receive media attention vary significantly and can be a number of different scenarios such as conferences, sit-ins, hunger strikes or forceful occupations (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 328). Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers identify that blockades and occupations appeared to gain the most media attention in the articles analyzed in their research (2010: 328). As Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers note, "[b]y featuring some events and issues more than others, the media works to characterize groups and events in a particular way" (2010: 328). What unites the visual construction of Aboriginal activism and agency is a perpetuation of the radical activist trope and all of its associated prejudice surrounding criminality and violence.

The Radical Activist Trope and the Us v. Them Binary

The way in which the trope is illuminated through the visual discourse can be seen in how activism on the part of Aboriginal peoples is framed as being a "world apart" from non-Aboriginal activism. Said considers this distancing and difference by suggesting that, "[t]o a certain extent modern and primitive societies seem thus to derive a sense of their identities negatively" (Said, 1979:54). Being non-Aboriginal or non-white is as powerful in identification as ascribing positive traits and attributes. In this way, the identity of the dominant non-Aboriginal and subordinate Aboriginal communities rely on each other for their construction, meaning and characteristics. In the case of the Aboriginal radical activist, the way in which an Aboriginal activist through the visual discourse is portrayed is as reflective of negative identity as positive and tells as much about the subject as it does about the object of the images of the visual discourse.

The trope relies on the substantial canyon constructed between what constitutes the binary of Us v. Them (LaRocque, 2010 :4). As Miller argues, "[t]ime and again Aboriginal people come across as troublesome constituents whose demands for self-government are contrary to Canada's liberal-democratic tradition" (2008: 2). An important defense mechanism to protect the Us v. Them binary is the use of colonial stereotypes and tropes to "help keep Aboriginal people in their place and justify tougher

measures of social control" (Miller, 2008: 2). All media framing and construction of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is channeled through the central narrative of difference and that Aboriginal protest is a threat to "Canadian" society (Miller, 2008: 2). The Aboriginal activist is imagined relative to the non-Aboriginal viewers of the images.

Decontextualizing Aboriginal Activism

Similar to the way in which the trope of Aboriginal victimhood is constructed, the trope of radical activism in its construction is purged of political, historical and cultural context. The "why" question is notably absent in the visual discourse and the images of Aboriginal activists are left detached and decontextualized from the larger narratives that they are a part of. Instead, the focus of the images is the negative impact that Aboriginal activism has on the status quo- be it traffic delays due to road closures for protests or a blocked construction project on disputed Aboriginal land. Harding notes that, "[w]hile devoting considerable attention to reporting on the extreme circumstances in which many contemporary Aboriginal people live- poverty, alcoholism, crime, and suicide- news media simultaneously eschew any analysis of the socio-political context of these living conditions and the impact of Canada's long history of colonialism on Aboriginal people" (2006: 206). The framing of Aboriginal activism according to the radical activist trope is, as Harding describes, isolated from its socio-political context in order to focus not on state culpability or social justice but instead on the criminality and inconvenience of radical activism.

The Radical Activist Trope and Social Disruption

The trope of Aboriginal radical activism illustrates through the visual discourse that Aboriginal agency and activism are a source of disruption. Aboriginal activism is depicted as an obstacle, a barrier, or a nuisance for non-Aboriginal Canadians and the state. Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers note based on their analysis of Aboriginal activism in print media that stories about, "tactics such as preventing people from getting to work or home or preventing supplies from reaching their destinations, work well" (2010: 351). The power of this trope of Aboriginal activism resonates on a deeper level with the underpinnings of cultural anxiety of the non-Aboriginal majority in relation to Aboriginal agency and political voice. Ultimately, due to this underpinning of anxiety, the West speaks on behalf of Aboriginal Canada through the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and presents a familiar and colonial imagining of Aboriginal political activism in order to counteract this anxiety. Robertson contends that, "containing any threat to the whiteness of the nation, the press intensified the violent aspects of this racial construction" (2011: 255). The trope of the radical Aboriginal activist is not a sympathetic one (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown, and Myers, 2010: 328).

Constructing Aboriginal activism as deviance, criminality and social disruption means that there is "little sympathy for Aboriginal acts of resistance among the Euro-Canadian population" (Hedican, 2013: 255). A source of anxiety for the dominant majority lies in Aboriginal claims to land, restitution and self-governance being legitimated and validated because acknowledging the legitimacy of these claims may

potentially upset existing power imbalances. Arguably, by eroding sympathy for

Aboriginal activism by attacking Aboriginal political leadership and dismissing the socio-

political context that the activism seeks to combat, the media is complacent in the effort

to decrease anxiety (on the part of the dominant majority) in regards to Aboriginal

political activism and voice. As Robertson suggests, playing up the violence of

Aboriginal activism lessens their legitimacy and in doing so, helps to contain the

perceived threat posed by Aboriginal activism (201: 255). Harding argues that during the

1990's, Aboriginal protests were "framed, much as they were in colonial times, in ways

that protect dominant interests and signify aboriginal people as a threat" (Harding, 2006:

205). Harding argues that the demonization of Aboriginal activists within mainstream

media functions to protect dominant interests and protect non-Aboriginal society from the

perceived threat of Aboriginal voice and activism (Harding, 2006: 205) Alfred and Lowe

refer to the, "ingrained cultural hysteria and deep fear of indigenous peoples" that is

central to the construction of Aboriginal actors as real threats to dominant society and

criminals instead of political activists (2005: 32). Invalidating Aboriginal protest,

framing Aboriginal activism as criminal and obstructive, and attacking Aboriginal

political elites potentially reinforces the existing power inequalities which reduces

majority anxiety about Aboriginal activism. As Alfred and Lowe contend, "the reaction

of the Canadian state and citizenry reveal that persistent colonial mythologies underlie

Canadian perspectives and serve to create a patterned response to indigenous resistance;

to criminalize and otherwise delegitimize indigenous resistance" (Alfred and Lowe, 2005:

31). By regurgitating the trope of the radical activist that attacks the legitimacy of

Aboriginal political elites and functions to erode sympathy for Aboriginal activism, the media to some extent perpetuates an invalidation of Aboriginal protests.

The Radical Activist Trope and Aboriginal Political Leadership

Aboriginal political elites and leaders within Aboriginal protest movements are under particular scrutiny and prejudicial stereotyping when the media covers Aboriginal social problems (Jiwani, 2009: 9; Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010:328; Robertson, 2011:242). Cairns finds that Aboriginal leaders are "routinely described as unrepresentative, as irresponsible agitators, and as selfishly seeking only their own personal goals" (2000: 23). This specific characterization of Aboriginal leaders and political elites further illustrates how colonial attitudes support the continued construction of Aboriginal activists as illegitimate, greedy, and unjustified in their demands. Jiwani notes that in the contemporary news discourse of missing Aboriginal women there are, "[n]umerous stories about nepotism and corruption among Aboriginal leaders" (2001:9). Robertson identifies a similar trope of the leaders as radical Aboriginal activists in how they are almost always presented as "angry, confused, and unsure of what they wanted" in the popular reaction to Aboriginal demands (Robertson, 2011: 242). In this way, leaders and Aboriginal political elites are framed as the most blatant examples of the radical activist trope. They are characterized as more dangerous, more unpredictable and more emotional than even the already dangerous, unpredictable and emotional Aboriginal protestors (Robertson, 2011: 242). Therefore, as the extreme case of the Aboriginal radical activist, Aboriginal political elites are the most pressing threat and obstacle to

dominant society (Robertson, 2011:242). Robertson identifies the use of both the terms

"war path" and "militant" in the description of Aboriginal political elites and finds these

military allusions to be referential of another trope of the "ignoble savage" as

paradigmatically opposed to the common "noble savage" (see Chapter 1 for more on this

construct) archetype (Robertson, 2011: 253). Where the noble savage is stoic and

romanticized, the ignoble savage is passionate and dreaded (Robertson, 2011: 253). This

binary is a central element of the Aboriginal radical activist trope and functions to

invalidate and dismiss Aboriginal political agency.

The Oka Crisis and the Radical Activist Trope

The images of the discourse of Aboriginal social problems which present the

trope of Aboriginal radical activism frequently depict the literal point of conflict between

the dominant state and the subordinate Aboriginal protestors, in an effort to demonstrate

the danger and violence of Aboriginal activism (McCall, 2011: 77). The example of the

Oka Crisis is a pivotal case where the construction of Aboriginal radical activism reflects

the colonial attitude that Aboriginal activism is a particularly dangerous obstacle to

progress and a threat to moral society in Canada (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers,

2010: 332). The image used frequently in the media visual discourse in relation to the

Oka Crisis features Aboriginal men, wearing military regalia holding weapons and

stationed behind a blockade. As Lischke and McNab acknowledge, "Aboriginal peoples

who participated in or supported blockades and engaged in other forms of resistance were

perceived as 'bad Indians' derived from the 'wild or savage Indian" (2005: xvii). This

sense that protest and social activism makes Aboriginal people bad or immoral is nested within the larger narrative that any form of Aboriginal political activism and agency is a demonstration of the incongruence between Aboriginal peoples and the dominant state. Furthermore, in both the physical blockade and the discursive placement of the "Bad Indian" behind the blockade, Aboriginal people are symbolized as being a nuisance and obstacle to be avoided and corrected. According to Robin Pierro, blockades were a primary source of negative media coverage of Aboriginal issues during the period between 2010 and 2013 (2013: 10). Similarly, in their analysis Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers found that, "the majority of articles were about road blockades or land occupations" (2010: 345).

One of the most well-known images of the Oka Crisis features an Aboriginal activist, literally nose to nose in a direct confrontation with someone in the Canadian armed forces (Lambertus, 2004: 179). Both men are staring each other down (Lambertus, 2004: 179). Both are dressed entirely in army clothing, and both look intense, aggressive and ready to strike at any moment. The Aboriginal activist also has his face entirely covered, while the armed forces member has his face and eyes exposed (Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes, 2012: 237). It was the single most reprinted photograph of the conflict within Canadian newspapers (Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes, 2012: 237). This captured moment is particularly telling of the trope of Aboriginal radical activism as the activist is in a dangerous and frightening heated moment with the most obvious symbol of state power- The military (Lambertus, 2004: 179). The report from RCAP invokes this image by stating that, "the standoff at Kanesatake (Oka) in the summer of 1990 [was] captured in a photograph of a battle-ready Canadian soldier face-to-face with an armed, masked

Mohawk warrior" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 1, Chapter 7: 187). This image is particularly

emotionally charged and frankly, frightening. The conflict is imminent and both

individuals look ready to strike. Here, in this powerful photograph is a clear example of

the radical activist trope and what the function the trope holds in evoking public

response.

The Radical Activist Trope and the Masked Offender

It is interesting that the activist's face is entirely covered, likely in an effort to

protect his identity or to protect his eyes, nose and mouth from tear gas, but it is also

important on a symbolic level (Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes, 2012: 237). The bandana

covering his face is the only barrier to this radical activist in returning the Western gaze.

In the case of Aboriginal protest in the visual discourse, the Western gaze is that of non-

Aboriginal Canadians. As members of the dominant society and the targeted audience of

mainstream media, they hold the Western gaze and observe the visual discourse. The

subject/object distinction between the non-Aboriginal audience and the subverted

Aboriginal peoples objectified in the visual discourse functions to maintain colonial

power inequalities that benefit non-Aboriginal peoples at the expense of Aboriginal

peoples who are objectified within the visual discourse (Miller, 2008: 2). The radical

activist disrupts the binaries that distance Aboriginal peoples from the dominant majority

which means that the image solicits a powerful response by the public and in turn the

government. The imagery is aggressive, raw, confrontational, and contrary to dominant

majority expectations about Aboriginal behaviour that are associated with the trope of Aboriginal victimhood. Through the trope of Aboriginal victimhood, Aboriginal peoples are constructed as helpless and requiring state guardianship. Alternatively, through the trope of Aboriginal radical activism, Aboriginal peoples are constructed as violent and undeserving of sympathy (Lambertus, 2004: 127; McCall, 2011: 77).

In many cases, the faces of the activists are covered, much like during an armed robbery which creates a visual bridge between Aboriginal activism and criminal deviance (Lambertus, 2004: 4). This visual cue of criminality references "the alleged Aboriginal proclivities for wanton violence, violent crime, viciousness, and a general tendency toward mayhem" (Anderson and Robertson, 2011:7). The covering of their face also works to further strip identity and agency from these decontextualized images. The covered faces quite literally take the face and voice away from the Aboriginal radical activist creating the sense that all Aboriginal activists are the same and interchangeable, instead of recognizing the divergent political pursuits and approaches taken by Aboriginal activists. The radical activist trope illustrated by anonymous "masked offenders" is visually striking, such as during the Oka Crisis, when "[i]mages of armed, masked men dressed in army fatigues, defending their land and the people from the full force of the Canadian state, shook mainstream Canada and galvanized indigenous people from coast to coast" (Alfred and Lowe, 2005:16).

Oka Framed as a Law and Order Issue

Aboriginal radical activists are depicted as fugitives, vigilantes, offenders, and social deviants. Charles Stuart notes that during the Oka crisis, the media perpetuated a "law and order" narrative in regards to the state response to the Oka protestors (1993: iv). The Oka crisis was firmly presented as a *criminal* problem instead of a political protest and the protestors became decontextualized criminals and thugs instead of political actors (Stuart, 1993; 18). At the onset of the Oka Crisis, mainstream media tightly conformed to the "law and order" narrative, with Wilkes, Corrigal- Brown and Myers noting that, "an analysis of the 208 stories published in 15 Canadian newspapers during the first week of the Oka crisis showed that almost 60 percent framed the conflict as being a law-and-order issue (e.g. Mohawks as criminals) as opposed to a political struggle with deep historical roots" (2010:332; also Skea 1993; Grenier, 1994; Stuart 1993). As a result of the media coverage, there was no visual acknowledgement of what caused or spurred the activism at Oka implicitly establishing that Aboriginal activism is always unpredictable (Stuart, 1993:18).

One such image that embodies this sense of Oka as a "law and order" issue instead of a political protest is that of "a warrior standing on top of [a] police cruiser" (Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes, 2012: 228). In this image, a Mohawk warrior is standing on top of an abandoned police cruiser. Little (if any) context is offered and it "portrays an image of the Warriors as violent and aggressive" (Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes, 2012: 228. The police cruiser is important. The way in which the police cruiser has been overcome by the Mohawk warrior is more important. It invokes a sense that the protest has hit such a dangerous point that the state (as symbolized by the police cruiser) has been attacked and immobilized by the Aboriginal other. During the crisis, this single

photograph was reprinted at least 25 times in Canadian newspapers ensuring that this visual demonstration of the radical activist trope was widely circulated in the mainstream media (Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes, 2012: 228).

The Trope of the Radical Activist and the Aboriginal Warrior

The radical activist trope rests on the construction of the mythical Aboriginal warrior- violent, frightening, and predisposed to confrontation, which Harding aptly describes as the, "menacing balaclava-clad warrior patrolling barricades" (2005: 330). The Aboriginal-warrior is a media darling and as Corrigal-Brown, Wilkes and Myers found in their quantitative analysis of media coverage of Aboriginal protest in Canada, when the Aboriginal-warrior stereotype is readily available for media narratives, "the media pay disparate attention to these events" (2010: 328). An important reason for the enormous media response to Oka in an unprecedented way was at its core the "media's acceptance of Mohawk Warriors as warriors" (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 332). The media framing of Oka strongly emphasized the Aboriginal warrior and in doing so, linked the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist with violence and criminality (Miller, 2008: 2). Mainstream media became fixated with the visual of the Mohawk warrior and "[e]ven for the Mohawk Warrior Society, the swell of media attention was unprecedented" (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 16). The Oka Crisis received the most media coverage of any Aboriginal protest between 1985 and 1995 and adherence to the Aboriginal radical activist trope and the symbol of the Aboriginal warrior had a great deal

to do with the amount of media coverage this protest received (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers; 2010, 344).

A "warrior" characteristic of the images that supports the trope of Aboriginal radical activism is the utilization of the warrior's physical appearance. In these images, the activists may be wearing full traditional warrior regalia or they may be dressed in Western military uniform pieces (Swain, 2010: 85). Face painting or war paint is also an important symbol of the activist-warrior that repeats throughout this trope (Lambertus, 2004: 124). The protestors may indeed be concealing their faces simply to avoid the pepper spray frequently used by the RCMP in an effort to diffuse the protest (Swain, 2010: 85). However, covering their faces, as if it is necessary to conceal their identity, informs the viewers of the visual discourse of these protests that what they are doing is in some way defiant or wrong. The viewers of the images of Aboriginal protests may be left wondering why else would it be necessary to conceal their faces if they were not doing something wrong? As Lambertus describes, the dress and appearance of Aboriginal protestors is an essential cue for the activist-warrior construction (2004: 124).

Defiance and conflict are themes that percolate throughout the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in relation to the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist. Many images will have the Aboriginal activist standing defiantly in front of a line of RCMP or military officials. In other cases the activist will be on the ground or on the back of a police car being placed under arrest, restrained or handcuffed. The point made by this representation of the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist is to demonstrate that Aboriginal activism will categorically defy, attack, and conflict with the state. This is important as it positions Aboriginal activists in an assumed universal antagonistic and

oppositional position, greatly limiting the opportunities for meaningful mediation and resolution.

Ipperwash and the Aboriginal Warrior/Criminal

The conflict at Ipperwash is an important case for understanding the strength of the radical activist trope and the lasting role of colonial attitudes in the construction of Aboriginal identity and activism (Morden, 2013: 505). Ipperwash was the first instance of an Aboriginal protestor being killed defending a claim to Aboriginal territory in more than a century and gained a large amount of media coverage both during the crisis and in the legal and political aftermath (Morden, 2013: 505). Strikingly, the media coverage of Ipperwash at the onset was very similar to that of Oka, with a strong law-and-order narrative presented by the majority of newspaper sources in Canada (Hedican, 2013:74; Stuart, 1993: 17).

A component of the media response to Ipperwash that Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers note is that, "the media favoured the officials' version of events, not only legitimating the latter's use of force and violence but also leading to considerable anti-First Nation content" (2010: 332; citing Lambertus, 2004; Miller, 2005:8). Similarly, Hedican notes that during the events at Ipperwash, "there was the implicit assumption that it was Aboriginal protestors who had fired at police officers, rather than the other way around, which served to instill in the public's mind an image of the First Nations occupiers of Ipperwash Provincial Park as thugs and troublemakers" (2013: 139).

Fullerton and Patterson analyze a notable photograph from Ipperwash which relates strongly to the radical activist trope (2008: 202). The photograph of Warren George was taken after Ipperwash in 1998 when he was convicted of criminal negligence causing bodily harm as a result of his participation in the standoff at Ipperwash (Patterson and Fullerton, 2008: 202). In the photograph, George is wearing a t-shirt and jeans and is averting his gaze from the photographer (Patterson and Fullerton, 2008: 202). He has in his hands a cigarette, a coffee and an eagle feather and as Patterson and Fullerton note, the photograph to most viewers would appear to clearly illustrate an Aboriginal protestor who holds a disdain for the Canadian legal system (based on his dress, gaze and cigarette) (2008:202). The photograph detaches George from his role in Ipperwash and from the seizure of Stoney Point First Nation land by the Canadian government and instead shows an Aboriginal man, whose "appearance suggests a casual disrespect for the legal system" (Patterson and Fullerton, 2008: 202). Fullerton and Patterson, in their analysis of this photograph associated with Ipperwash go so far as to suggest that the photographer and the news outlet that published the photograph "killed Warren George" (2008: 204). They contend that the news article stripped George of his voice by presenting him as a disrespectful and uncaring Aboriginal activist and excluding any political or cultural context for his actions or appearance (Fullerton and Patterson, 2008: 202). In the framing of the radical activist, such as in this particular photograph, the audience does not see a protestor. They see a criminal and in this framing, the protest they are associated with loses its historical and political context.

The saturation of media coverage of both Oka and Ipperwash is important because ultimately, "[t]hese standoffs were only a few of several hundred events that have taken

place since the 1980's" (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 332). This demands an investigation of what it was about these standoffs in particular that led to an increased level of media attention and public interest both during the events and during their resulting public inquiries. Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers find in their quantitative analysis of newspaper stories of Aboriginal activism between 1985 and 1995 that, "the imbalance in the coverage means that some events (the most dramatic and/ or violent) are more likely to be seen as 'representative' of these events in reader's minds" (2010:344). This imbalanced focus on violence in Aboriginal activism allows for a consistent invocation of the radical activist trope and normalizes this prejudicial/ colonial understanding of Aboriginal activism as being dangerous to dominant society.

The Threat of Aboriginal Political Agency and Activism

A component of the power of the Aboriginal radical activist trope lies in how the radical activist construction illustrates a threat to the perceived security of the barrier between the dominant majority and the Aboriginal/ colonial other. Through activism and political agency, Aboriginal peoples trespass into the fiercely guarded border territory that occupies the space surrounding the binary of Us v. Them. The construction and framing of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems according to the trope of Aboriginal radical activism is what Pile and Thrift describe as "extraordinary efforts to police the boundaries between coloniser and colonized in and through the practice of power" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:43). According to persistent colonial attitudes, political voice, agency and activism are strictly a White/ Western space. Hardt and Negri argue

that "the colonized are excluded from European spaces not only in physical and territorial terms, and not only in terms of rights and privileges, but even in terms of thoughts and values" (Hardt and Negri, 2000:124). This anxiety surrounding Aboriginal encroachment on European/ White/ Western space is reflected in how the Aboriginal activist is intentionally constructed in the visual discourse to appear as antithetical to the traits of the dominant majority as possible. By directly engaging in political protest, activism, and civil disobedience, the colonial subject becomes too close for comfort and functions as a visible threat to the strength of the binary. As Retzlaff argues, "acting as subjects rather than being acted upon also means empowerment and confidence that they can effect change" (Retzlaff, 2006: 27).

The construction of the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist is a direct response to anxiety on the part of the White/ Western majority (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 74). Similar to this Western-centric anxiety, Hardt and Negri argue that "Eurocentrism was born as a reaction to potentiality of a newfound human equality" (Hardt and Negri, 2000:74). By constructing the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist, the media discourse is able to force Aboriginal agency and activism to the hinterland and the farthest possible position away from the barrier and the Western/White dominant position. Said contends that "being a White man in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language and thought" and this concrete way of being is bounded by secure barriers that separate White identity from other cultures in a heterogeneous society (Said, 1979:227). Framing Aboriginal activism as dangerous, frightening, volatile and irrational, the colonial diametric understanding of the White/Aboriginal boundary is bolstered. Pile and Thrift express a similar sentiment

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to Hardt and Negri by arguing that "[t]he body is a surface of signification, where the boundaries between self-same and other-different become crucial in forestalling terror" (Pile and Thrift, 1995:42). The activist body is constructed and framed in such a way to ensure that even in the media discourse of Aboriginal activism, the images work to reinforce (instead of break down) the colonial barrier between Us and Them.

By firmly identifying Aboriginal activists as outside of the borders and norms of dominant society in Canada, the radical activist trope communicates that the goals and methods of Aboriginal protestors are illegitimate (Miller, 2008: 3). For example, the visual discourse of the terrifying Mohawk warriors seen at Oka mirrors a number of the attitudes and assumptions expressed by the Canadian public and the government at the time of the Oka crisis (Hedican, 2013: 173). As Miller contends, "Media images- like a masked man holding a warrior flag- serve as our 'windows' through which we see who deserves to claim Canadianness (Bullock and Jafri, 2000)" (2008: 3). By viewing these protestors not as Canadians with legitimate political concerns and complacently ignoring the enormous socio-cultural context of a shared colonial past, the media framing of the Oka Crisis illustrated an "indelible media stereotype of protesting Indians- the Mohawk Warrior, armed, masked, militant and a terrorist" (Miller, 2008: 3). Then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney went so far as to poignantly label the Oka protestors as terrorists, indicating that the framing of the protestors at Oka as deviants was exclusive to mainstream media and was also found in government responses to the crisis (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 200).

Unfortunately, it is much more likely that a consumer of media in Canada would be able to recognize one of the powerful images of the Oka Crisis than to name the

discontentment and Aboriginal social problems that boiled over leading to the crisis. Miller comments on the decontextualization of the Oka crisis that "[a]rmed and masked warriors were portrayed as unruly thugs, instead of residents who were frustrated by decades of unsatisfied land claims negotiations" (2008: 3). This dislocation is effectively coaching the media audience to concern themselves with the fear, danger and disruption of the activism instead of attempting to understand the *why* of the activism.

In both tropes, the decontexualization between socio-political context and the resulting news stories is central. The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems projects crimeless victims and arbitrarily violent protestors instead of analyzing the role that the state itself has played in the continued marginalization and racism faced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Separating victimhood and responsive activism from the socio-economic causal roots further exaggerates the stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples as fundamentally irrational, emotional, reactive and unpredictable. Anderson and Robertson contend that "ultimately the media attention and consequent political pressure bore some fruit, leading the Federal government to amend and improve its slow-moving land reform efforts" (2011: 221).

Although the Oka Crisis may have generated attention that contributed to government decision making, the construction and framing of the Oka Crisis only served to reinforce prejudicial attitudes and stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples, instead of interrogating or unsettling them. Anderson and Robertson also note that Oka only received short-lived media attention (2011: 221). Although perhaps there was an immediate and shallow impact on government decision making, after the Oka Crisis and according to the framing utilized by the visual discourse of Canadian media, "[n]atives

remained heathen, childlike, dangerous, violent, crazy, volatile and stupid" (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 249).

Here again, lingering colonial attitudes are functioning as the blue print for media framing. The accepted and normalized colonial altitudes mean that a framing of Aboriginal activism as random fits of deviance resonates strongly with the Canadian public, making the trope of Aboriginal radical activism particularly strong in the visual discourse. Pierro contends that the majority of the news reporting of Aboriginal radical activism is made in urban centres in offices, well removed from the actual protest or confrontation, leading to high degree of decontexualization (2013: 16). Pierro notes that, "[s]adly, analysis of media coverage during flash points such as Oka, Ipperwash, and Gustafsen Lake has shown similar trends [of decontextualization], and suggests these opinions are often rooted in century-old stereotypes rather than reality" (2013: 16).

There is a consistency in the presentation of the radical activist trope in the media coverage of Aboriginal activism including unauthorized resource use, occupations, blockades or protest rallies (Hall, 1995: 8). As Tony Hall argues, "At Anicinabe Park in 1974, at Temagani, Lubicon Country, Meares Island, Nitassinan and Restigouche in the 1980s, at Oka, Kanewake and the Peigan Lonefighters camp in 1990, on the Miramachi in 1995, we have time and time again witnessed the invocation of police powers to defend and protect the resource claims of non-Indian title holders" (1995: 8). Although Hall is discussing a broader set of Aboriginal protests that did not all result in public inquiries, his argument that there is similarity in the treatment and response of Aboriginal protests holds water in regards to the cases of this thesis as well. The similar invocation of the radical activist trope, the treatment of Aboriginal protest as a law and order issue

instead of political activism and the use of military and police intervention all repeat throughout all of the cases of Aboriginal protest resulting in public inquiries (Hedican, 2013: 180).

Colonial Function of the Radical Activist Trope

The function of the trope of the radical activist lies in its ability to demarcate "normal" or dominant society. Hardt and Negri argue that "the evil, barbarity, and licentiousness of the colonized other are what make possible the goodness, civility and propriety of the European self" (Hardt and Negri, 2000:127). Based on the entrenched assumption that the colonizer and colonial other are diametrically opposed, the characterization of the Aboriginal radical activist in negative, frightening, and delegitimizing terms invalidates Aboriginal political voice and bolsters support for the continued dominance of the non-Aboriginal majority. Hardt and Negri find that the construction of the colonial other is framed as being, "outside the defining bases of European civilized values (we can't reason with them; they can't control themselves; they don't respect the value of human life; they only understand violence)" (Hardt and Negri, 2000:124). This belief has an impact on how the state responds to instances of Aboriginal activism and in how accepting the Canadian non-Aboriginal public is of the actions and methods of the state in regards to Aboriginal activism.

Gendering the Radical Activist Trope

Similar to the trope of Aboriginal victimhood, gender is of critical importance to the framing of Aboriginal social problems according to the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist as well. Most of the images of Aboriginal activism feature male activists. The association between archetypal masculinity and conflict, violence, and aggression exclude female agency and activism. The trope of Aboriginal radical activism is overwhelmingly male. The construction of the radical activist rests on the inherent gendered assumptions surrounding political activism and particularly how women as political protestors are constructed.

In the case of the visual construction of the Idle No More movement, Chief Spence's central activist role is unusual and important. However, in the media's construction of her activism, the dominant narrative surrounds food, her hunger strike, and the 30 pounds of weight she has lost since starting the hunger strike (Pierro, 2013: 9). A shallow focus on the female body is the most important message presented of Chief Spence's activism, while her band's living conditions are underrepresented (Pierro, 2013: 9). While coverage of male Aboriginal activists such as former Chief of the AFN, Shawn Atleo or Aboriginal activist Shawn Brant show images of the men making speeches, confronting officials and the RCMP, and blocking traffic, the images of Chief Spence show her being physically supported by male supporters or seated and sipping fish broth (Pierro, 2013: 6). Even in the radical activist trope, which is largely characterized by action and power, female Aboriginal activists are still visually represented as symbols of weakness, dependence and vulnerability.

Anderson and Robertson note another construction of activism that is gendered by illustrating the "shrill female activist" (2011: 194). According to this construction,

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female protestors are viewed as shrill, hysterical and irrational. As such, their demands as activists are dismissed and their role as agents of change is belittled. The "shrill activist" trope is applied directly to women, whereas men are characterized as militant (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 194). The function of this construction is dual- to invalidate the protest and also belittle women's roles within activism (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 194).

The radical activist trope as a whole denies the legitimacy of Aboriginal claims against the state (Miller, 2008: 2). However, this invalidation of claims against the state made by Aboriginal activists and protestors is even stronger regarding female protestors and activists (Jiwani, 2009: 9). During the Murdered/Missing Women case and Pickton murder trial, "Aboriginal women were positioned as 'demanding' rather than having legitimate claims" (Jiwani, 2009: 9). Similarly to how the trope of Aboriginal victimhood is even more greatly associated with women, the trope of the demanding Aboriginal activist is also highly associated with female activists, invalidating their political voice and claims (Jiwani, 2009: 9).

In both the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist and the trope of Aboriginal victimhood, the media framing is as important in creating identity outside of the frame as it is in constructing Aboriginal identity within the frame. Rapport explains this by arguing that in "reading the other, we construct ourselves" (1995:269). The identification of the Aboriginal other, be it the radical activist or the victim, is as much as question of constructing the non-Aboriginal consumer of media as it is constructing the Aboriginal social problem. The visual discourses acts as an apparatus for constructing the identity of the dominant majority where, "by their everyday acts of meaning, people act out the

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social structure, affirming their own statuses and roles, and establishing and transmitting the shared systems of value and knowledge" (Halliday, 1978: 2). Hardt and Negri argue that Orientalism "is a creation of discourse, made in Europe and exported back to the Orient" and similar process of construction and application also permeates throughout the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems (Hardt and Negri, 2000:125). This understanding of the framing of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is reflective of Hardt and Negri's argument that, "[t]he representation [of the colonial other] is at once a form of creation and a form of exclusion" (Hardt and Negri, 2000:125). The entire visual discourse is written according to identifiable difference: the Aboriginal other is always within the frame for the viewing of the dominant majority as the subject. However, framing works to delimit identity both inside and outside of the frame.

The trope of Aboriginal radical activism functions to delineate the identity and characteristics of the dominant majority in Canada, by clearly articulating how Aboriginal activism and political agency is outside and beyond the border of appropriate and acceptable behaviour. Henry and Tator comments on how the construction of Aboriginal activism is revealing of the process of identity reaffirmation of the White majority as well (2002: 228). They comment that "the rhetoric of dominant discourse is hidden within the mythical norms that define Canada as a White, humanistic, tolerant and accommodating society" (Henry and Tator, 2002: 228).

The component of the radical activist trope that characterizes Aboriginal peoples as predisposed to criminality and deviance is also at work in the way in which colonial stereotypes impact the treatment of Aboriginal people within the justice system (Cheema, 2009: 91; Furniss, 2001: 9). As Cheema notes, "perceptions about Aboriginal peoples

behaviour and mannerisms" has an impact on police interactions with Aboriginal peoples (2009: 85). The construction of Aboriginal peoples as being predisposed to criminality fosters "stereotypes of Aboriginals- as symbolic assailants and criminal suspects until they prove otherwise" (Cheema, 2009: 91). This has consequences, both in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and also in how the state- including the criminal justice system- interacts with Aboriginal peoples (Cheema, 2009: 91).

Not all parts of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems will always fit within the framing of either the victim or the radical activist tropes, but overwhelmingly, Aboriginal social problems are constructed through the visual discourse in order to reflect these two dominant tropes. However, as Henry and Tator comment, "the occasional positive story about a minority community, or a review on the book pages of a novel by a writer of colour, does little to offset the everyday negative images and opinions that find their way into news stories" (2002: 236). In the case of Aboriginal public inquiries, the presence of the trope of the radical activist is very common and indicates the ongoing role of colonial identity tropes in evaluating and constructing Aboriginal identity in Canada.

Chapter 4: History of Aboriginal Public Inquiries

General Background

Royal commissions, like public inquiries at the Federal level are created and designed in accordance with the *Inquiries Act (*RSC, 1985: c. 1-1). This act allows for royal commissions, public inquiries and task forces to subpoena witnesses, conduct investigations, hire witnesses and produce written recommendations. Provinces and territories additionally have their own versions of the *Inquiries Act* to create provincial level inquiries. Royal Commissions sound as though they are superior to public inquiries, but in reality these two forms of investigation and review are very similar. The only real difference exists in how these two titles are used. The "Royal Commission" title is used frequently by federal inquiries with a large, national scope (such as RCAP) while the "Public Inquiry" title is used more frequently when issues and policy concerns immediately impact a smaller segment of the population. Also, provincial level inquiries will use the title "Public Inquiry" instead of the "Royal Commission" title. Royal commissions and public inquiries are called by the Governor in Council in accordance with the *Inquiries Act* (RSC, 1985:c1-1).

Do Royal Commissions and Public Inquiries Work?

Public inquiries are enormously expensive projects, such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, examined in this thesis, which had a $63 million budget and called in excess of 3500 witnesses (Hedican, 2013: 255).   Public inquiries are also time consuming, with all public inquiries to date in Canada taking in excess of a year

as a minimum and upwards of a decade or more (Air India for example). Examples of Federal Inquiries include Gomery, Arar and Air India and Provincial Inquiries include SARS (Ontario), Breast Cancer Screening (Newfoundland and Labrador) and Milgaard (Saskatchewan) inquiries. Inquiries and commissions that solely address Aboriginal social problems or political issues are more uncommon still. Only the most contentious issues trigger a public inquiry or royal commission. Anderson and Denis argue that public inquiries are important in regards to Aboriginal issues, "not simply in their content, but in their form" (2003: 379). Anderson and Denis consider public inquiries to be "symbolic rituals" performed by the state to demonstrate awareness of issues and confirm the state's legitimacy in responding to such issues (2003: 379).

James Frideres somewhat cynically acknowledges that commissions on Aboriginal issues "can be used as a 'stalling' process to deal with issues politically embarrassing to the government in the hopes the issue will 'go away'" (1996: 251). This sentiment is again echoed by Regna Darnell who also suggests that commissions have very little capacity for change and commission findings are hardly ever enacted into any sort of policy change (1996: 251). Between 1980 and the present day, very few measures from Aboriginal public inquiries and commissions have been enacted, causing many such as Darnell to dismiss their processes. Given Darnell's concerns and continued presence of colonial attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples in Canada, is there still potential within these commissions and inquiries for meaningful change?

The success of public inquiries varies tremendously, with some resulting in immediate and lasting changes to government policy and decision making, while other inquiries have had very few recommendations ever enacted. This thesis seeks to evaluate

the presence of colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity within public inquiries and royal commissions. I argue that one impact of Aboriginal-specific public inquiries and royal commissions is the creation and maintenance of these colonial identity tropes. The inquiries function as specific points of public performance for constructing the dominant tropes of the Aboriginal victim and the radical activist which shapes the discourse of Aboriginal social problems. Ultimately, in the same way that the media discourse surrounding these social problems is shaped by lasting colonial attitudes, the public inquiries and commissions are important sites for the creation and maintenance of colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), to this day, remains the most expensive and extensive public inquiry in Canada (Hedican, 2013:204). It included thousands of witnesses, hundreds upon hundreds of interviews and resulted in a sizeable report (Anderson and Denis, 2003: 379). Darnell contends that RCAP as a political instrument demonstrates in its content "the politics of ambivalence, shifting identities and elusive borders" of identity and social inclusion or exclusion (2000: 171). In designing and conducting the commission, identity construction was of central importance and is paramount in the resulting report. Although it had many contributing events and factors, the Oka Crisis was a considerable motivation for the creation of RCAP (RCAP, 1996: Volume 1, Chapter 1: 11).

The events at Oka emerged out of a longstanding conflict between Mohawks and the state over disputed territory (Hedican, 2013: 110; Ramos, 2008: 801; Ramos, 2006). The Mohawks, members of the Kanesatake First Nation claimed that the land in question had been held in trust for their people by the St. Sulpice religious order (Hedican, 2013: 110). In 1961, a golf course was built on some of the disputed territory with no consideration or consultation for the Kanesatake First Nation (Hedican, 2013: 110). Following decades of petition by the Mohawks to regain the disputed land, the government approved an expansion of the golf course in 1990, once again ignoring the claims of the Kanesatake First Nation (Hedican, 2013: 111). The expansion of the golf course would cover a Mohawk cemetery and 39 hectares of pine forest that was culturally important to the First Nation (Hedican. 2013: 111).

RCAP covered a variety of issues, but among other concerns, specifically made recommendations concerning how Aboriginal people must be consulted and notified of policy issues that impact them or their rights directly (Hedican, 2013: 204). The broad scope of RCAP meant that it ranged in content from treatment within the healthcare and education systems to over representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system (Hedican, 2013:28). Initially the response to RCAP was mixed, with many Aboriginal communities and advocates weary of how inclusive the mandate of the commission would be (Hughes, 2012: 105). However, Hughes acknowledges that, "[t]he broad mandate proved to be extraordinarily successful in bringing Aboriginal organizations and individuals into the process, which in turn significantly reduced Indigenous perceptions that RCAP was a top-down process" (2012: 106). RCAP also resulted in four thematic reports on land claims, Inuit relocation, suicide rates amongst

Aboriginal people and an overview of Aboriginal peoples within the criminal justice system (Hedican, 2013:28).

During the media coverage of RCAP, images of the Oka Crisis were frequently used as well as images of poor living conditions on Aboriginal reserves (Miller, 2008: 3). The Oka Crisis images utilized in relation to RCAP had a strong adherence to the Aboriginal radical activist trope (Miller, 2008:3). The images of the Oka Crisis consistently depict Aboriginal activists as dangerous and unpredictable criminals (Miller, 2008:3). Many symbolic components support this characterization of Aboriginal activists including the bandana covered faces, the brandished weapons and the use of barricades (Miller, 2008: 3). These visual cues not only represent the Aboriginal activists as unknown and frightening protestors, but the illegal barricades and weapons also immediately indicate that they are criminals and that they are hostile (Miller, 2008: 3). Also, along with the symbols of criminality and hostility that are highlighted in the representation of the Aboriginal activists, the image of the Canadian forces personnel and the police also function to draw attention to the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist.

However, within RCAP there were considerable and important strides made in advancing and improving Aboriginal-state relations through the conversations that the commission generated. Importantly, RCAP itself noted the presence of tropes and stereotypes in the treatment of Aboriginal protest and social problems (including Oka) in mainstream media (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 7: 581). The report from RCAP found that the colonial stereotypes of the hopeless victim, environmental steward, and frightening warrior were dominant throughout the media coverage of Oka and other contemporary Aboriginal protests (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 7: 581 and see also

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Harding, 2005: 313). The way in which these constructions were identified and addressed in RCAP will be analyzed in this thesis in chapter 7. Although RCAP did address the way in which Aboriginal social problems and protests were constructed in the media, the RCAP was not a perfect commission and did not produce perfect findings and recommendations. In reality, the commission itself, even in recognizing and being sensitive to the existence of these colonial tropes was not entirely able to escape their trappings (Harding, 2006:311) However, the presence of these tropes does not invalidate the entire commission, but simply indicates how colonial tropes identified through colonial theory do indeed continue to be constructed within inquiries as well as the visual discourse of hot button Aboriginal social problems. RCAP touched on a number of topical concerns of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and was reactive in particular to the concerns that were at the root of the Oka Crisis. For example, the issues of Aboriginal self-government, the fiduciary responsibility of the state in regards to Aboriginal rights, and perhaps most centrally the narrative of Nation to Nation relations between Aboriginal peoples and the federal government of Canada (Coulthard, 2007:438).

Ipperwash Inquiry

On July 29th, 1995, members of the Stoney Point First Nation occupied Camp Ipperwash, a military base that was located on their nation's confiscated territory that was seized during World War II (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 331). In the following days, they further attempted to occupy Ipperwash Provincial Park, but were met by a large number of Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) personnel (Wilkes, Corrigal-

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Brown and Myers, 2010: 331). During a tense standoff, Dudley George, an Aboriginal

protestor was shot and killed by an OPP officer (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers,

2010: 331). The Ipperwash protest, land occupation and resulting confrontation were

pivotal as they resulted in the first Aboriginal protestor being killed in over 100 years

during a land claims protest in Canada (Miller, 2008: 1). The events at Ipperwash

resulted in Ontario Premier Dalton McGuintey calling a provincial public inquiry (the

Ipperwash Inquiry) and in 2004, nearly a decade after the occupation, the land at Camp

Ipperwash was returned to the Stoney Point First Nation (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and

Myers, 2010: 332).

Images of Ipperwash are in many ways similar to those of the Oka Crisis as the

media focused on the violent unpredictable Aboriginal frame in the media coverage of

Ipperwash (Miller, 2008:3). As Jon Miller finds in his 2008 quantitative analysis of news

coverage of Ipperwash, " as the story developed, the Stoney Pointers were increasingly

portrayed as aggressors, obstructionists, or criminals; in other words: troublemakers"

(2008: 5). Miller further finds that, " more than 70 percent of stories written about

Ipperwash in the study period fit frames that suggested the occupiers were engaged in

activities that were questionable or illegal, rather than being caused by 53 years of

frustration over broken government promises to return the Stoney Point lands" (2008:5).

The honourable Sidney Linden who was charged with the responsibility of

overseeing the Ipperwash inquiry made an interesting comment that speaks to the central

themes of the standoff between the Ipperwash protestors and the armed forces when he

noted that, "[t]he police officers were equipped with bulletproof vests, shields, batons,

helmets and guns. The Aboriginal people had no protective clothing and had simply

stockpiled rocks and sticks and stones on the inside border of the park fence" (*Report of the Ipperwash Inquiry*, 2007: 71). Here, Linden is not describing the trope of the radical activist, but instead alluding to victimization and power imbalance between Aboriginal activists and the armed forces. The metaphor housed within the description of the advanced and sophisticated paraphernalia of the armed forces, foiled against the inherently primitive sticks and stones of the Aboriginal peoples taps into broader understandings of non-Aboriginal people's dominance and superiority to the primitivism and unsophisticated Aboriginal/ colonial other.

The Ipperwash inquiry was initiated by Ontario Premier Dalton McGuintey on November 12th, 2003, in response to the death of Aboriginal activist Dudley George during the confrontation between law enforcement (OPP specifically) and Aboriginal protestors at Ipperwash Park (Hedican, 2013:189). Due to the shocking nature of Dudley George's death and the concerns of Aboriginal communities, Dalton McGuintey stressed that the inquiry was a priority for the government and made a public inquiry an election promise that he successfully ran on (Hedican, 2013:164). Hedican notes that the Ipperwash Inquiry, "was conducted under the *Public Inquiries Act*, with a specific mandate to report on the events surrounding the death of Dudley George, although it became obvious from the onset of the inquiry that other important matters would come into play, such as the role of the police in native acts of political mobilization, as well as the larger issue of policy in Canada regarding Aboriginal rights and claims" (2013: 173). However, the recommendations still largely have not been enacted yet.

What is particularly interesting about the case of the Ipperwash standoff was how heavily the sense of fear and threat to public safety was intensely constructed by the

media and public officials at the time (Hedican, 2013: 161). The protestors had strategically chosen the date for the protest to begin, following Labour Day in order to ensure that there were no non-Aboriginal campers left in the park (Hedican, 2013: 161). From all official records, the protestors were unarmed and the size of the protest fluctuated between 10 to 40 persons, but this head count also included children who were unlikely threats (Hedican, 2013: 161). The sense that these protestors posed an imminent threat to public safety was out of line with the objective reality of this protest (Hedican, 2013: 161).   Notably, the fairly aggressive and sizable response to the standoff by OPP was in part the result of this perceived threat (Hedican, 2013: 161).

So where did this misconception emerge from? What was it about Ipperwash that was conducive to the rampant sense that the protest was an immediate threat to the general public? The media certainly played an inflammatory role within the Ipperwash standoff (Hedican, 2013: 170). The way in which news sources cultivated and stoked the construction of the violent radical activist by using imagery of weapons, confrontation and barricades may have very well had an impact in the government decision-making that led to the violent outcome (Hedican, 2013: 170).

A major component of the mandate of the Ipperwash Inquiry was in regards to "the policing of Aboriginal acts of civil disobedience, or political mobilization" (Hedican, 2013:190). Ipperwash is a key example of Aboriginal political activism being largely dislocated in the media and government response from its political context. According to Hedican, "the OPP evidently did not know why the Aboriginal protestors were engaged in their action. The information about a burial site in Ipperwash provincial park only came to light during the initial charge of the OPP" (Hedican, 2013:192).

Echoing this lack of understanding of the political and cultural context that the Ipperwash protest emerged from, the report from the Ipperwash Commission states that "[a]ll the police were aware of was that Aboriginal protestors were in the park illegally" (Hedican, 2013: 192). Hedican notes that the saturation of media coverage of Ipperwash was damaging to the political voice of the protestors because, "[w]hat was lost rather quickly in all this rush to blame the Aboriginal protestors was the real story" (2013: 239). The intended message of the discourse surrounding Ipperwash is clear; the protestors were to be judged simply as law breakers and trespassers who had to be removed. The treatment of the Aboriginal protestors during the standoff, the media construction and framing of the proceeding violence and finally the findings of the Ipperwash inquiry all reflect a similar adherence to the trope of the Aboriginal radical activist where protest is criminal, political agents are a threat to society, and the underlying Aboriginal claims and political context of their actions are stripped away or unknown.

The Missing Women Inquiry

Although the missing women inquiry in B.C. is not specifically an inquiry into a "hot button" Aboriginal social problem per se, the overrepresentation of Aboriginal women among missing women and among the victims of Robert William Pickton meant that Aboriginal women were frequently photographed during the inquiry. The inquiry speaks to broader and more systemic concerns such as prostitution and the vulnerability of sex trade workers, homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence, and the failure of the state (through the police forces and justice system) to act on information, properly

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investigate, and bring to trial the cases of missing women, predominantly in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (Report from the Missing Women Inquiry: Volume 4, Page 5). The visual discourse following the unfolding of the Pickton investigation, his subsequent trial and the establishment of the Missing Women Inquiry all relate strongly to the trope of the natural Aboriginal victim. The most frequent imagery associated with this case is that of Aboriginal women weeping publically, often holding images of their victimized friends and family members (Jiwani, 2006: 911 and Culhane, 2003: 602). The images also almost exclusively feature women (Jiwani, 2009: 3). They are in a condition of emotional distress and photographed weeping or collapsing in shock (Culhane, 2006: 602). This visual cue informs the viewer that Aboriginal peoples are highly emotional and unstable victims. Memmi notes how that in the visual representation of the colonized other as highly emotional, the colonizer is able to further distance themselves from the other (Memmi, 195: 86). Memmi notes that, "even a native woman weeping for her husband reminds him only vaguely of the grief of a mother of wife" (1965: 86). The "weeping native" that Memmi identifies, through being characterized as overly emotional and tragic is different and less than the colonizer, and their experiences and perceived victimization is rendered unrelatable (1965: 86).

The missing women inquiry resulted from the revelations of the Pickton case, a serial killer operating in Vancouver's downtown eastside who specifically targeted prostitutes and homeless women who were predominately Aboriginal (Jiwani, 2009:1). The inquiry is unlike the other Aboriginal inquiries and commission utilized in this thesis in that the focus is on women at risk more broadly and the alleged deficits in law enforcement's and the justice system's handling of the investigation generally instead of

specifically looking at the treatment of Aboriginal peoples. However, as many of the Pickton's 26 alleged victims were Aboriginal, and a large proportion of the still missing women from the Downtown Eastside are Aboriginal, the inquiry has become a site of Aboriginal identity tropes and an attempt to illustrate Aboriginal social problems in urban centers (Report from the Missing Women Inquiry: Volume 4, Page 1; Jiwani, 2009: 1). In the report from the Missing Women Inquiry, commissioner Wally Oppal explains the inquiry's mandate by stating that, "I was directed to investigate and report on what happened in the missing women investigations and the Crown decision to stay the charges against Pickton in 1997. In addition, I was directed to make recommendations to improve investigations of missing women and multiple homicides in British Columbia" (Volume 4, Page 1).

Recently, there has been a campaign in Canada to persuade the federal government to launch a national inquiry into missing Aboriginal women. So far no progress has been made, but human rights activists and bodies have loaned their support to the cause including James Anaya, the UN special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples (Anaya, 2014: 12). The hope is to take the experiences of the Pickton case and put them in conversation with the numerous unsolved cases of missing women across the country. Potentially, the commission would also examine cases such as the Highway of Tears in B.C. or missing women in Winnipeg's downtown core (Campion-Smith Toronto Star, May 13th, 2014). Unlike the B.C. commission, the national inquiry would be specifically focused on Aboriginal women and less focused on the police handling of the Pickton case in B.C.

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry

Although less blatant than the missing women inquiry, to a less degree the justice inquiry also relates back to the Aboriginal natural victim trope. The victimization of Aboriginal peoples through the justice system is the central focus of this inquiry. This inquiry stems from a number of considerations related to the justice system including arrests and police conduct, court proceedings, institutionalization, rehabilitation, and overrepresentation of Aboriginal peoples in corrections. Statistically, Aboriginal people are overrepresented in corrections in centers across the country. Conviction rates are higher, arrest rates are higher and the likelihood of reoffending and being incarcerated again (Armstrong and Rogers, 1996; Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 329). Along with this issue, there have been several high profile cases in Manitoba and elsewhere in the country of mistreatment and misconduct of law enforcement when interacting with Aboriginal peoples. Cases of police brutality and cases of police driving Aboriginal people to deserted or remote areas and leaving them have been picked up by the media and a growing number placed pressure on the provincial government to respond (Furniss, 2001: 1). The culmination of these social problems was the creation of a series of provincial level Aboriginal Justice Inquiries (Furniss, 2001: 1). One such inquiry was the Caribou Chilcoten Justice Inquiry, enacted by the government of British Columbia in 1992 (Furniss, 2001: 1). Furniss explains that the mandate of the inquiry was "to investigate persistent allegations that Aboriginal people in the central interior of

the province were being subjected to racial prejudice and unfair treatment by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the provincial justice system" (2001: 1).

Other Aboriginal justice inquiries at the provincial level include the public inquiry on the wrongful conviction of Donald Marshall, the murder of Helen Betty Osborne and the shooting of Connie Jacobs (Furniss, 2001: 1). Unfortunately, these provincial level justice inquiries largely became locked into a narrow focus of specific injustices, instead of maintaining a broader scope of identifying underlying colonial power imbalances that allowed for the injustices to take place (more in chapters 6 and 7). Furniss notes that although these inquiries seek to combat racism within the justice system against Aboriginal peoples, "[t]hese attitudinal barriers, nevertheless, continue to present significant obstacles in Aboriginal peoples' quest to resolve problems with the justice system" (2001: 2). Both the criminality component of the radical activist trope and the natural victim trope are present within the discourse of Aboriginal peoples treatment in the criminal justice system and significantly limit the ability of these individual small-scale inquiries to combat longstanding colonial identity constructions.

The Impact of Inquiries on Colonial Aboriginal Identity Tropes

The tropes of Aboriginal natural victimhood and radical activism do pervade the language and findings of Aboriginal public inquiries and commissions, but the presence of these tropes is not the same across all of the inquiries. In the case of RCAP, arguably the most ambitious of the Aboriginal inquiries, the tropes are far less blatantly evident and there is even an explicit awareness and effort to shake these tropes within the

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resulting report (Harding, 2005: 313). In RCAP's finding on Aboriginal peoples and the

Canadian justice system, there is a critical distinction that Aboriginal people are

overrepresented in the justice system at least in part as a result of institutionalized racism

and prejudice (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3: Chapter 1: 97). There is also a link drawn

within the findings of RCAP between the higher crime rates apparent in Aboriginal

populations across Canada, and the continued impact of the legacy of colonialism on

Aboriginal peoples (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3: Chapter 1, Page 97). RCAP expresses

awareness both in the section that addresses life chances and in the section that addresses

activism and protest that Aboriginal people are not hopeless victims that are looking to

the state for guardianship and also not out of control criminal radicals (RCAP, 1996: 5 as

quoted by Harding, 2005: 313)

In contrast to RCAP, Ipperwash, Missing Women and the Aboriginal Justice

inquiries fail to make as robust of a connection between the legacy of colonialism and

contemporary Aboriginal social problems. They focus more on the immediate and the

reactionary than on context and causation. For example, in the case of the Ipperwash

inquiry, the final report notes several instances of OPP officials expressing stereotypes

and cases of OPP officials using derogatory language and excessive force, but there is no

robust connection made in the findings between these specific events and broader issues

of institutionalized racism and persistent tropes (Report from the Ipperwash Inquiry,

Volume 4: Executive Summary, Page 30). There is also a focus within the report from

the Ipperwash inquiry in regards to the need for better consultation with Aboriginal

communities and respect for the duty to consult and accommodate Aboriginal peoples is

specifically mentioned within the inquiry's recommendations, which indicates a desire to

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change how the state (in this case, more specifically the province of Ontario) interacts with Aboriginal peoples (Report from the Ipperwash Inquiry, Volume 4: Recommendations, Page 101). However, the report places more emphasis on the role the province must play in order to "ensure that First Nations are aware of decisions affecting Aboriginal burial and heritage sites" (Report from the Ipperwash Inquiry, Volume 4: Recommendations, Page 102). The report from the Ipperwash inquiry discussed racist souvenir t-shirts being created, horribly racist jokes being made over police radio and derogatory language being used at protestors, but there is insufficient work done within the report to demonstrate why all of these events are connected and how the lasting impacts of colonialism are responsible (Report from the Ipperwash Inquiry, Volume 4: Executive Summary). While RCAP directly addressed the inflammatory role of the media, the stereotypes most commonly found in the media, and the impact of these stereotypes on how Aboriginal protests are perceived, the report from the Ipperwash inquiry made the recommendation that, "[t]he OPP and other police services should provide verified information to the media in their news releases. Inaccurate information should be corrected promptly and publicly" (Report from the Ipperwash Inquiry, Volume 4: Recommendations, Page 108). Given the way in which stereotypes and the trope of the radical activist in particular were invoked during the Ipperwash crisis and the resulting media visual discourse, the recommendations could have offered more in terms of directly addressing media constructions and persistent colonial identity tropes.

One strength of the Ipperwash inquiry is found in the research papers commissioned by the inquiry, particularly in the paper completed by Alfred and Lowe (2005). In Alfred and Lowe's paper and other papers commissioned by the inquiry,

connections are made between colonial identity constructions, institutionalized racism, and the failure of the Canadian state to respond effectively to Aboriginal social problems and protests (Alfred and Lowe, 2005: 1; Borrows, 2005: 1). Unfortunately, it appears that not enough of the content and ideas expressed in the research papers were effectively included into the report's recommendations. Although the report from the Ipperwash inquiry notes that racism was not isolated to a "few bad-apples" within the OPP, the general tone of the recommendations is too focussed on how to address individual cases of inappropriate/ racist responses (for example, recommendation 4: "All phone calls to and from the command center should be recorded") than addressing the underlying social constructions that validate discrimination against Aboriginal peoples (Report from the Ipperwash Inquiry: Volume 2, Chapter 11, Page 273). There is a similarity in Ipperwash, Missing Women and the Aboriginal Justice inquiries in that they all center on the question of how could the police (and justice system) have done better/ done differently. What RCAP does, that these inquiries do not is push this question beyond the actions of individuals and instead ask, what is it about contemporary Canadian society (and the legacy of colonialism) that allowed for these events. Arguably, by not connecting (or in some instances superficially connecting) these hot button issues to larger colonial legacies and prejudicial identity construction, these inquiries were unable to identify these Aboriginal social problems as being symptomatic of continued prejudice and social marginalization that is the direct result of persistent colonial attitudes and understandings.

Whether in Denis and Anderson's "symbolic rituals" role or in Frideres' more cynical assessment, inquiries and commissions are fundamentally public acknowledgements of Aboriginal social problems. They expose these issues and generate

interest in the nature of Aboriginal social problems. They also attract mainstream media

attention, whether positive or negative. A great deal can be learned through these

inquiries and they are revealing of the attitudes and assumptions that shape these events.

Assessing the success of public inquiries is difficult, particularly as Hughes

acknowledges, due to the lack of performance measures built into public inquiries and

commissions (2012: 120). Lack of implementation alone should not be grounds to

dismiss a public inquiry or commission as a failure. If broad enough in scope and

cognizant of the lasting impacts of colonialism, public inquiries can potentially be an

appropriate means of combating prejudicial tropes of Aboriginal identity. Although

many researchers have examined the weaknesses and problems with royal commissions

and inquiries of Aboriginal issues, there is still potential within these commissions as

large scale responses to Aboriginal social problems to help foster better

intergovernmental relations between Aboriginal peoples and the state.

Chapter 5: Discursive Consistency and Tropes of Aboriginal Identity

The role of the media in fostering and repeating social attitudes, constructions and identity tropes is important, particularly in regards to lingering colonial attitudes in Canada (Jiwani, 2009: 1). Jiwani notes that, "[i]n telling the stories of the nation, the news performs the role of the bard, disseminating myths which offer the nation a sense of an imagined community" (2001:2). Jiwani echoes Anderson's concept of "imagined community" to describe how narratives of national identity develop and legitimize a sense of nationhood. An important power of news media is found in its ability to normalize and regulate certain accounts of news, including the invocation of tropes of identity (Jiwani, 2009: 5). Furniss comments similarly that, "[t]he reproduction of dominant social values and identities is one of the primary motivating features of news production" and helps to establish an imagined community with both insiders and outsiders (2001: 4). With consistency and repetition, the way in which the media constructs identities, particularly those of Aboriginal peoples and other outsiders of the imagined community of Canada begins to take a definitive and recognizable shape. As J. Hartley notes, "the media colonize that 'taken-for-granted' world in which conversation achieves coherence and order" (1982:8). It is through this taken-for-granted authority that the media employs colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity tropes in regards to Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries.

The imagery of the media becomes a highly visual and readily available space for "intragroup discourse about a minority group" (Harding, 2006: 205). When the majority consumes the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems, it does not approach the

images from a neutral position. Instead, when viewing the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems, individuals approach the images with "a context and a history already in place, and it is through this 'lens' that they interpret what they see" (Fullerton and Patterson, 2008: 214). Media framing of Aboriginal social problems gains its effectiveness by realizing and capitalizing on the context and history that media consumers bring with them. Miller notes that, "[m]edia are important because they articulate and popularize what is acceptable behaviour in society- or, as other scholars have put it, what "Canadianness" is and who can be considered threats to it" (Miller, 2008: 2).

Although certain researchers have looked at particular case studies to produced analyses of the construction and framing of Aboriginal identity in Canada, there exists a research gap in exploring the way in which certain tropes found in colonial theory are engendered within the visual discourse surrounding Aboriginal social problems and specifically in relation to hot-button issues that resulted in public inquiries. However, this gap can at least be partially traversed through the incorporation of the research produced outside of Canada in relation to the role of media imagery in framing the colonial other. As Robertson explains, "while specific constructions of Indigeneity in the press have received scant attention in Canada, a rich and growing body of scholarship, from the path breaking work of Edward Said through to Stuart Hall and others has recognized the press as a central agent in the promulgation of the larger cultural project of colonialism" (2011: 238). Recognizing that colonialism doesn't have an endpoint in the mainstream media's visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and also

recognizing the lasting role of colonial attitudes within the media impact public opinion and government responses is essential to combating prejudicial identity tropes.

Reflecting and Packaging Public Opinion

In consolidating and reinforcing a national identity, the Canadian media plays an important role by informing citizens of a particular account of current events. As Robertson argues, "the press serves as arbiter for both reflecting and manufacturing public opinion" (2011: 236). In this dual function of both production and reflection, the media's framing of Aboriginal social problems has an enormous impact on public opinion. The specific tropes and constructions invoked by the media to construct Aboriginal social problems must be considered as both indicative of existing public opinion (the media reflects back the attitudes of their audience) and also as a form of learning and validation of continued colonial and prejudicial attitudes (manufacturing public opinion). Robertson further explores this loop of engendering public opinion by commenting that "given Canada's well established history of discrimination against Aboriginals, one might fairly ask whether the press simply responded to market demands, in effect giving consumers what they wanted" (2011: 238). This understanding of the loop of public opinion, attitudes and media framing is beneficial in explaining how and why certain dominant tropes are invoked with such salience and also why certain Aboriginal social problems gain such strong issue salience.

Reinforcing Existing (Colonial) Power Inequalities

Ultimately, as the media framing is constructed according to the dominant tropes of Aboriginal victimhood and radical activism, the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems only works to reinforce existing power inequalities and prejudicial colonial attitudes that function to marginalize and subvert Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Knopf explains that, "[t]he mass media in contemporary North America are dominated by the mainstream, by neocolonial societies that uphold the neocolonial status-quo" (2010: 90). Media framing is designed in order to maintain the status quo and this often supersedes the need to accurately or fairly represent Aboriginal social problems and protests. Knopf sees this primary concern of defending the status quo in how "[t]he biased media coverage of the Oka crisis in 1990 and the recent Caledonia reclamation protest in 2006 and 2007 show that in situations of conflict between Canada and the Aboriginal populations, the news media tend to take the stand for mainstream Canada" (2010: 91). Mainstream media create a sense of "reality" about Aboriginal social problems and protests that may have little or no relation to the socio-cultural context they emerge from (Harding, 2006: 206) Jiwani identifies the media's role in constructing narratives of Aboriginal social problems by stating that, "[n]ews, at both the national and local levels thus constructs a symbolic universe- a socially constructed reality which affirms national identity and the latter's relations with and location in the world at large" (2010: 9). Miller similarly argues that "media can play a decisive role in promulgating racist ideology and in maintaining white dominance" (Miller, 2008: 2). While the media framing of Aboriginal social problems may appear to be an expository or even sympathetic news casting of an objective reality about the conditions that Aboriginal peoples of Canada

face, the way in which the visual discourse is framed and constructed is strikingly consistent with prejudicial attitudes and damaging racial stereotypes. The impact of media framing is hostile to Aboriginal identity, political agency and voice in Canada, not expository and informative of Aboriginal social problems.

The construction of colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity in relation to news stories about Aboriginal social problems and protests is by no means a new process, as "[t]he legacy of Aboriginal representations in the Canadian context date back to early French and English Colonization" (Jiwani, 2009: 3).The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is a clear indication of how "the press since confederation has aided and abetted the promotion of colonial policies" (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 256). The media reflects and validates colonial assumptions and attitudes that benefit their largest and most important audience- the dominant non-Aboriginal majority (Harding, 2006: 205). Harding notes that the discourse of Aboriginal social problems and protests, "effectively sanctions racism towards Aboriginal people since white Canadians have historically enjoyed and continue to hold decisive advantages over Aboriginal people in all forms of institutional power" (2006: 205). In doing so, the media constructs the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is specifically framed in order to target the dominant majority and to tap into the lingering colonial attitudes that are essential to defining both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identities from the dominant perspective.

Media and Public Awareness of Aboriginal Issues, Protests and Public Inquiries

Mainstream media and especially the visual discourse hold a central role of teaching and educating the dominant population. For many, news is a primary and daily source of information on current events which helps to inform their own opinions and perspectives (Van Dijk, 2000: 33). As Fullerton and Patterson note, "[r]eporters and photographers operate as the public's eyes and ears. They bring the face of the Other to the people" (2008: 209). Robertson notes that, "newspapers play a critical role in teaching about race, and, in this case, the concept of citizenship" (2011: 238). To this end, the utilization of framing, archetypes and tropes within the visual discourse is a form of educational cue and teaching aid. The framing of Aboriginal social problems relies on these tropes to reinforce and teach dominant narratives and constructions of Aboriginal identity to members of the non-Aboriginal majority. RCAP reflects this notion of the way in which mainstream media constructs Aboriginal social problems into news stories in order to be consumed by non-Aboriginal audiences by arguing that, "[s]ince the earliest days of contact with non-Aboriginal people, the stories of Aboriginal peoples have been constructed and disseminated by outsiders, for outsiders" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 7: 581).

Knopf acknowledges the importance of mainstream media to gain popular awareness about Aboriginal social problems, but also notes that, "[o]n the other hand, such coverage inadvertently sustains the stereotypes pf the lazy Indian on welfare and Indians as victims to be blamed for their state" (Knopf, 2010: 91). Part of the reason that mainstream media adhere to colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity is that they serve as "shortcuts". In order to simplify and strengthen these constructions and tropes as shortcuts, the media tends to repeat familiar and well established colonial attitudes and

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racialized stereotypes with little variation. As Anderson and Robertson contend, "the country's most ubiquitous agent of popular education, the newspaper, had tended to conflate all these peoples into one heavily stereotyped monolith, patterned on a colonial ideology that flourishes to this day" (2011: 256). Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes identify the emergence of the "protest paradigm" as a direct result of news routines and consistent framing of Aboriginal protests (2012: 226). Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes argue that because the protest paradigm is familiar, emotive, and directly linked to prejudicial colonial attitudes, it makes for good (in terms of consumership) news (2012: 226).

Euro-Canada as an Imagined Community

The power of the framing of Aboriginal social problems extends beyond the continued reiteration of colonial and prejudicial attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples as "Canada, like all nations is an imagined community" (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 5). As such, the continuous process of imagining the community of Canada becomes a project of exclusion, identity confirmation and a conscious effort to separate inside and outside of what it means to be Canadian. Joyce Green identifies this ongoing process of imagining Canada, through the exclusion and marginalization of Aboriginal peoples, as "Project Canada" (2001: 716). Buddle describes in her research on Aboriginal cultural mediation how, "Euro-Canadian settlers effectively inscribed Canadian nationalism through the stories they told themselves about themselves in relation to a fabricated Indigenous otherness" (2004: 35). Robertson notes that the use of tropes allows the mainstream media to define the character of the imagined community of Canada (2011:

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256). Robertson argues that, "[t]he press continues to print the *news,* frame the imaginary

Indian as a cartoon caricature, and champion the myth of Canada as a pluralistic society"

(2011: 256). Based on the role that defining the Aboriginal Other plays in defining the

dominant majority, the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems can be considered

a component part of the project of imagining the nation of Canada and is given a great

deal of legitimacy and strength due to the nature of this role. Buddle identifies how

tropes and constructions of Aboriginality shape government responses by arguing that the

imagined non-Aboriginal community of Canada, "approached Aboriginal peoples after

having framed their own virtual realities or 'pictures' of Indianness, after compiling

information from the imaginings about Indian peoples communicated by other whites in

public discourse" (2004: 35).

 The ongoing process of determining and reinforcing the separation between

multiple identities in a heterogeneous society such as Canada is a demanding pursuit.

Buddle finds that, "Euro-Canadians tended to invest rather heavily-emotionally,

economically, and politically- in the versions of 'whiteness' they extrapolated from the

process" of constructing colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity (2004: 36). Great effort is

needed to construct and maintain identities in order to give them clarity, shape and

strength. Thobani argues that through the exaltation process, members of the imagined

community, by valorizing certain characteristics, demonstrate their difference and

superiority to the Aboriginal other (2007: 10). The process of exaltation of the non-

Aboriginal subject, as members of the imagined community of Canada is a discursive one

and imagery- including the use of tropes- is a central component of this discourse

(Thobani, 2007: 10). Fairclough contends that, "texts negotiate social relations between

people in circumstances of doubt or contestation, and people attempt to work out textually, in their use of language, the dilemmas they face in defining their own identities" (1995: 8) Fairclough's assessment of the role of language and discourse in defining and clarifying distinctions between identities is also found in visual discourse, where representation, symbol and imagery function to work out the "doubt and contestation" that surrounds the mutually defining identities of dominant majority and the Aboriginal subordinate other (Fairclough, 1995: 8).

Framing and Templates for Representation

Framing is an important tool utilized by mainstream newspapers in Canada to mediate accounts of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries in a repeatable and easily understood way (Jiwani, 2009: 5). Jenny Kitzsinger suggests that frames as "templates serve as rhetorical shorthand, helping journalists and audiences to make sense of fresh news stories" (2000:61). Kitzsinger suggests that using templates for how to mediate certain news stories allows news agencies and media consumers alike to understand complicated current news stories, such as stories regarding Aboriginal social problems and public inquiries (2000:61). Framing establishes what acceptable news content is by establishing "the limits concerning what can be permissibly transcribed from actual events to scriptings thereof" (Goffman, 1974: 56).

The process of constructing and framing Aboriginal social problems within the media discourse is an act of mainstream media making sense of the colonial other and attempting to make sense of their own position of power in relation to the Aboriginal

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peoples of Canada. As Henry and Tator explain, "[t]o make sense of the world is to exert power over it, and to circulate that sense socially is to exert power over those who then use that sense as a way of coping with their daily lives" (Henry and Tator, 2002:73). Henry and Tator argue that the media discourse, including very prominently the visual component, represents the "making sense" or normalizing function of media discourse in informing, legitimizing and regurgitating social attitudes and norms (2002: 73). The way in which Henry and Tator suggest that the public utilizes the media framing and constructions to cope with their daily lives further supports the way in which the visual discourse has a specific impact on how and why the majority of Canadians respond to media constructions and framing of Aboriginal social problems.

What makes the framing of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries in the media visual discourse particularly evocative is how the utilization and reinforcement of the dominant tropes of Aboriginal social problems are so consistent. Similarly, in regards to Orientalism, Said finds that "the representations of Orientalism in European culture amount to what we can call a discursive consistency" (1979: 273). Said explains that the way in which the Orient and Orientals are constructed conform to certain consistent narratives and frames in Western thought, art and cultural expression (1979: 273). The consistency means that any opportunity for competing narratives, voices and perspectives, particularly from the East are greatly constrained.

Codifying the Us v. Them Binary Between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal People

There is a danger in underestimating the power of the visual discourse in confirming and reinvigorating norms, attitudes and prejudicial power relations. As Said contends, "the strength of Western cultural discourse, a strength too often mistaken as merely decorative or 'superstructural' is considerable and potent in its impact on society as whole" (1979:25). The visual discourse as a component of broader Western cultural discourses maintains "very close ties to the enabling socio-economic and political institutions" which causes a loop of normalizing validation to circulate from the discourse, to the consumers of media, and back again (Said, 1979: 6). "The binary codification of difference" encapsulated in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems resonates with consumers of Canadian media and works to increase the salience of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems (Pile and Thrift, 1995: 48). The blatant coding of Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal members of the dominant majority into diametrically opposed and water-tight poles of experience lends strength to the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems in influencing social attitudes and public opinion.

Media in Canada is an essential and widely available information source that "exerts formidable suasion that effectively serves to instruct audiences and teach readers" (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 13). The visual discourse in mainstream media is a recognizable and familiar tool for public knowledge and exposure to Aboriginal social problems that for many may be a primary source of knowledge and information on the issues that are impacting Aboriginal peoples in Canada. For many Canadians, who would not otherwise have any awareness of certain Aboriginal social problems or

protests, "[t]he media presents us with stories about events created by people that we will never meet of places we will never see" (McCormick, 2010: 9).

As a result of the media's visual discourse, "mainstream Canada gazes at the world in a certain way and acts on these beliefs" (Anderson and Robertson, 2011: 8). Although the importance of the media in being the only source of exposure for many to Aboriginal social problems and protests is not unique (such as coverage of conflict in foreign countries), the particular framing of Aboriginal social problems, in an effort to build "moral panic" is a differentiating feature of media framing of Aboriginal social problems and protests (Miller, 2008: 2). Miller describes this "moral panic" as the way in which framing develops a highly exaggerated and distorted construction of Aboriginal peoples that treats them as a constant threat to "upstanding" dominant society (Miller, 2008: 2). Miller contends that the racist discourses that permeate the media's treatment of Aboriginal social problems and protests include "moral panic, blaming the victim, and white victimization", all of which are evident through both the Aboriginal victim and the radical activist construction (2008: 2). The report from RCAP argues that, "[t]he tendency of the media is to emphasize conflict, differences, violence, death and destruction" in presenting Aboriginal social problems and protests (RCAP, 1996: Volume 5, Chapter 4: 93). These themes that RCAP identifies as being emphasized by mainstream media in their construction of Aboriginal social problems, are essential themes for building a sense of "moral panic" that Miller identifies (2008: 2).

Visual Discourse, Norms and Constructed Identity

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The visual discourse found in Canadian media is a critical arena for the regurgitation, strengthening and normalization of norms, attitudes and assumptions that legitimate Aboriginal subordination and marginalization. Anderson and Robertson comment that "press coverage is important as it serves as a mirror, albeit imperfect, of public sentiment" (2011: 15). The media construction of the dominant tropes of Aboriginal victimhood and radical activism within the framing of Aboriginal social problems are, in part, a barometer of public opinion, as well as a source of validation of legitimacy for lingering colonial attitudes. Tropes serve an important purpose in clarifying how and where Aboriginal activism and social problems impact non-Aboriginal society. As McCormick contends, "[t]hese underlying themes implicitly define the boundaries of society and have an effect on how people think and live their lives" (2010: 9). Media has an immediate impact on public perception in that is it a prolific source of information and vehicle for informal learning. As such, Said finds that "the fields of learning, as much as the works of even the most eccentric artist, are constrained and acted upon by society, by cultural traditions, by worldly circumstance, and by stabilizing influences like schools, libraries, and governments" (1979: 201). Images are important components of the discourse of Aboriginal social problems and protests because, [m]odern media includes more images than ever before, and these images are remembered longer and are more likely to elicit emotional responses than are textual accounts" (Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes, 2012: 223). The emotive strength of imagery is critical to the construction of Aboriginal social problems and allows for connections to be made between the emotionally-wrought images (such as those

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described in relation to the natural victimhood trope) and between preconceived notions of Aboriginal identity.

The media frames of Aboriginal social problems are carefully constructed in order to appeal to and target non-Aboriginal media consumers. One way in which the mainstream media targets their non-Aboriginal audience is through the use of "shocking" news stories (McCormick, 2010: 9). The colonial tropes of the radical activist and the natural victim are hyperbolized and evoke shock and by extension, work well as news stories. Using colonial tropes allows for this appeal to non-Aboriginal audiences and in her assessment of this type of "shocking appeal", McCormick finds that, "[a]lthough such knowledge is third-hand, it appears immediate, shocking, entertaining and informative, filtered through the media graphically and textually" (McCormick, 2010: 9).

Ultimately, the news coverage of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries is a highly targeted and filtered product (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 329). As Henry and Tator explain, "[e]lites are the likeliest to have access to news outlets so their opinions are more likely than other people's to be reflected in news reports" (2002:76). This creates a loop that encompasses media, the public, the Aboriginal objects of the discourse and the Government whereby the media constructs a frame of Aboriginal social problems that centres on lingering colonial attitudes and power inequalities that demonstrate non-Aboriginal dominance over Aboriginal victims and the public in turn responds to this construction. The visual discourse of media in Canada represents one of several "structures and mechanisms for privileging the judgements of particular social groups and the particular discourses they deploy" (Fairclough, 1995: 19). Furthermore, this particular recipe for construction according to

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prominent tropes and colonial attitudes impacts public opinion and can have impacts on Government decision making and by extension impacts the Aboriginal peoples. Following the cycle, the normalizing quality of the media discourse functions to reinvigorate and regurgitate lingering colonial attitudes, thereby strengthening assumptions, stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes towards Aboriginal peoples. This reinforcement works to dictate how the media will continue to frame and construct Aboriginal social problems.

The high degree of discursive consistency in the media treatment of both Aboriginal social problems and their resulting protests is something that has been analyzed by many including Harding (2005), Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers (2010) and Lambertus (2004). They all agree that across various large scale protests including Ipperwash, Oka and Gustafsen lake Lake, Aboriginal protests are constructed in the media in a very particular way that is consistent with colonial stereotypes. This thesis identifies not only the consistency within the visual discourse, but also how these tropes and the construction of Aboriginal social problems and protests are anchored in persistent colonial attitudes and perceptions of Aboriginal identity. Furthermore, this thesis grapples with how these two dominant tropes are present in the resulting public inquiries that are called to respond to these hot button Aboriginal issues and their subsequent protests.

Chapter 6: The Implications of the Radical Activist and Natural Victim Tropes in Aboriginal Public Inquiries

This thesis has highlighted the presence of two dominant tropes found in the visual discourse of the Aboriginal radical activist and the natural victim. In both instances, the visual discourse has supported these constructions through media framing and these colonial tropes have dangerous implications for how they can in turn shape public inquiries and limit their potential in addressing the Aboriginal social problems that they were initially created to address. This chapter will offer an explanation for why the media often gets it wrong in their representation of Aboriginal social problems and will further identify what is at stake when they do misrepresent these issues.

The imagined and constructed tropes of the radical activist and the natural victim have in many ways, effectively displaced any alternative narratives of Aboriginal social problems in protest. A reasonable question is: how is it possible for the media construction through framing to displace the original and signified Aboriginal social problem? This displacement can be attributed to the way in which both the sign and signifier are simultaneously attempting to occupy contested space within the visual discourse. The discourse of Aboriginal social problems is a choppy assemblage of sound bites, images, and headlines which as a whole are attempting to fight for already limited space within news media. When space is contested and limited for meaning and representation, it fosters a competition and zero sum game between the sign (the true Aboriginal issue or claim entrenched in the socio-political context of colonialism) and the

signified (the media framing of social problems shaped by the construction of tropes of Aboriginal identity and lingering colonial attitudes).

Through framing, the media constructs a reality of Aboriginal social problems which engages with cultural norms, stereotypes, dominant narratives, and symbolism in order to create a fairly unified message. On a primary level, media framing functions as an influence on public opinion and awareness of Aboriginal social problems which can in turn have implications for government decision making. On a secondary level, media framing also functions to replace the referential Aboriginal social problem with the media construction, and in doing so, the sign displaces the signified.

The media framing and construction of Aboriginal social problems in Canada have taken on a life of their own above and beyond the original social problem that they are meant to symbolize and represent. The constructions begin to occupy a central place in the understanding and knowledge of social problems that is held by the majority of Canadians. The constructions have a high degree of salience and become normalized and familiar to consumers of media. Barthes argues against the normalization of tropes and social constructions by rejecting, "the naturalness with which newspapers, art, and common sense constantly dress up reality which, even though it is the one we live in, is undoubtedly determined by history" (1972: 11). Barthes expressed concern at the taken for granted and unquestioned absorption of contemporary discourse as neutral and ahistorical, when it can be neither (1972: 11).

The media construction should not be collectively considered an "unreal" copy or "fiction" of the contemporary Aboriginal social problems in Canada. In fact, in its dominance over all other potential narratives within the discourse, the media construction

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of Aboriginal social problems is arguably the most real and powerful. As Fairclough

explains, "Baudrillard has argued that in post modernity the distinction between image

and reality has collapsed so that we are living in a hyperreality where it is impossible for

instance to separate the images of war on TV and the actual thing" (1992: 16).

Aboriginal social problems have been displaced within the mainstream media discourse

by repetitive and consistent presentations of the Aboriginal natural victim and radical

activist.

Framing News-Events and Constructing Arbitrary Timelines on Aboriginal Social Problems

Through framing, the mainstream media construct news-events out of particular

Aboriginal social problems. Bill Ashcroft notes importantly that, "'events' are by no

means neutral" (2001b: 88). Ashcroft elaborates on Paul Ricoeur's conceptualizations of

how "events" are created in order to define specific points within an empirical

development narrative (Ashcroft, 2001b: 88; Ricoeur, 1984: 66-7). As Ashcroft

contends, "[t]he narrative of events is one which cloaks, with the fiction of empiricism,

the teleological and centripetal narrative of Empire" (Ashcroft, 2001b: 88). Ashcroft

contends, building on the concepts of Ricoeur that the narrative of "events" must be

addressed in order to problematize how "history confirms, as much as any elaboration of

the discourse of modernity, the supremacy of the modern, advanced, civilized West over

the premodern, primitive, colonized societies" (Ashcroft, 2001b: 88) Ashcroft

demonstrates a clear connection between the framing of time and events, the binary of

colonial identities, and power (Ashcroft, 2001b :88). According to this construction of

Aboriginal social problem as individual "events" or "periods of crisis", the media

effectively assigns arbitrary start dates and end dates, as if the beginning and end of an

Aboriginal social problem is demarcated by the boundaries of media attention waxing

and waning. The time frame that the media constructs around Aboriginal social problems

is explained by Baudrillard who suggests that, "Only the media can make an event-

whatever the contents, whether they are conformist or subversive" (Baudrillard,

1994:82). In this construction, the news-event of Aboriginal social problems removes the

referential issue from its political context.

When covering Aboriginal social problems, protests and their resulting public

inquiries, "[r]ecent 'episodes' are more newsworthy than ongoing 'issues'" (Wilkes,

Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 332). Treating Aboriginal social problems as if they

are comparable to natural disasters- short, shocking and blameless- is a more digestible

media product for mainstream audiences than chronic inequalities and this is not lost on

mainstream media (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 332). Framing leads to the

severing of the sign and the signified by constructing Aboriginal social problems as

discrete, independent crisis-events and constructing an imagining of Aboriginal social

problems similar to the treatment of humanitarian crises such as famine or drought. The

political causal factors in Aboriginal social problems are left on the editing floor of

media's framing which leaves the signified problem particularly vulnerable to erasure

and displacement.

How the construction of Aboriginal social problems is able to force out the

original or referenced Aboriginal social problem in this contested space rests on the

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continued prevalence and power of lingering colonial attitudes that taint all Aboriginal-state relations. Not only are Aboriginal peoples of Canada, according to lingering colonial attitudes, universally characterized as helpless, dependent, victims, but there is also a strong social norm surrounding the assumption that non-Aboriginal people will always be more competent in "solving" or "fixing" Aboriginal social problems than Aboriginal people (Harding, 2005: 311).   This myth of protection or "White Man's Burden" (Friesen and Friesen, 2002: 54) relies on a blanket validation of Western dominated media constructions of Aboriginal social problems over any potential opposing or divergent constructions and representations (Jiwani, 2009: 2). As a result, through this entrenched colonial attitude, the construction of Aboriginal social problems framed by mainstream media is awarded more salience and legitimacy than even the original or reference Aboriginal social problem. The sign as constructed in media takes on a life of its own, detached from the Aboriginal social problem it was initially meant to signify.

The Business of News v. the Educating Role of News

Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes make the crucial observation that, "sales are maintained or increased by making stories that area as appealing and dramatic as possible; as a result, collective action tends to be framed as episodic, dramatic, and novel" (2012: 224). Corrigal-Brown and Wilkes' observation may help to explain why there is such a focus on creating "events" and "periods of crisis" and also why emotive imagery is given precedence over alternative (perhaps more accurate or less extreme)

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images. Consumers of media in Canada are believed to be, by mainstream media more engaged by a repeated image of a dirty, female, toddler in a destitute home on a reserve in Northern Ontario than they are with a meaningful inquiry into the social and political context and causal factors that gave rise to the conditions that made this image possible. As Sorenson acknowledges in regards to the visual discourse of famine in Africa, "media corporations are saturated with the values of entertainment, a category which demands the transformation of disaster into spectacle and the packaging of events into an easily consumable form determined by a repeatable cycle of meanings" (1991: 224). The prominence is placed on the emotive power and resonance of the visual sign instead of on the preceding and cumulative processes that gave rise to the Aboriginal social problem being highlighted- the question often becomes, will this story sell? Even if the images are representative of a serious issue, such as violence against Aboriginal women, the construction of the images and the reliance on colonial identity tropes, certain images are more likely to elicit a memorable and emotional response, which makes them of higher (entertainment) value (Sorenson, 1991: 224). However, in the framing of the images of Aboriginal social problems in the visual discourse, the political causal factors and the power imbalances that give rise to these problems are omitted or minimized.

The mainstream media, through presenting the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems, is to some extent functioning as a means to increase awareness and recognition of these issues. There is some potential value in the signifying or highlighting role alone. However, when the media construction and framing is so dislocated from the initial Aboriginal social problem it is signifying, this awareness building role is shallow. The visual discourse with the displacement of the signified by

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the sign becomes less about driving public awareness and more about provoking shock, guilt and reinforcing colonial prejudicial attitudes and assumptions.

The media construction of Aboriginal social problems be it through the radical activist or Aboriginal victimhood trope preforms a hostile takeover of the contested space in the media discourse that might otherwise be occupied by a closer examination of the systemic factors that are connected to Aboriginal social problems and more importantly, Aboriginal perspectives and alternative narratives. This reinforced dominance of the media construction of Aboriginal social problems has serious implications for Aboriginal representation and agency as it fosters a sense that Aboriginal social problems are a media spectacle and crisis event, but unrelated to systemic power imbalances.

Sign Subverts the Signified

Within mainstream media, the sign subverts the signified, constructed "periods of crisis" subvert the causal political factors, and ultimately the media framing subverts Aboriginal voice and agency within the visual discourse. As Retzlaff comments, "the presentations have little or no reference at all to the Aboriginal perspective on the issue" (2006: 26). By constructions and framing subverting the referential issues, potential opportunities for Aboriginal perspectives to gain access into the discourse are severely constricted. The framing is anchored in colonial attitudes that presume the predominance of non-Aboriginal representations over Aboriginal voice in all areas, limiting the ability of Aboriginal perspectives to be adequately represented in the mainstream media's visual discourse. The media framing, which is rooted in persistent colonial attitudes that lurk

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just beneath the surface allows for the constructed news-event of Aboriginal social problem to be awarded more salience, public interest and legitimacy than the corresponding social problem it was initially intended to signify.

Said finds that in Orientalism, "the nexus of knowledge and power creating the 'Oriental' and in a sense obliterating him as a human being", leading to a similar process of the sign causing the erasure of the signified (Said, 1979: 27). This process of erasure is explained by Derrida when he finds "a dangerous promiscuity and a nefarious complicity between the reflection and the reflected which lets itself be seduced narcissistically" (1974:36). Derrida's observation indicates how the specific and constraining way in which the media frames the visual discourse informs a certain reading and comprehension of Aboriginal social problems, and this reading in turn reflects back onto the initial social problems, and in doing so, obliterates them. The sign loses its reference and in this case the framing and media construction is disentangled from any reality of Aboriginal social problems. Derrida explains this phenomenon as "there are things like reflecting pools, and images, and infinite reference from one to the other, but no longer a source, a spring" (1974: 36). In this quote, Derrida is using the metaphors of reflecting pools and springs to establish that the reflecting pools are capable of reproduction and imperfect perfection but are not connected to the original source, such as the case of a spring. In this way, Derrida explains the difference between signs (reflecting pools/ images) and the initial signifiers (sources/ springs) (1974: 36).

Baudrillard identifies a similar inevitability in the way in which the real/replica sign/signified binaries collapse when he contends that, "[i]t is no longer possible to fabricate unreal from the real, the imaginary from the given or the real" (Baudrillard,

1994:124). Baudrillard suggests that the repetition of symbols makes it increasingly difficult to return to the original source and in many cases, the original or root is lost entirely (1994: 12) Baudrillard's claim resonated in the way in which media framing has the eventual consequence of erasure of the signified Aboriginal social problem in the visual discourse to the benefit of the media construction. Through this process, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognize where the frame and construction begin or end and more challenging still to ever extract the construction and framing from the discourse. Zizek, like Derrida and Baudrillard, finds simulacra, "no longer clearly distinguishable from the real" (1999: 195). Becoming undetectable, these simulacra (in the context of this thesis, the tropes of the radical activist and the natural victim) become a particularly difficult target to hit. In order to attack these tropes, they must first be exposed as what they are: constructions designed to maintain existing colonial power imbalances.

Destroying the Message?

Baudrillard makes reference to McLuhan's formula that *the medium is the message* and contends that this formula expresses the simultaneous demise of the medium and the message (Baudrillard, 1994:82). Baudrillard argues that the McLuhan paradigm indicates that in media discourse, there are no longer pairs of interacting poles for the movement of information and meaning. There is no clear separation of the way in which information moves and the meaning that its movement produces. In McLuhan's paradigm, Baudrillard recognizes, "the erasure of distinct terms and oppositions,

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including that of the medium and of the real" (Baudrillard, 1994:83). Applying

Baudrillard's concept of the implosion of meaning and the mutual demise of the medium

and message (1994: 82) to the case of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems

allows for a clearer analysis of how the displacement of the signified by the sign, or more

concretely, the subversion of the Aboriginal social problem by the media framed

construction of the social problem, has immediate implications for both Aboriginal

communities and also the larger public of media consumers in Canada.

Baudrillard and Simulacra

Baudrillard's concept of the hyper-real and simulacra is a central component of a

critical discourse analysis of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems (1981:

12). Baudrillard contends that the hyper-real does not indicate a false reality that

substitutes for the original reality, but instead a simulacra of the real that takes on so

much meaning, resonance and legitimacy that it becomes more-real in the perceptions of

the observer than the original (1981: 14). Baudrillard uses the example of Disneyland as

a physical example of the hyper real, where although initially anchored to the real,

Disneyland has taken on a dislocated and powerful meaning and autonomy above and

beyond the original (1981: 12-14). As such, through this attached meaning and power,

Disneyland has become hyper-real (Baudrillard, 1981: 12). Likewise, through framing,

the media construction of Aboriginal social problems has gained legitimacy,

recognisability and meaning beyond the original referenced problem and has become

hyper-real.

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Questioning Self-Governing Competence

A shared quality of both the Aboriginal victimhood trope and the radical activist trope is found in how both tropes question the competence of Aboriginal people in governing themselves and resolving their own issues (Harding. 2005: 311). Harding argues that, "[c]ontent analysis of recent news texts indicates that common sense about Aboriginal people is constructed by the media in ways that preclude their being 'ready' to exercise control over their lives" (2005: 311). Whether it is the hopeless and even willing victims of the Aboriginal victimhood trope or the criminal and frightening warriors of the radical activist trope, the media constructs a sense that Aboriginal people in the face of social problems and unresolved claims with the state are not able to respond effectively or look out for their own best interests.

Media stereotypes and tropes indicate Aboriginal people as a whole, whether victims or activists are incapable of managing or preventing social problems and grievances against the state. As Coulthard explains, there is a longstanding "myth that Indigenous societies were too primitive to bear political rights" (2007: 451). Both the trope of the natural victim and the radical activist support the continuance of this myth. As such, the implications of these two tropes within Aboriginal public inquiries is that they can silently question the competency of Aboriginal people in being self-governing and alternatively validate the warden role of the state in managing Aboriginal affairs (Harding, 2005: 313). Retzslaff illustrates the link between tropes and social control by arguing that negative labelling "can disempower groups through the creation of potent

negative stereotypes and can thus be a powerful means of exercising social control"
(2005: 610).

       The existence of these two tropes is problematic for the success of Aboriginal public inquiries as they diminish from the social problems, protests and disputes that the public inquiries were created to address. The natural victim and radical activist trope create blind spots for the intolerance and sanitized racism that is still present to this day. Tropes effectively obfuscate the reality and socio-political context of the issues that the public inquiries are designed to respond to making it difficult (if not impossible) for the inquiries to do adequate work to analyze and prevent similar problems. In order to avoid the limiting and detrimental effect of these two dominant tropes, public inquiries must focus on addressing these constructions and the framing role of the media within the context of Aboriginal social problems and protests, such as the research completed for RCAP regarding stereotyping and the treatment of the Oka Crisis by the media (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3 Chapter 7: 581). If Aboriginal political voice is obfuscated by the trope of the radical activist (and likewise for the helpless victim trope), public inquiries will be severely stunted in their ability to produce meaningful recommendations for change.

Chapter 7: RCAP and Combating Colonial Tropes

This thesis has analyzed the nature of two dominant tropes, the radical activist and the natural victim, that permeate the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries. This chapter examines in more depth how RCAP's findings in regards to the media framing of Aboriginal social problems and the dominance of certain tropes and stereotypes has an immediate impact on government decision making. Whereas the preceding chapter identified how and why the media "gets it wrong" in regards to Aboriginal social problems, chapter 7 identifies RCAP as a case where an Aboriginal public inquiry was capable of avoiding these mistakes and effectively addressed the dominant colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity. The recognition of colonial stereotypes in media coverage of Aboriginal social problems differentiates RCAP from other Aboriginal public inquiries that have not only failed to recognize the role of media constructions within the government response to and public opinion of Aboriginal protests and social problems, but have themselves been shaped by these constructions.

Dominant Constructions Identified by RCAP

Harding notes that RCAP found that, "three damaging stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples are perpetuated in all forms of public discourse 1) Victim 2) Warriors and 3) Environmentalists" (2005: 312). These three stereotypes that RCAP analyzed reflect the tropes identified within this thesis as being particularly important in the public inquiries called during the time period in question. The victim and warrior stereotypes noted by

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RCAP are variations of the Aboriginal victim and radical activist tropes analyzed in this thesis. The third volume of the report from RCAP identifies a variety of problematic stereotypes utilized by the media in regards to Aboriginal social problems by stating that, "Aboriginal people are portrayed in a historical past reconstructed in present stereotypes: the noble Red Man roaming free in the forest; the bloodthirsty savage attacking the colony or the wagon train; the drunken Indian; the Aboriginal environmentalist; and, most recently, the warrior in para-military dress, wielding a gun" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3 Chapter 7: 581). RCAP as a public inquiry explicitly acknowledged the presence and power of colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity in shaping the media's framing and construction of Aboriginal social problems and also in the way in which the state interprets and responds to these visual cues in their own understanding of Aboriginal activism.

Importantly, RCAP examined how colonial tropes and attitudes continue to shape government responses to Aboriginal claims against the state and social problems. The report from RCAP commented that, "[g]overnment administrators saw Aboriginal people as unsophisticated, poor, outside modern society and generally incapable of making the right choices" (RCAP, 1996 as quoted by King, 2012: 89). With this acknowledgement, RCAP manages to minimize some of the cynical critiques raised against public inquiries (see chapter 4) by not only being self-aware as a product of the state but also being critical of government responses to Aboriginal peoples and how colonial attitudes and tropes of Aboriginal identity could have shaped these responses.

Reflecting on Media's Role in Oka

RCAP not only researched the way in which Aboriginal people are represented within Canadian media, but also analyzed the particular role of the media in the events at Oka and other major Aboriginal protests and occupations (Harding, 2005: 312). James Winter's study of the way in which Oka was reported in Canadian media indicated that the media overwhelmingly validated and supported the government's response (1992: 249). Harding comments on Winter's research and notes that, "Winter found that news outlets had a cozy relationship with the government and 'were instrumental in accomplishing the government goal of public opinion management" (Winter, 1992: 249 as quoted by Harding, 2005: 313). RCAP does not shy away from digging into this issue and identifies that the media reports of Oka were bias to a disadvantage of the Mohawk protestors throughout the crisis (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 1, Page 5). Addressing the media's role in framing the protests to swing public opinion in favor of the state's response and intervention was a project housed within RCAP that differentiates this public inquiry from other Aboriginal inquiries (Harding, 2005: 311).

RCAP identified the presence of the trope of the radical activist in the media coverage of Oka by referencing the, "bandana-masked, khaki-clad, gun-toting" protestors featured in the media discourse (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 7: 581). Instead of falling into the trap of blaming the protestors, fixating on their methods, or playing up the inconvenience of the blockade (that would typically be fodder for discussion of Aboriginal protests such as Oka) RCAP identified how the media constructed a sense of Aboriginal protestors that was far removed from the important and contentious historical context of the land disputes. For example, as the second volume of the report from

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RCAP contends, "[e]ven the extensive press coverage of the Oka crisis was not

successful in communicating the fact that the issue was a land claim the Mohawk Nation

had been advancing for nearly two centuries" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 2, Chapter 4; 513).

The report from RCAP demonstrates an awareness of how the radical activist trope does

damage to the treatment of Aboriginal activists in mainstream media by decontexualizing

their political protest. The report from RCAP demonstrates that colonial identity tropes,

such as the radical activist construction dislocate Aboriginal social problems and their

resulting protests from their socio-political contexts (RCAP, 1996: Volume 2, Chapter 4:

513)

   The research conducted through RCAP on the relationship between the events at

Oka and the media treatment of Aboriginal protest found that, "media coverage did little

justice to the complexity of the issues surrounding the Oka events and the long history of

Aboriginal grievances over the land in question" (Harding, 2005: 326). Similarly to the

decontexualization described in chapter four of this thesis, RCAP recognized a

disassociation between the Oka Crisis and the longstanding conflict that culminated in the

occupation in the media framing of the news story (Harding, 2005: 326).   Furthermore,

RCAP acknowledged that the colonial stereotypes and tropes that are prevalent

throughout the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems are in some cases the most

immediate source of information for non-Aboriginal Canadians about specific cases. As

noted in the fifth volume of the report from RCAP, "[m]any Canadians have little, if any

interaction with First Nations peoples in their daily lives and are likely to develop images

and perceptions from newspaper articles, television programs, and commercials" (RCAP,

1996: Volume 5, Chapter 4: 93). RCAP stresses the way in which due to their

prevalence, historical (colonial) roots and the role of these stereotypes and constructions, the use of the radical activist, natural victim and other damaging tropes can have an impact on public perception and response to Aboriginal social problems (RCAP, 1996: Volume 5, Chapter 4: 93).

RCAP Regarding Media and Discourse on Aboriginal Activism

The report from RCAP commented in regards to the three stereotypes the commission identified (victim, warrior and environmentalist) regurgitated "old and deeply imbedded notions of 'Indians' as alien, unknowable and ultimately a threat to civil order" (RCAP, 1996: 5 and also Harding, 2005: 313). Here, RCAP connected the presence of tropes rooted in colonial attitudes to the continued stereotyping and framing of Aboriginal peoples in contemporary Aboriginal social problems and protests (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 1, Page 5). The report from RCAP argues that, "[w]hen the media address Aboriginal issues, the impressions they convey are often distorted" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 5, Chapter 4: 93). RCAP looked at both the quantity and quality of media attention awarded to the recent Aboriginal issues preceding the inquiry and concluded that the role of the mainstream media during Aboriginal social problems and protests, for the most part, is problematic and worthy of further analysis.

The report from RCAP also identifies the lack of Aboriginal content and perspectives in mainstream media as a problem to be addressed in order to have more representative coverage of Aboriginal social problems and protests. The report from RCAP argues that due to a lack of Aboriginal perspectives in mainstream media,

"stereotypes and distorted images, based on historical and current misconceptions, are widespread" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 3, Chapter 1: 5). The report from RCAP indicates that with an increasing number of Aboriginal perspectives within the mainstream media, the possibility of overcoming distorted and prejudicial constructions of Aboriginal social problems will be increased.

A major concern that the report from RCAP raises in regards to the media's role in the Oka Crisis is the way in which mainstream media adheres to a construction of Aboriginal protestors as being predisposed to violence and aggression (1996: Volume 4, Chapter 2: 63). The report from RCAP identified that stereotypes of Aboriginal people have a negative effect on how Aboriginal protests (such as Oka) are perceived and ultimately responded to and therefore the stereotype that Aboriginal activists are inherently violent needs to be addressed (RCAP, 1996: Volume 4, Chapter 2: 63).

Furthermore, RCAP commented on how Aboriginal protests are generally overlooked by mainstream media in Canada (Harding, 2005: 313). This finding is important in how Aboriginal protests are sensationalized and how the tropes of the radical activist and helpless victim are so familiar in the media, that it appears as if protests are covered by the media more frequently than they actually are (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 330). The relative infrequency of media attention to Aboriginal protests, land dispossession and treaty violations is striking because these type of Aboriginal-state "disputes are widespread in Canada, where there are currently over 800 unresolved cases" (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 330).

Structuring and Designing RCAP

An important difference between RCAP and other Aboriginal public inquiries is found in not only the size and scope of RCAP, but also in the way the inquiry was designed. RCAP was co-chaired by George Erasmus, a recognized Aboriginal cultural and political leader, and a majority of the 3500 witnesses called for the inquiry identified as Aboriginal (RCAP, 1996: Volume 1, Preamble). The introduction to the first volume of the report from RCAP opens with a message of thanksgiving, in the style of the Iroquois tradition (RCAP, 1996: Volume 1, Introduction: iv). From this introduction forward, there is a concerted effort throughout the report to include Aboriginal world views, beliefs and traditional knowledge in identifying how Aboriginal-state relations can be improved. The report from RCAP acknowledges that, "[t]his Commission concludes that a fundamental prerequisite of government policy making in relation to Aboriginal peoples is the participation of Aboriginal peoples themselves" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 1, Introduction: 7). This acknowledgment of how critical inclusiveness is to addressing Aboriginal social problems is evident throughout the commission. Cairns assesses the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives within RCAP and contends that, "[a]lthough we do not know the inner workings of the commission, we may reasonably assume that the *report* reflects an Aboriginal perspective, as four of the seven commissioners, including the co-chair [George Erasmus], were Aboriginal" (2000: 116).

The timing of RCAP is also an important consideration in the design of the commission. As the report from RCAP acknowledges, "[RCAP] came to fruition in the troubled months following the demise of the Meech Lake Accord and the confrontation, in the summer of 1990, between Mohawks and the power of the Canadian state at

Kanesatake (Oka), Quebec.   As we complete the drafting of our report in 1995, further

confrontations at Ipperwash, Ontario, and Gustafson Lake, British Columbia, signal that

the underlying issues that gave rise to our Commission are far from resolved" (Volume 1,

Chapter 1 Pg 11 RCAP). RCAP emerged during a politically charged and volatile time

period in Aboriginal activism and Canadian federal political history when identity

politics were paramount. Hughes notes that, "the Oka crisis had created a window of

opportunity by generating a sense of urgency previously lacking both in Canadian society

and among the political elites" (2012: 108). RCAP capitalized on this window of

opportunity to complete an ambitious and in depth commission, the likes of which had

never previously been seen in regards to Aboriginal peoples. Events such as the failure

of the Meech Lake Accord and the Oka crisis gave a sense that Aboriginal-state relations

and more broadly, the politics of recognition in Canada of minorities had reached an

important tipping point (Swain, 2010: 175; Peach, 2011: 2; Simmons, 1999: 120-1). As

Ian Peach notes, "[w]hen combined with Elijah Harper's resistance to the passage of the

Meech Lake Accord and the high-profile activism of other Indigenous leaders, the events

at Kanesatake placed Indigenous issues" as a government priority (2011: 2). As such, the

timing was just right for a public inquiry (RCAP) that held as a mandate broader

questions of representation, identity and how to address the inequalities faced by

Aboriginal peoples within Canada.

        This thesis contends that RCAP in its approach to mainstream media,

acknowledgement of colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity and in its design is different

from other public inquiries and serves as an important case. However, although RCAP

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was different in many ways, it has, to date had serious limitations with enacting its recommendations, which sadly is a common problem with public inquiries in Canada as a whole (Hedican, 2013: 31). This thesis is by no means arguing that the RCAP serves as a perfect model for public inquiries and therefore allows that the RCAP recommendations have not been enacted. Hughes points out that RCAP lacked any sort of performance measures, so it is difficult to assess the success of the commission (2012: 121). Hughes contends, "if the path was the goal, RCAP was a success. It engaged Aboriginal people in this country, individually and collectively; it created a space where long silenced voices were heard" (2012: 121). Along with the attention granted to media constructions of Aboriginal people and the impact of lingering colonial attitudes, RCAP's difference to other public inquiries lies in its success in effectively including Aboriginal peoples in the inquiry process (Hughes, 2012: 105).

It is easy enough to discredit RCAP on the basis of the overwhelming lack of implementation of the recommendations (Rymhs, 2006: 116). Many also argue that interest in RCAP's findings are waning and that this is the direct result of the lack of implementation (Rymhs, 2006: 116). However, RCAP asked important questions and made strong observations on the presences of colonial Aboriginal identity tropes within mainstream media and how these tropes have an impact on public opinion and state responses to Aboriginal social problems and therefore still stands as an important case for how public inquiries are capable of circumventing the trappings of colonial identity tropes and prejudicial attitudes.

Chapter 8: Looking Forward

Although a great deal of this thesis has been preoccupied with the past- whether in the 1990's at Oka or Ipperwash or a more distant colonial past where the tropes of the Aboriginal victim and radical activist were first established- the concerns of this thesis are in how these historical legacies continue to shape media accounts of Aboriginal social problems and also the resulting public inquiries that the government uses to respond to these social problems in the present day. Understanding the dominant tropes that impact Aboriginal public inquiries and are reflected in the media visual discourse is essential to understanding how to move past these tropes in the future, particularly in light of the possibility of new Aboriginal public inquiries. This chapter seeks to explore what may be on the horizon in terms of potential future public inquiries, what lessons can be taken from RCAP, and how colonial tropes- including the radical activist and natural victim- can be diffused in future public inquiries.

Beginning a Federal Missing Women's Inquiry?

Recently, a fair amount of Aboriginal-content media attention has been focused on multiple calls for a Federal inquiry into the hundreds of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada. Nine Canadian premiers agreed to support pursuing a federal inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women during meetings with Aboriginal advocates in July 2013 (CBC, July 24, 2013).   Although it is uncertain, what role if any, the individual provinces would play in the inquiry, their support increased the popular support for the inquiry that had been building (CBC, July 24, 2013). Momentum

in support of creating a missing women's inquiry began to build during the media coverage of Robert William Pickton's murder trial and the resulting Pickton inquiry in B.C. Many within the Aboriginal communities of B.C. and other advocates have acknowledged that although the Highway of Tears and the Pickton murder trial are high profile cases of murdered and missing Aboriginal women, the issue is nationwide (Jiwani, 2009: 1 and Garcia-Del Moral, 2011: 38). With over 500 murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada over the last two decades, the pressure for a public inquiry into these disappearances will likely increase (Jiwani, 2009: 1). In May 2014, RCMP commissioner Bob Paulsen publically confirmed that the RCMP believes the number of murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada to be in excess of 1000 women (CBC, May 1st, 2014).

Although, (as outlined in chapter 4) there remain serious concerns about the effectiveness of public inquiries and their relative value vis a vis their enormous financial cost and time requirement, public inquiries remain a tool available to the state in order to attempt to reconcile and prevent serious concerns that have gained a great deal of public attention. Recently, the United Nations has called on Canada to begin a federal inquiry into the missing and murdered Aboriginal women nationwide (Campion-Smith Toronto Star, May 13th, 2014).

In his report released in May 2014, the UN's special rapporteur on Indigenous rights James Anaya noted that, "[d]uring his visit to Canada the Special Rapporteur heard consistent, insistent calls across the country for a comprehensive, nation-wide inquiry, organized in consultation with indigenous peoples, that could provide an opportunity for the voices of the victims' families to be heard, deepen understanding of the magnitude

and systemic dimensions of the issue, and identify best practices that could lead to an adequately coordinated response" (Anaya, 2014: 12). This recommendation is by no means binding, but the federal government has now received the same recommendation repeatedly from a number of provincial governments and advocates across Canada and internationally (Anaya, 2014: 12). Whether or not a federal inquiry into murdered and missing Aboriginal women in Canada begins, it is necessary to recognize the hostile role that colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity can play within the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries. In the event that a murdered/missing Aboriginal women commission is created, the trope of the natural victim, particularly the gendered construction of the female natural victim will be particularly relevant and in order for an inquiry of this nature to be successful, addressing this colonial trope will be essential in the work done by the inquiry.

Learning from RCAP

As mentioned in the previous chapter, RCAP was a different kind of public inquiry as it made explicit commentary on the nature of colonial stereotypes and their continued role in contemporary Aboriginal social problems and protests (Harding, 2005: 313). RCAP also provided analysis on the way in which the media was an important factor in the events at Oka and in other protests in the same time frame and identified long standing colonial attitudes as being a contributing factor in how the protests were covered and why in mainstream Canadian media. Ultimately, it is difficult to make a definitive observation on whether Aboriginal public inquiries work or not. As this thesis

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has described, there are major concerns surrounding the lack of implementation of public inquiry recommendations and also in regards to the enormous time and cost of such inquiries. However, RCAP did make important recommendations, which if enacted could have major benefits to Aboriginals peoples (Hedican, 2013: 78).

Although two decades have passed since the report from RCAP was published, the majority of the recommendations have not been enacted (Hedican, 2013: 178). However, the number of recommendations enacted is not the only measure of the effectiveness of the public inquiry. The report from RCAP opened up dialogue on the role that the mainstream media plays in Aboriginal protests and activism (Harding, 2005: 313) The RCAP report also made observations on the most persistent colonial stereotypes that continue to shape media constructions of Aboriginal social problems and protests and this was an important difference with RCAP from other Aboriginal public inquiries (Harding, 2005: 313). Perhaps, if a federal missing and murdered Aboriginal women inquiry is indeed called, it will be possible to see what lessons from RCAP can be applied in this case as well.

Combating the Tropes

Colonial tropes such as the radical activist and the helpless victim are not productive and do harm to the ability of Aboriginal actors to combat systemic racism and stereotyping. However, when the tropes have infiltrated all forms of modern cultural exchanges and expression including media, the arts and other forms of social discourse, it is difficult to not only isolate these tropes but to adequately combat them. Hegemony in

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media, as Skea explained limits the potential of the media to escape the trappings of colonial tropes, attitudes and stereotypes (1993/4: 17). As Skea explains, "[w]hen journalists submit news articles that are sympathetic to radicals, editors are likely to intervene in the news process in order to sustain the hegemonic principles. This is especially the case when journalists are reporting confrontational events, like the Oka crisis, where the government is the primary source of information" (Skea, 1993/4: 17).

Skea contends that as the hegemony both grants mainstream media its privileged position in constructing narratives and also supplies the information to the media in regards to Aboriginal social problems and protests, it is increasingly difficult for media outlets to surpass the confines of colonial tropes and constructions of Aboriginal people. It is quite simply, in the media's best interest to continue to duplicate colonial attitudes in their treatment of Aboriginal peoples as it is those existing power inequalities that favour the mainstream media and their cultural hegemony (Skea, 193/4: 18). The way in which the media frames Aboriginal social problems, protests and their resulting public inquiries according to colonial tropes including the Aboriginal victim and the radical activist has an immediate impact on public awareness and opinion of these events (Skea, 1993/4: 29). Skea argues that, "the representation of Native peoples and their struggles as portrayed by the newspaper industry ultimately affects the larger public's perceptions of Native people" meaning that the stakes for combating these colonial tropes are very high (1993/4: 29). What is encouraging, is that as Belanger notes, "[i]n recent years, the Canadian media has come under increasing scrutiny for presenting false and negative images of Native people" (2004: 106). This trend is encouraging, and hopefully will translate into addressing these false images in public inquiries in the future as well.

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Furthermore with the emergence of social media, increasingly available and faster internet and the ever expanding platform for data sharing, changing media sources will have an impact on how Aboriginal social problems, protests and public inquiries are constructed, framed and transported by the media (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 350). Increased access to visual images through new technologies could potentially also increase the repetition of certain tropes of Aboriginality as well. Particularly in regards to the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems, the "transfer of high-quality images is much simpler and less costly than it was in the past" (Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers, 2010: 350). Aboriginal social problems and their resulting protests and public inquiries remain hot button news stories, meaning that with the spread of new technologies, the already high media coverage of Aboriginal social problems will likely increase.

The report from RCAP makes important observations on the harm colonial identity tropes cause for Aboriginal-state relations and resolving Aboriginal social problems (1996: Volume 5, Chapter 5: 463). The fifth volume of the report from RCAP stresses "the need to correct erroneous assumptions and to dispel stereotypes that still abound in the minds of many Canadians, distorting their relationships with Aboriginal people" (RCAP, 1996: Volume 5, Chapter 5: 463). Ultimately, colonial identity tropes are extremely problematic and rampant in both the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries. Pursuing similar investigations into stereotypes and media framing as seen in RCAP could indeed be beneficial in future Aboriginal public inquiries and a concerted effort to combat these problematic tropes

could potentially increase the effectiveness of public inquiries to respond to Aboriginal

social problems and protests.

Conclusion

The media framing and construction of Aboriginal social problems says as much, if not more, about the non-Aboriginal consumer of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems as it does about the Aboriginal peoples who are represented. The media framing simultaneously creates and reinforces both the object and subject position of the visual discourse and essentially reasserts the dominance of the non-Aboriginal subject over the natural victim or radical activist. The subject position is in a far greater position of power and agency than the object, which Baudrillard contends by stating that, "[w]e have always lived off the splendour of the subject and poverty of the object" (Baudrillard, 1990:111). The way in which the media frames Aboriginal social problems through the visual discourse is strikingly consistent and speaks loudly of the prominence in imbalanced power relations as the foundational level of analysis for understanding all Aboriginal-state relations.

Media framing illustrates that the most successful visual discourses of Aboriginal social problems construct the two dominant tropes of Aboriginal victimhood and Aboriginal radical activism. Both the victimhood and radical activist trope indicate that Aboriginal peoples are in a subordinated and removed position from the dominant Western consumer of media and further display how power inequality continues to shape how Aboriginal social problems are understood in Canada. Francis, makes the provocative statement that "[i]ndians, as we think we know them, do not exist. In fact, there may well be no such thing as an Indian" (Francis, 1992: 4). This quote meshes with the arguments of this thesis as it articulates the disconnect between the discursive colonial construction of Aboriginal people and the contemporary position, perspectives

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and identities of Aboriginal peoples. The social construction of Aboriginal peoples is an essential piece of the Canadian identity puzzle that continues to be assembled to this day. By recognizing that the tropes, framing, and construction of Aboriginal identity and social problems have profound political and power repercussions, the postcolonial theory can be broadened to explore a more meaningful interrogation of their continued prevalence.

The media construction of Aboriginal social problems within the visual discourse also works to subvert the social problems that the media framing is signifying. Without intervention, in the visual discourse of mainstream media, the news-event or story of Aboriginal social problems will likely continue to displace the original social problems, which over time will lead to erasure of their political and social context. By recognizing the central role of persistent colonial attitudes in media framing of Aboriginal social problems, it is possible to recognize why media constructions of Aboriginal social problems adhere to certain frames and narratives and resonate with the dominant population.

Imagery plays a critical role of the transmission of opinions, information and knowledge in the discourse of Aboriginal social problems. Along with language, visual imagery is able to effectively frame the discourse according to the tropes of Aboriginal natural victimhood and radical activism. The images are compelling and have a lasting impact. The constructed imagery of the mainstream media's visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems has multiple layers of meaning and significance which is instrumental in the continued framing of Aboriginal/ non Aboriginal relations in Canada.

Aboriginal social problems are varied across the country. Problems such as illiteracy, substance abuse, poverty, unemployment, criminal deviance, physical and sexual abuse and mental illness are not strictly "Aboriginal" issues by nature, but Aboriginal people are disproportionately impacted by these problems in Canada. A greater understanding of how these social problems are reproduced, understood, and excused by the consumers and producers of media is essential to understand how strongly lingering colonial attitudes continue to shape contemporary power imbalances.

The narration and illustration of history is inseparable from the negotiation of power (Lischke and McNab, 2005: 49). The way in which tropes are evident in the media framing of Aboriginal social problems and protests is linked to the colonial project in Canada and lingering colonial attitudes that persist to this day. Aboriginal protests such as Ipperwash and Oka are not isolated instances of arbitrary Aboriginal civil disobedience, but political activism in response to longstanding and unresolved conflicts over land and in response to various forms of institutional inequality faced by Aboriginal peoples (such as treaty infractions, forced relocations, residential schools, fishing and resource access restrictions etc.) As Wilkes, Corrigal-Brown and Myers note, "[t]he widespread protests of the 1980s, 90s and beyond are directly linked to long-standing grievances with deep roots in colonial history" (2010: 330). The visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is deeply impactful in the transmission of knowledge and awareness of current events and the continued unfolding of the history of Aboriginal-state relations in Canada.

The way in which Aboriginal peoples and the state engage with one another in Canada is a huge component of the ongoing social and political process of

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decolonization. Although colonial attitudes continue to persist through the media discourse of Aboriginal social problems, there is reason to be hopeful that continued analysis, awareness, and interrogation of the construction and framing of Aboriginal social problems will contribute to improved Aboriginal-Government relations and identify areas in which colonial attitudes need to be counteracted and critiqued. As Cairns contends, there is a "profound paradigm shift now under way, but still incomplete, in how we converse with each other across the divides of a plural, heterogeneous society" (2000: 15). The interrogation and destabilization of the dominant colonial tropes constructed within the framing of Aboriginal social problems by mainstream media is an absolutely essential component of changing the conversation that Cairns identifies (see also Libesman, 2005: 971).

The framing of the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems according to the dominant tropes of Aboriginal victimhood and radical activism reflect a continued dominance of colonial attitudes in Aboriginal-state relations. The constructions expressed through the visual discourse represent a continuance of stereotypical and prejudicial attitudes and expectations towards Aboriginal peoples which facilitate a continued subordination of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The framing of the visual discourse is not only a project of constructing Aboriginal social problems and the imagined natural victims and radical activists that are constructed along with them. It is also a project of self-definition and construction in negative terms by the non-Aboriginal majority. The constructions of Aboriginal radical activism and victimhood allow for a reinforcement of the assumed watertight binary between the colonizer and the colonial other. Framing works to both construct the inside and the outside of the frame and

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ultimately is more revealing of the dominant majority and the attitudes that perpetuate the legacies of colonialism than the visual discourse reveals about any objective reality of Aboriginal social problems in Canada. As Derrida contends, "the meaning of the outside was always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside and vice versa" (1974: 35). The construction of colonial tropes of Aboriginal identity by the non-Aboriginal majority is an inherently self-referential pursuit.

The imagining and construction of archetypes of Aboriginal identity in relation to social problems is an ongoing process of identity setting, exclusion and persistent colonial attitudes. The dominant tropes of the natural victim and the radical activist are compelling and persistent due to their invocation of a clear binary between the dominant majority and the Aboriginal other. The space of the Aboriginal natural victim or radical activist both in physical location and discursive space is fundamentally and concertedly removed from the dominant majority. As Fanon notes, "[t]he colonized's sector, or at least the "native" quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people" (1963: 4). They are the residents of reserves, the survivors of the residential schools experience, the face behind the mask in a frightening standoff and they are always separate and removed from the dominant majority. By using the media visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems that resulted in public inquiries as a barometer of lingering colonial attitudes, it is clear to see in the use of racialized tropes, that prejudicial colonial attitudes continue to inform public awareness and response to these social problems and resulting inquiries.

The trope of the natural Aboriginal victim hinges on the colonial attitude that the victimization of Aboriginal peoples is an inevitable and natural process, similar to a

natural disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake. This trope in the media's framing of Aboriginal social problems and public inquiries functions to effectively depoliticize the original signified issues by engendering an inevitability which neither holds the State and dominant majority responsible for responding to or preventing. The victimhood trope also frames Aboriginal peoples as being universally vulnerable and weak. Critically, the trope establishes that Aboriginal peoples, based on racialized characteristics alone, are somehow more prone to deviance, victimization and poor life chances than the non-Aboriginal majority. There is a subplot within the media visual discourse that "victim" is the default position of all Aboriginal peoples in Canada and that success stories are to be consumed by the dominant audience as social anomalies and exceptions to the racialized rule to be wondered at. The depiction of the natural Aboriginal victim trope in the visual discourse of mainstream media adheres to a consistent pattern of representation where vulnerability, infantilization and dependence are symbolically demonstrated.

The tropes found in the visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems and their resulting public inquiries reveal persistent colonial attitudes which continue to dictate the media framing of Aboriginal peoples to this day in Canada. The tropes of the radical activist and the natural victim both indicate that Aboriginal peoples are outside of the imagined community of Canada and act as foils to the good and moral non-Aboriginal majority. Both tropes are deeply rooted in the colonial past and are traceable back to the earliest stereotypes and racialized generalizations found in French and English first contact with Aboriginal peoples (Wilkes, Corrigal Brown and Myers, 2010: 330). These tropes have staying power and they have a deeply problematic role in Canadian media that is to the disadvantage of Aboriginal peoples.

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Although the question of the effectiveness of Aboriginal public inquiries is unsettled, the need to combat the use of these tropes in the media visual discourse of Aboriginal social problems is essential. The tropes are not relics of colonial history, but instead are powerful constructions that are invoked to shape public opinion in regards to Aboriginal social problems, protests and their resulting public inquiries. Colonialism is not an isolated historical event, but instead an ongoing project that continues to impact attitudes, cultural exchanges and discourse in the contemporary period. Aboriginal social problems are complicated and remain contentious from coast to coast and will therefore likely remain the source of many more hot button new stories in the future. However, in order to insure that colonial tropes do not transfer into Aboriginal public inquiries that are called to respond to Aboriginal social problems and protests, it is necessary to unpack these tropes and recognize them for what they truly are- sanitized racism that reflects ongoing colonial attitudes.

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