Re/framing Aboriginal Social Policy Issues in the News: Old Stereotypes and New Opportunities

by

Robert Harding

B.A. (Hons.), University of Manitoba, 1982
B.S.W., University of Manitoba, 1985
M.S.W., McGill University, 1986

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APPROVAL

Name: Robert Leonard Harding
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Title of Thesis: Re/framing Aboriginal Social Policy Issues in the News: Old Stereotypes and New Opportunities

Examining Committee:

Dr. Jonathan C. Driver, Chair

Dr. Robert Anderson, Senior Supervisor
Professor, Communication

Dr. Robert A. Hackett, Supervisor
Professor, Communication

Dr. Eldon Carlyle Yellowhorn, Supervisor
Assistant Professor, Archaeology

Dr. Shane Gunster, Examiner
Assistant Professor, Communication

Dr. Richard Vedan, External Examiner
Associate Professor, Social Work & Family Studies
University of British Columbia

Date Approved: 

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines representations of Aboriginal people and issues in the news media in historical times (1862-7) as well as in the modern era (1991-2003). Previous studies – most notably the review of Aboriginal people and the media conducted by the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) – have found evidence of persistent patterns of racism and ethnocentrism in all forms of public discourse.

Techniques of content analysis and critical discourse analysis are applied to news stories about treaty negotiations and Aboriginal child welfare issues appearing in national newspapers, major daily newspapers, community newspapers as well as Aboriginal publications. The findings of this research indicate that news reports about Aboriginal issues display ethnocentrism and stereotyping and utilize dominant news frames that contain and limit Aboriginal voices. Furthermore, the press covers critical issues, which have long historical antecedents that are little understood or known by the public, in a thoroughly de-contextualized fashion.

While Aboriginal issues tend to be reported in ways that support the status quo, this reportage is not monolithic. Due to a variety of factors that influence the production of the news, including journalistic imperatives emphasizing "balance" and "objectivity," even news coverage of Aboriginal issues that is steeped in dominance must reiterate contradictions inherent in relations between mainstream Canadian society and Aboriginal people. This affords opportunities for Aboriginal people and others to foster new public
discourses that challenge hegemonic values. As well, the public has demonstrated an ability, under certain conditions, to resist racist and stereotypical interpretations of events. Finally, voices of Aboriginal people are increasingly included in public discourse and most Aboriginal organizations have communications or media relations branches which systematically attempt to influence reporting on Aboriginal issues and counteract "bias" in the press. This research furnishes a media resource not only for Aboriginal people, but for anyone concerned with social justice, in analyzing the news and challenging dominant representations of Aboriginal people and issues.

Key Words: Aboriginal people, news frames, media, stereotypes, treaties, Aboriginal child welfare, representation, news discourse, Aboriginal self-governance, critical discourse analysis and content analysis.
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# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AFN</td>
<td>Assembly of First Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
<td>Bachelor of Social Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Canadian Broadcasting Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPC</td>
<td>Centre for Aboriginal Policy Change</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>CTF</td>
<td>Canadian Taxpayers' Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIAND</td>
<td>Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCFD</td>
<td>Ministry of Children and Family Development (BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Member of the Legislative Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>New Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Op/Ed</td>
<td>Opinion piece or editorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCAP</td>
<td>Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996)</td>
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<td>RCMP</td>
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

What this Dissertation is About

This dissertation examines historical and contemporary representations of Aboriginal people and issues within both the mainstream English-language news media and the Aboriginal press. This research focuses on the nexus of news discourse, Canadian public policy, and Aboriginal issues, particularly those matters that relate to questions of Aboriginal self-governance. Proceeding from a conception of the news media as "sites of struggle," this dissertation examines semantic and discourse structures underlying dominant news frames with a view to challenging such ways of seeing. As well, I will articulate alternative definitions of issues as evidenced in oppositional discourses in the Aboriginal press and secondary framing in the mainstream press. Specific research questions include the following:

1. In general, how are Aboriginal people portrayed in the mainstream press?
2. What are the historical continuities and discontinuities in representations of Aboriginal people and issues in the news?
3. How are issues that involve the transfer of resources and/or institutional authority from Canadian governments to Aboriginal entities (i.e., child welfare matters and treaties) framed in the mainstream press? What narrative and semantic structures underlie dominant news discourse about these issues?
4. How are these issues framed in the Aboriginal press?
5. Based on analysis of any alternative or oppositional frames present in the mainstream media and in the Aboriginal press, what other news frames are possible?
Setting the Stage

While significant bodies of literature exist with respect to Aboriginal social policy issues in general, Canadian social policy, and media representations of social policy, there is little that specifically focuses on the portrayal of Aboriginal social policy issues in the news. Explaining this lacuna is difficult – perhaps it has something to do with the low profile of Aboriginal people generally, both in the mainstream media and in the halls of higher education. Maurice Switzer, former media director for the Assembly of First Nations (AFN), points out that "very few so-called mainstream media outlets consider Aboriginal affairs to be a subject worthy of attention" (Fleras & Kunz, 2001, p. 176). Similar observations have been made about the failure of the public education system to inform Canadians about Aboriginal issues. In all areas of post-secondary education and research, "insufficient attention" has been devoted to Aboriginal issues:

The current contribution of institutions of higher education and research to an understanding of Aboriginal questions leaves something to be desired in several areas. First, we don't have theoretical and practical studies of the impact of the socio-economic system that governs Aboriginals on various aspects of their lives: acculturation, health conditions, short- and long-term psychological effects on individuals and communities, economic repercussions and so forth. In addition, we don't have comparative studies of these variables relating the situation of Aboriginals in Canada to that of indigenous people in other countries (Dupuis, 2002, p. 124).

The news media are frequently subject to accusations of perpetuating misconceptions about Aboriginal people. For example, the notion that Aboriginal people and other minorities are "basically well-cared for" has been described as a "media truism" (Henry & Tator, 2002, p. 53). Misinformation of this nature may partially account for the disconnect between the everyday realities of Aboriginal people and the perceptions of the Canadian public. In spite of the harsh living conditions many Aboriginal people
experience, polling indicates that almost one in every two Canadians believe that the living conditions of reserve communities are "as good as or better than the Canadian average" (Beavon & Cooke, 2003, p. 202). All of these factors may contribute to a general sense of complacency about Aboriginal people in the Canadian public. If Canadians accept this misconception without question, then there may be little appetite for stories that highlight the challenges Aboriginal people and communities face in the matrix of modern Canada.

While certain Aboriginal issues and events may attract generally sympathetic, albeit paternalistic, coverage,¹ research indicates that stories involving the potential transfer of significant economic resources and/or institutional authority to Aboriginal people tend to be framed in negative or unsympathetic terms² (see Winter, 1992, Furniss, 2001, Lambertus, 2004). The connection between "negative press" and "more stringent" Canadian government policy is well established (Callahan & Callahan, 1997, p. 55). Aboriginal people have long endured the consequences of the Indian Act and other destructive laws and policies; addressing how the news media frame these issues is integral to transforming the terms and nature of the debate about public policy towards Aboriginal people. Social policy affecting Aboriginal people is not created in a vacuum;

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¹ In particular, stories about aspects of traditional Aboriginal culture or ceremonies, such as pow-pows or potlatches, that play into enduring romantic notions about Aboriginal people, tend to receive favourable treatment in the mainstream press. Stories that feature Aboriginal people overcoming obstacles to achieve success in business or public life receive similarly positive coverage. These anecdotal human interest stories about Aboriginal people succeeding in mainstream society lend support to the creed of rugged individualism, a prime value of the dominant culture, and affirm a key assumption of modern capitalist societies – namely, that anyone can succeed if they work hard enough.
² See, for example, University of Calgary political scientist Thomas Flanagan’s (2000) First Nations?: Second Thoughts.
public opinion is one of the key factors that politicians, bureaucrats and other stakeholders consider in its formulation:

non-Native politicians are concerned about, and in their creation of opportunities for First Nations, are somewhat constrained by public opinion in the Canadian mass public. Indeed the federal government commissions expensive polling to keep its finger on the pulse of non-Aboriginal public opinion on Aboriginal issues (Ponting & Kiely, 1997, p. 174)

This dissertation addresses issues – particularly those pertaining to self-governance and child welfare – identified by Aboriginal people and organizations as high priorities. Furthermore, Aboriginal control over child welfare and other self-governance issues have direct implications for all Canadians. In addition to contributing to an emerging body of literature on the representation of Aboriginal people, I hope this dissertation will serve as a practical media resource that Aboriginal people and all those concerned with social justice will be able to access and apply to their own media adventures.

Where I'm Coming from and Where this Research is Going

The research interests reflected in this dissertation have coalesced around my diverse experiences in working with and living among Aboriginal people and other indigenous peoples, my evolving awareness of a disconnect between popular discourse about Aboriginal people and their lived experiences, and the strong commitment to social justice that I share with other members of my profession.
Growing up in Winnipeg, early on I developed an awareness of the reality of the significant Aboriginal presence in the city. Since my family lived in River Heights, a largely white, middle class neighbourhood, I had little direct contact with the city's Aboriginal communities. However, my family spent our summers at a cottage on Lake Winnipeg, not far from the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation in Scantebury and Sagkeeng in Fort Alexander. There, I made a number of Aboriginal friends with whom I went fishing and played sports. Even as an adolescent, I observed that my friends and I lived in very different worlds. I had seen the housing and living conditions of the people in Sagkeeng up close and they were nothing like those of the denizens of River Heights' elm-lined streets. Even then, I realized that I enjoyed a position of privilege in relation to my Aboriginal friends.

After graduating from high school, I worked at the grain port of Churchill, on Hudson's Bay, for three shipping seasons. There, many of my friends and fellow workers were of Cree or Chipewyan (Sayisi Dené) descent and I developed first-hand an appreciation of some of the contemporary impacts of racism and social and material inequality on the local Aboriginal people. The "public idiom" (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Robert, 1978) of Churchill was steeped in racial stereotypes about Aboriginal people, such as "Indians can't handle alcohol" or "They're good workers, but unreliable, because you never know when they're going to go on a binge and skip work." Amongst non-Aboriginal National Harbours' Board (NHB) workers, the conventional wisdom was to stay away from the local bar, the Churchill Hotel, renowned for its nightly brawls.

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3 According to statistics maintained by the provincial government's Manitoba Aboriginal and North Affairs department, Aboriginal people represented 8.5 per cent of the total population of the City of Winnipeg in 2001.
unless you were "crazy or Indian." Instead, most non-Aboriginal NHB employees frequented the local chapter of the Canadian Legion, where a member could sign in up to three "non-members" in an evening who would typically reciprocate by buying the member a round. This was largely the white man's preserve; rarely were Aboriginal patrons seen within its confines.

One of my best friends was a Chipewyan man, whose people had been moved lock, stock and barrel in 1956 from their traditional territory to a slum on the outskirts of Churchill by Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) officials. Apparently, one of the reasons for the relocation was that Manitoba's game officials felt that Chipewyan hunters were responsible for a decline in the Caribou population and "wanted the people moved to a place where they wouldn't be able to hunt Caribou" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, p. 433). In 1973, some of my friend's people had returned to their traditional territory and built a number of cabins on the shores of Tadoule lake (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 1997). Perhaps due to alcoholism, drug abuse and other social problems experienced by the transplanted Chipewyan population in Churchill, the new settlement at Tadoule Lake was designated a "dry" community. However, my friend confided that someone began smuggling in alcohol and drugs and selling it to the local residents. Ironically, he eventually moved back to Churchill to find work and get away from the substance abuse culture that was

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4 Referred to hereafter as RCAP.
emerging in Tadoule Lake. Over time, I lost track of my friend, but a few years later, I learned that he had been murdered.\(^5\)

Later, while studying for my Bachelor of Social Work degree at the University of Manitoba, I worked as a tutor in a pre-medical studies program that was designed to address the under-representation of Aboriginal students at the university's medical school, the only one in the province. The students in this program were bright and dedicated to making a difference for their people, but had never been given the opportunity to fully develop the academic skills needed to excel in post-secondary education. One of the objectives of this program was to assist Aboriginal students from Northern and remote communities become doctors so that they could return home and provide culturally sensitive medical care to their own people. My experiences working in this program convinced me that the chief obstacles to increased Aboriginal participation in medicine and other helping professions were the lack of quality educational opportunities and culturally appropriate programs for Aboriginal people. According to a 2006 report on Aboriginal post-secondary education, "cultural insensitivity" remains a barrier to the completion of post-secondary studies by Aboriginal people, along with such related factors as "mistrust of education," "discrimination," and "alienation in post-secondary education" (Mendelson, 2006, p. 45).

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\(^5\) Sadly, violent death was an all too common occurrence within the transplanted Chipewyan population. A former Chipewyan chief described the devastating impact the forced relocation had on her people: "This relocation destroyed our independence and ruined our way of life. After fifteen years of neglect and despair in Churchill, we could begin to count the dead. More than 100 of my people, one-third of our population, died in the Churchill camps because of this unplanned, misdirected government action" (quoted in Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 1997, p. 138).
At the same time, I was also working for a local child welfare agency. Even though this agency was responsible for working with children from all ethnic backgrounds in a city of approximately 600,000 people, about half the children living in the agency's group homes were of Aboriginal descent. Many of the Aboriginal teenagers that I worked with had already experienced well over a dozen placements in various forms of substitute care, such as group homes or foster care. Very rarely were the rich extended family networks of these Aboriginal children considered in the placement decision-making process. The general impact of such a high level of instability – in terms of changes in locale and caregivers is well documented (see Bala et al., 2004, British Columbia, 1992, Fournier & Crey, 1997, Gove, 1995, Kimelman, 1985, Walmsley, 2006).

In addition, none of the staff that worked in the facilities where I worked was of Aboriginal ancestry and little effort was made to incorporate Aboriginal programming or nurture the children's connections to their traditional cultures and communities. I soon learned that that the system was not serving the interests of Aboriginal children, families and communities. My own observations about weaknesses in Manitoba's child welfare system in the early 1980s were echoed by others familiar with the system, including Manitoba' Associate Chief Judge Edwin Kimelman (1985) who, after a 3-year inquiry

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6 For example, a number of my Aboriginal friends from Winnipeg were raised by their grandparents – not because their parents were in any way inappropriate or deficient caregivers, but because their grandparents had more experience and more developed parenting skills. This is a traditional approach to child-rearing among Aboriginal peoples. The idea was that my friends' parents would learn how to parent from watching their grandparents take care of their grandchildren so that, in time, they would be able to do the same, if necessary, for their children's children.
into the matter, compared the province’s child welfare practices towards Aboriginal children to "cultural genocide."

When I moved to Québec in the mid-1980s, I learned that the child welfare system there had some of the same limitations and challenges as that of Manitoba. I worked for a child welfare agency that served the Anglophone communities of Montréal’s West Island. In this agency’s group homes, there was also a problem of the overrepresentation of one ethnic group, but in this case, they were black children, predominantly those of Afro-Caribbean descent, who were overrepresented. Compounding the situation was the fact that there were almost no black child care workers in the group homes and the agency did not seem very interested in recruiting workers from Montréal’s black communities. Many of these children’s families came from countries such as Jamaica and the Barbados, where the whole extended family, much like in traditional Aboriginal communities, was traditionally involved in raising children. However, when a child was facing removal from the home, rarely were extended family members – such as grandparents, aunts and uncles – considered as potential primary caregivers. In Manitoba, I had observed the same reluctance to consider the extended family members of Aboriginal children in placement decision-making processes.

Another "system" that has had dramatic consequences, to say the least, for Aboriginal children, families and communities is the residential school system. Even though this system was dismantled in the early 1980s, I was reminded of the devastating and enduring nature of its impacts on Aboriginal people during my employment as a
Cégep\(^7\) instructor in the early 1990s. I taught Cree students in Chisasibi, a small community on James Bay, who were enrolled in a three-year diploma program in special education. The first course I taught was an introductory sociology course entitled, the History of Québec Society (including First Nations). The curriculum I was asked to use identified the 1530s as the starting point of Québec history, which is the decade that Jacques Cartier began his expeditions down the St. Lawrence River. Since this 460-year block of time represented the classic Eurocentric understanding of history in the region, and only a fraction of the whole story, I decided to employ two strategies in an effort to indigenize the curriculum. First, I showed the class a couple of documentaries about issues relating to land, fishing and hunting that were made in the prairies and featured narration in Cree (not realizing that the Cree of Northern Québec speak a dialect that is distinct from that spoken by their Prairie kin). This exposed my own misconceptions about the cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the vast and geographically dispersed Cree populations and the distinct Nations they comprise.

The other pedagogical technique I employed met with more success and was also very revealing for me. Rather than starting with the college-approved textbook's version of the history of the province, I invited the approximately 20 students, who ranged in age from mid-twenties to late thirties, to each write a story about some aspect of their culture or history. I was stunned at the result – all but one of these students wrote a personal story documenting their traumatic experiences in the residential school system (the only

\(^7\) The acronym stands for Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel or College of General and Vocational Education. Québec's public colleges offer two-year general programs for students who wish to continue their education at the university level and three-year specialized career programs designed for students who wish to enter the labour force upon graduation. The Cree students I worked with were in latter type of program.
student who didn't was too young to have attended). For me, this illuminated how this history course ought to start – with an exploration of the stories behind and within the system that was designed to destroy Aboriginal culture and language and remake Aboriginal children after a European model. We could work backwards from there. Though I had been employed to teach the Cree, I realized that I too had embarked on an educational voyage.

I moved to Aotearoa (New Zealand) in 1990 where I worked as a community development worker in the public health system. After living and working in the country for three years, I could see that problems with education and child welfare were not confined to Aboriginal people in Canada, but were by-products of colonialism that affected indigenous people and other colonized peoples the world over. In Aotearoa, the Maori people had experienced many of the same difficulties with cultural insensitivity and overrepresentation of their children in the child welfare system that I had observed in Aboriginal populations. In response to a concerted campaign for change by Maori people who were frustrated by the dreadful outcomes for Maori children in care, Aotearoa's child welfare system was re-tooled to return a measure of control over Maori children back to their communities. In 1989, New Zealand's child welfare legislation was transformed with the passage of the *Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Amendment*. This law created provision for the *whanau* (kinship group) conference, where every effort was made to support the child in his family or, at least, keep the child within his *hapu* (extended kinship group) or within his *iwi* (tribe/nation). Under this system, Maori children who had come into conflict with the law would be returned to their communities under the supervision of their local *Kaumatua* (elder). These changes have resulted in a
system that is more responsive to the needs of Maori communities (see Armitage, 1995, Durie, 1997 and Cheyne, O'Brien & Belgrave, 1997) and dramatically improved child welfare outcomes for Maori children. Thus, improvements in child welfare outcomes for Maori children, families and communities were tied to the devolution of control for child welfare from Pakeha (European) people to the Maori themselves.

The same could be said for education. When I was hired at the University College of the Fraser Valley (UCFV) in Abbotsford, I was asked by the School of Social Work and Human Services to lead a steering committee comprised of representatives of the school and the local Stó:lō Nation in developing a social services diploma that reflected traditional Aboriginal values and pedagogy. This initiative was designed to address some of the barriers faced by Aboriginal students in post-secondary education. As well, Xyolhemeylh (Child & Family Services Department of the Stó:lō Nation) expected that this program would help address a chronic shortage of social workers trained in traditional ways of healing and helping. Demand for this program, which was formally launched in 2001, was overwhelming. The critical factors in its success were that the

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8 Armitage (1995) observes that during its first year of operation, the Children, Young Persons and their Families Act was "credited with changing placement plans in 30 out of 180 cases that were studied" (p. 180). He also notes that in every case, due to the use of whanau conferences, extended families had greater involvement in providing care for children.

9 The fact that some of these principles have since been incorporated into child welfare reform in Canada attests to the degree to which Canadian Aboriginal people are attuned to the initiatives of international indigenous populations. For example, Liberating our children, liberating our nations (October 1992), a report by an Aboriginal Committee reviewing BC's Family and Children's Services legislation, based some of their recommendations on policy initiatives in Aotearoa involving the use of extended family conferences in child protection cases.
Stó:lō House of Elders had the final say over the design and content of curriculum and that all instructors for core courses were Aboriginal people.

Another task I was charged with at UCFV was rebuilding the third year Aboriginal social work course in the Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) program based on an approach of working with Aboriginal people as allies. In elaborating the curriculum for this course, one of the teaching syllabi I looked at was that of Richard Vedan, of the Neskonlith Band of the Secwepemc (Shuswap) First Nation. One of the most striking aspects of Dr. Vedan's course was the requirement that students (most students in the BSW programme are non-Aboriginal) monitor and critically assess media coverage of Aboriginal issues. This sparked something of an epiphany for me. I had always been concerned about media portrayals of Aboriginal issues but until now, had not considered incorporating media analysis into a course designed to help predominantly non-Aboriginal students learn culturally appropriate ways of working with Aboriginal clients.

I have come to see this issue of control, along with the right of a people to pursue self-determination, as central to the amelioration of a range of social problems affecting indigenous people. Even something as simple as control of, or at least the ability to influence, the naming process, through institutions such as the news media, government and the public education system, carries with it enormous power that is more than simply symbolic. For example, in Aotearoa, from the 1840s to the 1860s, the Pakeha people attempted to seize or sell much of the traditional territories of the Maori, in what until recently were known as the "Maori Wars." Instead of attributing blame to the aggressors

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10 Currently, Dr. Vedan is the director of the University of British Columbia’s First Nations House of Learning and Associate Professor at the School of Social Work and Family Studies.
the Pakeha – this referent carries with it the assumption that these conflicts were instigated by the Maori. Similarly, in Canada, many news reports at the time referred to the 1990 situation at Oka as the "Native Standoff." Even though the term "standoff" implies that there are at least two parties at loggerheads, only the Natives were associated with this conflict.

The news media, in their vaunted role of public watchdog, could play an important role in challenging misrepresentations of indigenous people. Sadly, it seems, the reverse is often true. For example, my work with the Cree of Northern Québec took place in the aftermath of the enactment of the Cree/Naskapi Act (1984) – a major agreement between the Cree of Northern Québec and the Provincial government regarding non-Aboriginal access to traditional Cree land, particularly with respect to hydroelectric resources. At the time, I was struck by the discrepancy between media accounts of wealthy Cree people reaping the benefits of a "special deal" with the government and the harsh realities of daily life for northern Aboriginal people. Fourteen years after the deal was signed, this is how sociologist James Frideres described the living conditions of Québec's northern Aboriginal populations: "today, 50% of the people in Northern Québec are unemployed. The tradition of community food is no longer part of their customs. Alcoholism, substance abuse, and wife beating are rampant, as are suicide attempts" (1998, p. 101).

At approximately the same time, a major Québec newspaper published the results of a poll that indicated that the average Québécois(e) believed that the province's Aboriginal population had a far higher standard of living than non-Aboriginal residents. The contrast between the image of Aboriginal people that emerged in public discourse
and the actual living conditions of Aboriginal people suggested to me that the media themselves posed a significant obstacle to Aboriginal people's attempts to mobilize public support for positive change in social policy affecting their lives. For me, this illustrated the critical role the news media play in constructing discourse about Aboriginal people and social issues. I believe that there is an urgent need to address the ways that Aboriginal people and issues are represented in the press. I hope that this dissertation represents a first step in that direction.

As a social worker, I am bound by a professional code of ethics that identifies the pursuit of social justice as a prime value of the social work profession (CASW, 2005). Furthermore, I identify with a progressive stream of social workers who adhere to an alternative code of ethics that promotes a more proactive role for social workers in combating racism and working with oppressed groups to alleviate unequal social conditions.¹¹ I believe that current modes of representation of Aboriginal people in the press contribute to the maintenance of the unequal state of relations that exists between Aboriginal people and the dominant culture. In turn, media representations of Aboriginal people may elicit acts of discrimination against them. Furthermore, even a cursory

¹¹ Bob Mullaly, Dean of the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba, advocates the use of a code of ethics for "progressive social workers" who are interested in "fundamental social change rather than merely tinkering with or fine-tuning the current set of social arrangements" (2005).
examination of "quality of life indicators" demonstrates that Aboriginal people do not enjoy the same level of access to resources and opportunities as other Canadians.\textsuperscript{12}

While my pursuit of this research is guided by my commitment to social justice, my sense of professional ethics, and my commitment to the various Aboriginal people and communities familiar to me on a personal and professional level, I also am motivated by what I believe to be some of the potential \textit{extra-theoretical} functions of my research. My hope is that this research, which seeks to unmask the nature of news coverage of Aboriginal issues and explore alternative discourses, will furnish Aboriginal people, and others concerned with social justice for Aboriginal people, with a practical guide for analyzing press coverage.

For British Columbians, the policy implications of an enhanced public understanding of Aboriginal issues are significant. Since these policy ramifications are predicated on a huge "if" – a significant change in the education and attitudes of the public – the best way to express them is in terms of hypothetical questions. For example, if the British Columbian public were more aware of the context and history of Aboriginal land and resource issues, would they be more likely to support fairly resolving these issues? Would their definition of the word "fair," in this context, be different from what it is today? Would the provincial government pay a higher price for procrastinating on treaty negotiations? Would more "balanced" and in-depth media coverage of Aboriginal

\textsuperscript{12} Social science researchers such as Beavon & Cooke (2003) who have documented this disparity conclude that "Aboriginal Canadians tend to have lower incomes, poorer health outcomes, and lower educational levels on average than other Canadians (p. 201). Other research into income inequality in Canada suggests that of all Aboriginal peoples, Status Indians and the Inuit are the "furthest behind" the general Canadian population "in terms of wage and salary income" (Maxim, White, & Beavon, 2003, p. 242).
delivery and management of child welfare services result in a higher level of public
understanding of the reasons for devolving responsibility to Aboriginal people in other
areas of governance?\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Data and Methodological Highlights}

\textit{Overview of Data}

The corpus of primary data for this dissertation consists of 351 news texts\textsuperscript{14} from
Both hard news stories and op/ed pieces were included in the data. The chronology of
data begins with an article entitled, "The Indian Land Question Again"(94), which was
published on June 28, 1862 in the \textit{British Columbian} (please see Appendix E for the full
text of this article, reproduced in its original format). The most recent news texts, entitled,
"The children's interests must always be first"(151), and "Hundreds of native kids in line
to suffer the same fate"(159), were published on October 31, 2003 in the \textit{Vancouver Sun}
and \textit{Province} respectively. A detailed chapter-by-chapter list of all news stories is
provided in Appendix B – List of News Texts. All citations of news texts in this
dissertation refer to this numbered index. For detailed descriptions of the data, results of

\textsuperscript{13} While holding the news media accountable for providing fair, balanced and
contextualized coverage of Aboriginal issues is important, the ultimate goal of efforts to
improve the representation of Aboriginal people is to achieve a situation where they are,
themselves, the chief architects of their own representation in the media. After all, self-
representation and autonomy are intimately linked since "issues related to the self-
governance of Native communities – power, control, authority over one's own destiny –
are seated in the authority to represent one's self" (Leuthold, 1997, p.192).

\textsuperscript{14} A total of 355 news texts are listed in Appendix B – this is due to the fact that four news
stories included in the pilot study in Chapter 2 also form part of the data set for the case
study on the death of a child that unfolds in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.
reliability tests and an in-depth discussion of methodological strengths, weaknesses and challenges, see Appendix A – Data and Methodology. Table 1 provides an overview of methodological approaches employed, research foci, publications surveyed, number of news texts analyzed and specific years from which research samples were drawn.

Table 1: Overview of Data and Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES</th>
<th>FOCUS OF RESEARCH</th>
<th>NEWSPAPERS &amp; NO. OF NEWS ITEMS</th>
<th>YEAR(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2       | Content Analysis          | News items that reference Aboriginal topics | Globe & Mail (33)  
Vancouver Sun (34)  
Province (23) | 2002 |
| 3       | Critical Discourse Analysis  
Frame Analysis  
Case Study Approach | Case Studies of 4 Historical Flashpoints:  
1) Residential school opening (1863)  
2) Colonial amendment denying Aboriginal right to pre-empt land (1866)  
3) Delgamuukw Decision – BC Supreme Court (1991)  
4) Aboriginal child welfare report (1992) | Vancouver Sun (13)  
Province (5)  
Times-Colonist (5)  
British Columbian (15)  
British Colonist (2)  
Colonist & Chronicle (3) | 1862, 1863, 1866, 1867, 1991, 1992 |
| 5, 6 & 7 | Headline Analysis  
Critical Discourse Analysis  
Frame Analysis  
Case Study Approach | 4 Contemporary Case Studies:  
1) Nisga'a referendum on Nisga'a Treaty (1998)  
2) BC referendum on tripartite treaty process (2002)  
3) Death of a child under the care of an Aboriginal child welfare agency (2003)  
4) Repatriation of Aboriginal children from non-Aboriginal families (2003) | Globe & Mail (22)  
National Post (24)  
Vancouver Sun (49)  
Province (40)  
Abbotsford Times (10)  
Chilliwack Times (7)  
Mission City Record (2)  
Kamloops Daily News (20)  
| 8       | Critical Discourse Analysis  
Frame Analysis  
Case Study Approach | As above | Windspeaker (3)  
Kahtou (16)  
Raven's Eye (8)  

354 NEWS ITEMS
Content Analysis

Application to Analyzing News about Aboriginal People

Content analysis was selected as the best form of textual analysis to begin the process of exploring broad patterns of news coverage about Aboriginal issues. In its application to media studies, content analysis has traditionally been employed to appraise features of news content and to trace their implications "about realities which lie outside the media content" such as "assessing the image of particular groups in society" (Bailey & Hackett, 1997, pp. 3-4). In Chapter 2, this methodology is used to analyze 90 news stories about Aboriginal issues that appeared in three newspapers – a daily tabloid, a daily broadsheet, and a daily national broadsheet – over a four-month period in 2002.

Coding

For each newspaper article, the researcher completed a single case coding form and entered the results into a spreadsheet. Forty-five of these 90 news texts – every second news story – were coded by two trained research assistants and subjected to inter-coder reliability tests. In addition, the three coders re-coded 13.3% of the 135 news texts they had already originally coded (18 news texts) so that intra-coder reliability tests could be conducted. The results of these reliability tests, along with other methodological issues, are discussed in Appendix A – Data and Methodology.

Types of News Content

Two types of content were of interest in this pilot study. First, elements of manifest content that are physically present and countable were analyzed (e.g. mentions of a particular topic or number of front page stories). As well, latent content was examined through an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data (e.g. assessing if a particular news story contains 'stereotypes' or is sympathetic to
Aboriginal interests). The content under study comprised all news items that reference Aboriginal issues, including op/ed pieces, in selected sections of issues of The Vancouver Sun, The Province and The Globe and Mail published from June 1 to September 30, 2002.

**Coding Tools**

The main research questions are reflected in the structure and design of the coding form and associated coding protocol. The protocol (see Appendix C – Coding Protocol) provides guidelines for coding, definitions of terms used in the coding form and a list of values for each category. For example, for "stereotypes," coders are offered four choices: Pathetic Victim, Angry Warrior, Noble Environmentalist and Other). The coding form (see Appendix D – Coding Form) is organized into sections on publication details, topics present, actors and roles, identity of Aboriginal actors, and other attributes of the article. The last section is the most ambitious in that an attempt is made to gauge a number of latent features of the data, including the presence or absence of stereotypes, whether or not articles are sympathetic or unsympathetic to Aboriginal issues, and how the relationship between Aboriginal people and other Canadians is characterized. It follows that the findings of this section are the most speculative.¹⁵

**Strengths and Weaknesses of Content Analysis**

One advantage of applying traditional content analysis to news texts is that it allows researchers to make comparisons with other content studies and to produce findings that may be tested by other researchers using the same methodology. For instance, in Chapter 2, one of the hypotheses tested was that the three stereotypes

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¹⁵ This is reflected in somewhat lower scores on reliability tests for the categories in the "Other Attributes" section as compared with categories in the other sections.
identified by the RCAP in its 1996 report were still prominent in 2002 news media coverage of Aboriginal issues. It turns out that, while the continued prominence of two stereotypes was confirmed by the findings, the third – that of Aboriginal people as noble environmentalists – was found not to have a significant presence in 2002 news texts. In addition to raising questions about the initial hypothesis, this study generated a preliminary statistical profile of the types of Aboriginal topics likely to attract attention in the press, the sorts of roles assigned actors in news stories, and some of the dimensions of Aboriginal identity ascribed to Aboriginal actors.

One of the perceived shortcomings of content analysis is that it may easily be subverted to the ideological agenda of researchers. Some critics charge that studies relying solely on techniques of content analysis may be structured so as to yield findings that support pre-conceived ideas and political positions of the individuals and/or organizations conducting and/or supporting the research. For example, analyses of news content have been used to support disparate, even contradictory, conclusions about a variety of social and economic issues, such as trade unionism and public health care, depending on whether the research was conducted by progressive media "watchdogs" such as NewsWatch Canada or by conservative "think-tanks" like the Fraser Institute. Yet content analysis is often promoted as a "neutral" and "objective" tool of scientific

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16 For example, Hackett, Gilsdorf & Savage (1992) examine the conceptual and methodological weaknesses of studies of news content published in the Fraser Institute's bulletin On Balance, a publication which describes its role as to "redirect attention to the use of competitive markets as the best mechanism for responding to change." (p.17). The authors describe as "surely not far off the mark" Andrew Coyne's description (in The Financial Post) of the bulletin's research agenda: "Ostensibly, it's just disinterested empirical observation, like bird-watching, but the intention is clear: to gather proof of the leftist conspiracy conservatives are convinced is running the media" (p. 32).
inquiry, a relatively mechanical process that involves simply "putting numbers to words." Critics who question the objectivity of this methodology tend to focus more on the development of coding tools, particularly on how coding categories are constructed, than on the coding process itself.

Another inherent limitation of content analysis is that, due to its focus on the frequency with which certain features occur, findings tend to replicate blind spots and under-reported issues that are intrinsic to mainstream news. While content analysis is very good at rendering a picture of what is well-covered in the news, it is not as effective at giving an indication of what is absent. However, this methodological weakness can be mitigated by supplementing content analysis with other research techniques. In fact, in *The Missing News: Filters and Blind Spots in Canada's Press*, Hackett et al. (2000) used content analysis, in concert with surveys of media relations personnel and interviews with journalists, to identify some of Canada's most under-reported stories in 1993, 1994, and 1995.

**Discourse Analysis**

*Complementing Content Analysis*

In assessing the representation of Aboriginal people in the news, the researcher supplemented traditional content analysis with Critical Discourse Analysis (van Dijk, 1988). While content analysis allows researchers to make broad generalizations based on the frequency with which certain textual elements recur, it does not allow for in-depth, nuanced reading of texts as with other forms of textual analysis. Some researchers argue that discourse analysis represents an "advancement" over content analysis because it
considers media messages as part of a structured whole and includes a recognition that the significant item may not be the one repeated most often but the one given the greatest weight in its placement or context of a text…[Discourse analysis has] the ability to recognize the exceptional as well as the frequent in texts (Cross, 2006, p.29)

Also, because it allows for a nuanced interpretive analysis of the "subtle manipulation of images and the variations in meanings that result" (Furniss, 2001, p. 33), discourse analysis is particularly well suited to studying the treatment of people of colour and other minority populations in the press. A number of recent studies of news coverage of Aboriginal issues have employed discourse analysis (see Lambertus, 2004, Henry & Tator, 2002, and Furniss, 2001). I believe that the use of discourse analysis to complement traditional content analysis enhances the researcher's ability to make inferences about news content. By correlating data about the frequency of appearance of certain features of the news with nuanced analyses of which discourses are privileged and which are contained, researchers can better assess the conventionality of news texts.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Critical Discourse Analysis

One of the limitations of discourse analysis is the degree to which researchers can make claims about the motivations about the producers of specific news stories or the impact of those texts on social relations generally or on specific individuals and groups. It has been argued that discourse analysis enables researchers to "surmise" but not "demonstrate" (Deacon et al, 1999). A criticism of the work of van Dijk, in particular, is that it attempts to construct an idealized or average readership and then speculate about how that imaginary audience would interpret particular news texts:

This leads van Dijk into speculation about what the reader is likely to make of various texts. It is van Dijk who declares "which structures of news discourse have particular social, political, or ideological implications"…[But] We simply do
not know in advance how audiences will decode news texts, even though we may agree that certain texts strongly suggest and insinuate a set pattern of responses. (Nesbitt-Larking, p. 259).

The problem is that each individual audience member interprets media messages based on a unique combination of personal, social, environmental, educational and other discursive factors. While audience members may share general characteristics such as age, income or class, it is impossible to know how a particular audience will interpret a given news text due to the sheer number and diversity of factors involved. This researcher does not take the position that one's social class or social positioning determines how one understands the news. However, it is worthwhile reflecting on, in general terms, how some audiences might respond to certain types of news stories. Any inferences made about how audiences might read specific texts ought to be grounded in a thorough understanding of the public idiom – that is the language that newspapers adopt that reflects what Stuart Hall describes as the "underlying common stock of knowledge which it assumes its audience shares" (quoted in Furniss, 2001, p. 5). At the very least, such theorizing provides a direction for additional or complementary research into audience reception.

While discourse analysis provides researchers with a useful tool to assemble well-reasoned arguments/hypotheses about the production of meaning, audience reception and impact on social relations, it cannot furnish, in and of itself, conclusive or definitive evidence about any of these processes. At its best, the methodology may be used to support "informed and substantiated inferences backwards to encoding or forwards to decoding" (Nesbit-Larking, p. 274).
In this research, interpretations and hypotheses generated through discourse analysis are supported and strengthened through the use of complementary methodologies, comparisons with "benchmarks" and by exploring "effectivity" with key actors.

Textual Analysis Using a Case Study Approach

In Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8, discourse analysis is used, along with frame analysis (Gitlin, 1980, Fairclough, 1989), to examine news texts about specific issues. Using a case study approach, I pay particular attention to relevance structuring or "fronting," semantical strategies and argumentative/rhetorical strategies. Some of the key assumptions underlying news discourse are explored through an analysis of dominant news frames.

In Chapter 3, the focus is on historical continuities and discontinuities in news discourse on four historical flashpoints in Canada's relations with Aboriginal people:

1) The opening of BC's first "residential school" in Mission (1863),
2) Legal amendment denying Aboriginal people land pre-emption rights (1866),
3) BC Supreme Court decision in the Delgamuukw case (1991), and

Chapter 5 features an examination of 188 headlines about four high profile events in BC race relations that appeared in two BC dailies, both national newspapers and several community newspapers:

1) Nisga'a referendum on Nisga'a Treaty (1998),
2) BC referendum on tripartite treaty process (2002),
3) Death of a child under care of an Aboriginal child welfare agency (2003), and

In Chapters 6 and 7, techniques of critical discourse analysis are applied to the news texts accompanying the headlines analysed in the previous chapter, 63 of which are
Chapter 8, which is based on discourse analysis of 34 articles published in Aboriginal newspapers about the same four cases examined in the previous three chapters, offers some preliminary comparisons between framing in the mainstream press and Aboriginal media.

**Key Concepts**

A number of interrelated concepts inform the textual analysis of the corpus of the data in this dissertation. Guiding the study of the cases in Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8, is the concept of *news frames*. In *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, Todd Gitlin (1980) advances his classic definition of a news frame as "principles of selection, emphasis and presentation composed of tacit little theories of what exists, what happens, and what matters . . . that routinely organize the news" (p. 6). In effect, news frames single out certain themes or *storylines* for attention while de-emphasizing or ignoring others. One of the main findings of this research is that news discourse about Aboriginal self-governance issues is largely situated within the *Aboriginal people as a threat to Euro-Canadian values frame*.

Related to news frames is the concept of *scripts*. While news frames exemplify themes or topics in news stories, scripts refer to the specific sets of behaviours ascribed to certain types of actors. In *Language and Power* (1989), Fairclough writes that scripts "typify the ways in which specific classes of subjects behave in social activities, and how members of specific classes of subjects behave towards each other – how they conduct relationships" (158-159). Furthermore, some scripts are culturally-based. For example, in news discourse about sports in the United States, a popular script is that of the African-
American athlete from the urban ghetto who rises above an environment of poverty and crime by parlaying a strong work ethic and athletic prowess into fame and fortune as a professional athlete in sports such as basketful, football or boxing. There are strict social expectations about how these actors will behave in a range of situations. In Chapter 6, news coverage about the "suspicious" death of a child on a reserve resonates with a well-established cultural script pertaining to Aboriginal people – the routine aboriginal crime story.

Popular frames and scripts in the news media are often couched in the public idiom. In Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order, Stuart Hall et al. (1978) describe the public idiom as the language used in news reports that reflects the "statements and viewpoints" of the individuals and institutions representing dominant interests in society (p. 61). In effect, news reports tap into a number of assumptions about an issue or a particular group of people that audiences are believed to share. In the case of Aboriginal people, the public idiom includes a number of widely held unfavourable stereotypes of Aboriginal people.

For the purposes of this research, stereotypes are defined as representations of particular groups of people that are "misleading, incomplete or negative" (Williams, 2003, p. 123). Stereotypes may cue highly prescribed and limited readings of news texts for audiences. In Chapter 3, news coverage of a wide variety of Aboriginal topics was steeped in two well-established stereotypes of Aboriginal people. In addition, a taxonomy of emergent stereotypes was elaborated. Content analysis of news texts led to the identification and classification of a preponderance of stereotypical images of Aboriginal people that were outside the two established stereotypes. Generally, this imagery was
associated with new Aboriginal topics such as Aboriginal initiatives to gain administrative control over jurisdictional areas (e.g., child welfare) that, until recently, were the purview of provincial or federal government authorities.

Taken collectively, frames, scripts and stereotypes shape the common sense understandings of issues and particular groups that powerfully constrain the range of ideas and definitions presented as possible in public discourse. While common sense invariably seems to be natural, media critic John Fiske (1990) points out that "it is always arbitrary, always socially produced, ultimately ideological in that the power of the dominant classes is maintained partly to the extent that their ideas can be made into the common sense of all classes" (p. 95). For example, it is ideological common sense that societies that promote individual rights over collective rights (Western societies) are inherently superior and more "advanced" than those societies that place the collective good of communities over the rights of individuals (indigenous societies).

Closely related to the issue of ideological common sense is Gramsci's (1980) theory of hegemony or ideology as struggle. Hackett (1991) identifies four general functions of hegemonic ideology:

1. It neutralizes class antagonisms by, for example, redefining them as differences of culture or individual intelligence,
2. It naturalizes existing dominant relations,
3. It suppresses or fails to identify certain aspects of social relations, and
4. It generalizes the particular into the universal, or the partial into the whole. (p. 57)

Hegemonic definitions of Aboriginal issues quickly become assimilated into the common sense that audiences use to interpret the news. For example, important features of colonial history are typically left out of news stories about Aboriginal self-governance issues. This has the effect of obscuring the role that Euro-Canadian governments played
in displacing Aboriginal people from their economies and traditional forms of governance in the first place.

Chapter Progression

In Chapter 2, I apply techniques of traditional content analysis to 90 news texts about a variety of Aboriginal issues that were published in the Vancouver Sun, the Province and the Globe and Mail over a four-month period in 2002. This pilot study furnishes preliminary evidence about the presence of certain broad patterns of news coverage of Aboriginal issues, particularly around stereotyping and the construction of common sense in news stories.

Chapter 3 traces the historical basis of news representations of Aboriginal people in British Columbia over a period of 130 years. The focus is on news discourse about two issues – authority over child welfare matters and control over land and resources – that have significant implications for power relations between Aboriginal people and other Canadians. News coverage of four "flashpoints" in the history of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations in British Columbia are considered: the opening of the province's first "residential" school in Mission in 1863; a colonial amendment to deny Aboriginal people the right to pre-empt land in 1866; the 1991 BC Supreme Court decision in the "Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en" case; and a community panel's 1992 report on Aboriginal child welfare. This chapter explores news frames and their associated narrative and semantic structures.

In Chapter 4, I assess the context of, and influences on, the production of meaning about Aboriginal people and issues in the media. Particular attention is paid to those
processes, forces and factors that are most influential in shaping definitions of Aboriginal issues in the news. My survey of diverse literature on media studies suggests that meaning is shaped by discursive forces, processes and values. In an effort to navigate the expansive theoretical terrain encompassed by these readings, I have grouped approaches to the study of the media according to their "focus." The three main categories in this model are Structural Studies, which concentrate on media organizations and systems; Behavioural Studies, which focus on the reactions, perceptions and effects of the media on audiences; and Cultural Studies, which involve analyzing meanings and language (Henry & Tator, p. 31). While these broad classifications will be used to make sense of a diverse body of theory, within each category, there are a number of distinct variations. As well, there are linkages among each of these approaches to the study of the media.

The next four chapters focus on news coverage of issues and events related to Aboriginal child welfare and treaties in British Columbia in the years 1998, 2002, and 2003. In Chapter 5, I carry out a headline analysis of 188 headlines of news items in major daily newspapers and "community" newspapers in order to elucidate some of the major features of news discourse, including dominant and secondary news frames.

Chapter 6 furnishes a detailed study of how a dominant news frame and its underlying discourse and semantic structures are reflected in news texts in four separate cases, two related to treaties and two concerned with Aboriginal child welfare. The first case is the Nisga'a Agreement, often referred to as BC's first "modern" treaty, which came into effect with its formal ratification by the Canadian Senate on April 13, 2000. The second case is the BC referendum on the treaty process, which took place in the spring of 2002. The two child welfare issues received considerably less media attention
than the treaty stories. The first child welfare case examines news discourse in the wake of the discovery of the body of an Aboriginal child under the care of Xyolhemeylh, the Stó:lô Nation's delegated child welfare agency, on September 21, 2002. The final case study considers news coverage of two separate legal attempts by Aboriginal child welfare authorities to repatriate Aboriginal children in 2003. News coverage of these cases revolves around several rhetorical arguments and scripts.

Chapter 7 is devoted to an analysis of secondary news frames that are present in news coverage of the Nisga'a Treaty and the Treaty Referendum. These frames differ from the dominant frame in their definition of "minority rights," through their use of sources and rhetorical arguments, and, finally, through their emphasis on journalist standards of balance, neutrality and detachment.

I examine frames emerging in the Aboriginal press and provide a comparative analysis of discourses in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal media in Chapter 8. These news frames offer alternatives to the dominant news frame and differ from the latter along a number of parameters. Op/ed pieces in the Aboriginal press invoke rhetorical arguments that are distinct from those associated with dominant or secondary news frames.

Chapter 9 explores the "effectivity" of news texts through informal conversations with four people who hold leadership roles in Aboriginal communities. The main themes of these dialogues include: factors shaping the representation of Aboriginal people in the news; impacts of news discourse on Aboriginal people generally and, more specifically, on the ability of leaders to effect positive changes for their communities; and ways that dominant representations may be challenged or changed. As well, participants were able to furnish some preliminary commentary on the findings of this research.
Finally, in Chapter 10, I synthesize the overall goals and objectives of this
dissertation. Included is a discussion of why the news media are important as a site for
contesting meaning about Aboriginal issues. News coverage of Aboriginal matters is
compared with reportage on other issues, such as labour and immigration. As well, based
on an assessment of alternative and oppositional frames in mainstream and Aboriginal
media, I explore emerging news frames. In closing the chapter, I offer some preliminary
recommendations about how to improve the representation of Aboriginal people and
issues in the press.
CHAPTER 2: 
THE MEDIA, ABORIGINAL PEOPLE 
AND COMMON SENSE

Introduction

In this chapter, techniques of content analysis are applied to 90 news items about Aboriginal issues that were published in three Canadian newspapers – The Vancouver Sun, The Province and The Globe and Mail – from June 1 to September 30, 2002 (see Appendix A – Data and Methodology for a full discussion of issues involving the data and methodology of this study). This pilot study builds on a review of Canada’s communication sector by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996e) that concluded that three stereotypes of Aboriginal people are perpetuated in all forms of public discourse, including the print media, film and television. The Commission identified three dominant tropes: 1) Noble Environmentalists, 2) Angry Warriors, and 3) Pitiful Victims (p. 93).

17 An earlier version of this chapter was published in 2005 as "The Media, Aboriginal People and Common Sense" in the Canadian Journal of Native Studies, 25(1), pp. 311-336.

18 The continued presence of stereotypes of Aboriginal people in North American film and television has been well documented. See, for example, Singer's Wiping the war paint off the lens (2001), Aleiss' Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood movies (2005) and Adare's "Indian" stereotypes in TV science fiction: First Nations' voices speak out (2005).
Stereotyping is but one feature of the media's construction of the "common sense" that the audience uses to interpret the news. Hartley, author of Understanding News (1982), observes that the media do not simply "remind us of commonsense notions and classifications that we already have, rather they produce and reproduce them out of raw materials selected from the cultural and linguistic environment" (p. 105). The common sense produced in the news media is not value neutral, but part of a larger process of presenting a hegemonic understanding of the world to audiences, what Gramsci (1980) refers to as the production of consent.

Stereotyping of Aboriginal people is a tradition that has deep historical roots in Canada. Many of the stereotypes that still figure prominently in news texts about Aboriginal issues originated in the nineteenth century. While older stereotypes, such as Aboriginal people as warriors, are still present in news discourse, a number of new stereotypes are emerging. The most prevalent emergent stereotype found in this research is one that casts doubt on the readiness of Aboriginal people to exercise complete control over their lives.

This stereotype appears at a critical juncture in the relationship between Aboriginal people and other Canadians. In recent decades, Aboriginal people have been reclaiming control over their lives and, in so doing, contesting the culture of dependency created by the Indian Act. Across Canada, First Nations have assumed control over reserve finances and many have taken over, or are in the process of acquiring, responsibility for areas such as education and child welfare. In British Columbia, tripartite agreements between First Nations and the provincial and federal governments are becoming part of the political landscape. In the courts, a number of decisions in
landmark cases now compel federal and provincial governments to respect Aboriginal title, land claims, and hunting and fishing rights. The threat of class action lawsuits has resulted in compensation settlements for residential school abuse.

These issues have significant economic implications for the state, large corporations and other dominant interests in Canadian society. The mainstream news media lends support to the status quo through their promotion of common sense interpretations of Aboriginal issues that effectively discredit Aboriginal claims and obfuscate their complex nature and context. Stereotyping plays an important role in the construction of the common sense that audiences use to interpret news. In this Chapter, I examine the ways that the news media frame common sense about Aboriginal people.

Recent Studies of Aboriginal Representation in the News

Until about two decades ago, the representation of Aboriginal people and issues in the news was a topic that garnered little attention from the academic community. That all changed in 1990 with the so-called "Oka Crisis." A major flashpoint in modern Canadian history, the stand-off between Mohawk Warriors and the Canadian Army in Oka, Québec, attracted intense scrutiny from academics as well as the local, national and even international press.

The coverage of these events in the Québec and Canadian press came under a great deal of criticism from academics from a variety of disciplines as well as the international community. In "Covering Native Issues: Traditional Reporting Just Won't Do It," Heald (1992) suggests that the news media need to come to terms with the diversity and multifaceted nature of Aboriginal issues. He argues that they are "too
complex to be dealt with in the single issue context that reporters work in" (p. 16). Not only did the media have difficulty dealing with the complexity of Aboriginal issues, there is evidence to suggest that some media organizations were too close to government sources to be objective about the events at Oka. In a study of news reportage of the Oka situation, media critic James Winter (1992) found that news outlets had a cozy relationship with the government and were "instrumental in accomplishing the government goal of public opinion management" (p. 249). In its review of the representation of Canadian Aboriginal peoples in the media, the RCAP found that Aboriginal people and issues are often excluded from the media altogether. On those occasions when Aboriginal people register on the public agenda, their voices are routinely "misappropriated" by non-Aboriginal people or their portrayals rely on familiar stereotypes. According to the RCAP's (1996b) findings, stereotypical imagery of Aboriginal people in the news reinforces "old and deeply imbedded notions of 'Indians' as alien, unknowable and ultimately a threat to civil order" (Vol. 3, Ch. 6, Sec. 3.1). One of the purposes of this pilot study is to test whether or not the RCAP's conclusions about stereotyping in the early 1990s media still applied in 2002.

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The commissioners of the 1996 RCAP described their mandate as "possibly the broadest in the history of Canadian Royal Commissions" (RCAP, 1996d). The work of the Commission, which was conducted from 1991 to 1996, culminated in the publication of a five-volume report as well as tens of thousands of pages of related reports and other documents. The final reports were based on extensive consultations with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals, communities and organizations as well as over 350 research reports commissioned by the RCAP. The RCAP's report on the communication sector in Arts and Heritage Section of Volume 3 – Gathering Strength drew on consultations conducted in 1992 and 1993 with hundreds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals as well as organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations, the Native Journalists Association and the Canadian Association of Journalists. It also incorporated the findings of a research report by Gail Valaskakis of Concordia University, entitled, "The role, development and future of Aboriginal communications," published on January 31, 1995.
In *We Are Not You: First Nations and Canadian Modernity*, Denis (1997) suggests that the media construct Aboriginal claims to self-government in binary terms such as "us vs. them, civilized vs. barbarian, modern vs. traditional, individual rights vs. collective rights" (p. 13). The modern vs. traditional dichotomy is also given prominence in Alia's *Un/Covering the North: News, Media and Aboriginal People* (1999). The author argues that one of the "old-order colonial," "ethnocentric paradigms" propagated in the press is that "peripheral people" such as Aboriginal people and other Northerners, "learn from 'core' people and not the other way around" (p. 167). In framing Aboriginal issues in ways that effectively deny or denigrate the inherent rights of Aboriginal people, the media exert a powerful and direct influence on public policy initiatives that affect their lives.

Recent research points to a basic distinction in the ways that rural and urban newspapers frame Aboriginal issues in Canada. After analysing news texts from the *Williams Lake Tribune* and the *Vancouver Sun* about a public inquiry into the relationship between Aboriginal people and the justice system, anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss (2001) noted significant differences between reportage in small city newspapers and their big city counterparts. She concluded that rural presses "deflect criticisms of local Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal conflicts into rural-urban dichotomies, while urban presses deflect challenges to state authority by evoking noble savage imagery and reducing Aboriginal claims to localized conflicts" (pp. 28-9). While urban and rural presses emphasize different criteria, in both cases, news frames about Aboriginal people result in the "silencing of Aboriginal concerns" and, ultimately, in their "political containment" (p. 28).
In *Discourses of Domination: Racial Bias in the Canadian English-Language Press* (2002), Henry and Tator apply techniques of critical discourse analysis to news coverage of prominent stories involving Aboriginal people. Their first case study looks at media coverage of the trial of former MP Jack Ramsey for sexually assaulting a young Aboriginal woman, while the second examines the media's portrayal of Mi'kmaq fishing rights at Burnt Church, New Brunswick. They observe that Aboriginal people are frequently portrayed as a "significant threat to the social order" or as "problem peoples who have either problems or create problems" (p. 204).

Finally, Lambertus (2004) observes that polarized news reporting of conflicts involving Aboriginal people predisposes other Canadians who may be unaware of the "historic context of disputes, are otherwise ambivalent, or have already come to negative conclusions about Native protests" to be unsympathetic to Aboriginal causes (p. 201). In effect, *what is not said* in a news report may have as great an influence on the production of meaning as *what is said*. The withholding of history and context about complex issues limits the interpretative choices available to audiences, particularly to those audience members who do not already possess or have access to more detailed or nuanced information on those issues.

**News and Aboriginal People in History**

Historically, a prominent feature of Canada's English-language news coverage of Aboriginal issues has been ethnocentrism and, at times, outright racism. Political scientist Paul Tennant (1990) notes that in 1860s British Columbia, the *British Colonist* routinely described Aboriginal people as "rascally redskins" (p. 113) and "miserable fish-eating
tribes" (p. 84). This newspaper had a practice of publishing unsigned racist letters advocating that they be "removed" from Victoria, a viewpoint that was echoed in its editorials (pp. 113-114).

News media in the mid-18th century acted in the interests of property owners and those who wished to get Aboriginal people out of the way of further settlement and economic exploitation. In the modern era, the removal of Aboriginal people from the path of economic activity continues to be a preoccupation of the media. Initiatives designed to provide Aboriginal people with more autonomy over their lives and greater control over land rarely receive balanced media coverage. For example, in 1999 David Black, owner of 55 BC community newspapers, many of which have monopolies in their local markets, ordered the editors of all his papers to refrain from publishing any editorial commentary in support of the Nisga'a Treaty. The BC Press Council, which is the body set up by the newspaper industry ostensibly to ensure "freedom of the press," received two complaints, one from the provincial government and one from a private citizen. The Press Council rejected the complainants' claim that Black was "censoring democratic debate" and ruled that newspaper owners have the "right to direct editorial policy" (Hackett, 1999, para. 2 & 8).

Not only did colonial newspapers promote racist images of Aboriginal people and advocate that they be dispossessed of ancestral lands, they also performed the function of setting the public agenda for the discussion of Aboriginal issues. In 1866, the editor of the British Columbian, a self-described defender of "Indian rights," expressed the view that those rights "did not include the right 'to hold large tracts of valuable agricultural and pastoral land which they do not and cannot use" (Fisher, 1992, p. 166). Sympathetic,
albeit patronizing, views towards Aboriginal people in the abstract could be found in colonial newspapers, but when it came to concrete issues such as land utilization, Eurocentric ideas of land use and notions of Aboriginal inferiority usually characterized the news. Traditional use of land by Aboriginal people was neither valued nor acknowledged by Europeans, and consequently never became part of public discourse.

In the 19th century, traditional Aboriginal culture was often publicly discredited: "highly sensationalized descriptions [of the Sundance and other traditional ceremonies]...served to confirm suspicions regarding the state of savagery existing in western Canada" (Pettipas, 1994, p. 101). After the 1885 Métis Uprising led by Louis Riel, news media generally assumed a proactive role in trying to persuade the government to adopt more coercive policies to deal with Aboriginal people: "[news reporters] expected the Department [of Indian Affairs] to take measures to guarantee the safety of White communities" (p. 102). At the time, the press saw the Department of Indian Affairs for what it was – a branch of the state dedicated to protecting the interests of white settlers.

Aboriginal people have always taken an interest in what was being written about them and attempted to set the record straight. In British Columbia, as far back as 1887, Aboriginal leaders appealed directly to elected government officials, often expressing their "bitterness at being depicted in White newspapers as violent and unpredictable" (Tennant, 1990, p. 56). In the late 1960s, a new generation of Aboriginal leaders associated with the pan-Indian movement recognized the necessity of influencing public opinion through the news media. By 1972, Aboriginal people in BC had created their own media outlets and, partially in response to this pressure and competition, the Vancouver Sun became the first paper in the province to devote a journalist solely to
covering Aboriginal issues. During an era of protests in the 1980s, Aboriginal leaders "actively sought the understanding of non-Indian editors and journalists in order to influence white public opinion" (p. 208).

Little has changed in the contemporary political landscape. Venerable stereotypes of Aboriginal people abound – especially the Noble Indian clad in traditional dress and situated in idyllic natural settings. Such portrayals play better in the media than do images of modern, politically savvy Indians dressed in casual, "western attire" from less picturesque settings:

journalists…quickly came on side when chanting Indians in traditional costume confronted white loggers on magnificent coastal islands or in pristine mountain valleys; less attention was paid when Indians in blue jeans and baseball caps did the same thing in the dreary spruce forests of the northern interior (Tennant, 1990, p. 209)

Aboriginal people have criticized the news media for their tendency to afford more favourable treatment to stories about "safe" issues that play into romantic western notions of them. AFN Grand Chief Phil Fontaine noted the hypocrisy of the Ottawa Citizen when it ran a story on Canada Day, 1998, celebrating Tecumseh as saving Canada from the Americans, but then, only a couple of days later, the paper published an article that criticized the Supreme Court decision in the "Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en" case and poked fun at Indian culture and oral tradition:

This is the worse kind of stereotyping of First Nations people – to appreciate us only when we are wearing our feathers, but despise us in everyday life. Some journalists and politicians in this country always want to complain about Aboriginal issues, but resent it when we appear to be making headway like in the negotiating of the Nisga'a treaty. (AFN, 1998, para. 5)

While the contemporary news media display greater sensitivity to Aboriginal people and issues than did their predecessors, evidence of outright racism may still be
found in opinion pieces and editorials. An opinion piece published in The Province on January 29, 2003, serves as a reminder that media representations of Aboriginal people have not changed as much as some might think. In "Natives need freedom from both government and band council," journalist Susan Martinuk blames Aboriginal people for the effects of colonization and racism. References such as "native culture is a mess," "miserable native culture," "Canada's Aboriginals face a bleak future," and "despair, poverty and hopelessness are norm" would not have been out of place in a mid-19th century publication such as the British Columbian or the British Colonist. The author takes an essentialist view\textsuperscript{20} of Aboriginal people, prognosticating that their current problems are due to "social and economic pathologies" that are "inherent" in their "culture." Her prescription is simple: since Aboriginal culture is flawed, the only solution is to bypass corrupt Aboriginal leaders and organizations, abandon any attempt to address Aboriginal rights or self-governance issues and impose assimilation on Aboriginal people (see the complete text of this column, reproduced in its original Canadian Newsstand format, in Appendix E – Sample News Stories).

**Mapping Patterns, Themes and Trends in News Coverage**

My main research focus orbits print media coverage of Aboriginal issues. Major patterns, themes and trends in news coverage of contemporary Aboriginal social policy issues in Canada are examined. An analysis of coverage in three major Canadian daily

\textsuperscript{20}Fiske (1996) argues that "essentialist" racism is alive and well today, particularly among right-wing circles in the United States. He observes that while the media did not directly invoke essentialist racism in covering the O. J. Simpson trial, "they did nothing to prevent its activation...One does not have to use a racial stereotype to perpetuate it: in a racist society, ignoring its existence can have the same effect" (p.274).
newspapers reveals significant variations in reportage of Aboriginal issues. A central hypothesis is that *the three stereotypes identified by the RCAP in its 1996 report were still prominent in 2002 news media coverage of Aboriginal issues*. Within this general frame of reference, specific questions emerge concerning the selected news stories and by-lines:

1. What Aboriginal topics are covered most frequently? Least frequently?
2. How frequently are Aboriginal people the *actors* in newspaper stories about Aboriginal issues?
3. How frequently are non-Aboriginal people the identified actors in newspaper stories about Aboriginal issues?
4. What roles do the actors play in these news stories?
5. Are certain roles more likely to be assigned to Aboriginal actors than to non-Aboriginal actors? And vice versa? If so, which roles?
6. What is the identity of Aboriginal actors (e.g., First Nations, Métis or Inuit)?
7. Are stereotypes of Aboriginal people present in these news stories?
8. Are these stereotypes consistent with the paradigm articulated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in their 1996 report?
9. Are new stereotypical images of Aboriginal people emerging in these news stories?
10. Are there recurring themes and patterns in these news stories?
11. Are these news stories sympathetic or unsympathetic to Aboriginal interests and issues?
12. In these news stories, how are Aboriginal people portrayed in relation to non-Aboriginal society and/or institutions?

**Selected Findings**

*Survey of Aboriginal Topics in the News*

The topic that was most often the primary topic in the 90 articles, other than the "Other Aboriginal Topic" option, was "Treaty Negotiation/Implementation" (10 articles), followed by "Fishing and Hunting" (nine articles). The most common secondary topic (Topic "Mentioned") was "Reserves" (32 articles), followed by "Self-Government," "Other Land and Water Issue," and "Financial Management" (each topic was mentioned
in 29 articles). For the most part, primary topics were distributed relatively evenly among the three newspapers with the exception of two closely related topics—"Treaty Negotiation/Implementation" and "Treaty Referendum." Twenty-seven percent of the articles in *The Globe and Mail* had one of these two categories as the primary topic, whereas *The Vancouver Sun* had only 15% and *The Province* a mere 9%. This is noteworthy because treaty negotiations dominated public discourse in British Columbia during the time the data were collected. BC's Liberal government had just conducted a highly controversial referendum on treaty rights in June 2002. Yet, the two BC newspapers in this study provided far less coverage of issues relating to treaty negotiations and the referendum than did a "national" newspaper published out of Toronto.

One of the many criticisms of the treaty referendum is that the average non-Aboriginal British Columbian lacked the basic knowledge about the history and context of treaties in particular, and Aboriginal rights in general, to make an informed decision about referendum questions. British Columbians who did not have a basic understanding of the underlying history and context of treaty issues may have simply fallen back on the *public idiom* of the media.

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21 While only one primary topic could be designated per news article, no limit was placed on how many secondary topics or "Topics Mentioned" could be specified for each article.
22 In an op/ed in the *Vancouver Sun*, Pollster Angus Reid describes BC's Treaty Referendum as "one of the most amateurish, one-sided attempts to gauge the public will that I have seen in my professional career" (April 5, 2002, p. A15).
Roles of Actors in News Stories

The main purpose of this category is to determine if Aboriginal actors are treated differently than non-Aboriginal actors. Fifty-seven percent of the non-Aboriginal actors in the 90 news stories are portrayed as "Heroes," by contrast, Aboriginal actors fulfill the role of "Hero" in only 10% of the articles. Aboriginal actors are most likely to be portrayed as "Survivors" (34%) or "Villains" (31%). These findings point to fundamental differences in the ways in which the news media attribute agency to Aboriginal people and other Canadians. In 94% of news articles, non-Aboriginal actors are depicted as active participants in news events. By contrast, in 65% of news items, Aboriginal people were portrayed as passive recipients of the consequences of the actions of others or events beyond their control. The myth of Aboriginal people inability's to exercise control over their lives has informed social policy towards Aboriginal people since early colonial times and is reflected in current legislation such as the Indian Act, which legally defines Aboriginal people as "wards" of the state.

Exemplifying the "non-Aboriginal-as-hero" theme are several articles that deal with the proposed First Nations Governance bill. In these news texts, DIAND Minister Robert Nault is portrayed as trying to "help" Aboriginal people meet modern standards of governance and human rights, while Aboriginal leaders who oppose the new bill are depicted as self-interested and/or standing in the way of progress. The views of a couple of Aboriginal leaders supporting the bill were given significant space in news stories.

In public discourse, historically, Europeans have denied the agency of indigenous peoples. Instead, indigenous people have been constructed as "passive recipients of good actions (development [on the part of Europeans]) or bad ones (extermination of coercive control), but only rarely and grudgingly giving agency and a 'speaking part' to the 'other' of their imaginings" (Hartley & McKee, 2000, p. 4).
Stereotypes

The researcher set out to determine whether the stereotypes identified by the RCAP were as prominent in the news in 2002 as they were when the Commission conducted its research between 1991 and 1996. The provision of an "Other" option with a space to write in an additional stereotype anticipates the construction of a list of emerging stereotypes. Two of the three stereotypes identified by the RCAP were still very much present in 2002: the *Aboriginal-as-Pathetic-Victim* stereotype in 44% of the articles analysed and the *Aboriginal-as-Angry-Warrior* stereotype in 31% of news stories under study. However, the stereotype of the *Aboriginal-as-Noble-Environmentalist* occurred in only 3% of the news stories.25

Perhaps the most significant finding in this section is the list of emerging stereotypical imagery generated by the coding form. More than 40% of the total number of stereotypical images identified in this study fell outside the RCAP's typology. In Table 2, these 51 images are grouped into five thematic image clusters (a sixth catchall category - "Miscellaneous Stereotypical images" has been added).

25 The RCAP assessed the impact of all forms of media on Aboriginal people, including television, film and the performing arts. It may be that the *Noble Environmentalist* stereotype is given more play in the realm of arts and entertainment.
Table 2: Emerging Stereotypes of Aboriginal People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCURRENCES</th>
<th>STEREOTYPICAL IMAGE CLUSTER AND ASSOCIATED IMAGES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td>Aboriginal people as incompetent or corrupt financial managers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as unable to manage their financial affairs</td>
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<td>• as financially irresponsible</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as unethical in managing band finances</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as corrupt, spending tax dollars irresponsibly and inappropriately</td>
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<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>Aboriginal people as taking advantage of the system</td>
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<td>• as taking advantage of &quot;special government deals&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as &quot;biking&quot; the system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as &quot;hiding behind&quot; the courts</td>
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<td>• as using the court system for personal gain</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as lawbreakers, taking advantage of &quot;special treatment&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>Aboriginal people as incapable of self-governance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as incompetent at managing their own services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as undemocratic &quot;bullies&quot; when in positions of power</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as out of step with practices of &quot;modern&quot; governance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as incapable of &quot;good government&quot; without non-Aboriginal assistance</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Aboriginal people as working within the &quot;system&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as &quot;Good Indians,&quot; doing what non-Aboriginals want</td>
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<td>• as &quot;defying the odds&quot; and succeeding in the non-Aboriginal world</td>
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<td>• as skilled artisans and artists</td>
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<td>• as quaint and non-threatening participants in traditional ceremonies</td>
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<td>• as tireless campaigners for fair treatment</td>
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<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Aboriginal people as living outside non-Aboriginal law and social norms</td>
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<td>• as chronic criminals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as engaging in illegal activities</td>
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<td>• as &quot;radical&quot; activists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as flouting the law</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>Miscellaneous stereotypical images</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• as &quot;standing in the way&quot; of progress</td>
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<td>• as dependent people</td>
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<td>• as not respecting human rights</td>
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<td>• as spiritual, superstitious and unscientific</td>
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<td>• as constantly fighting amongst themselves</td>
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<td>• as ill-mannered and &quot;uncivilized&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• as degrading the environment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The concept of emerging stereotypes is an interesting phenomenon that has garnered little attention by academics. Their appearance may signal a backlash in the
attitudes of non-Aboriginal Canadians that may be attributable, in part, to polarized media coverage of a number of recent high profile campaigns by Aboriginal people for increased self-governance and the resolution of long-standing grievances about land and residential schools. Another factor in the emergence of new stereotypes may be "First Nations fatigue" on the part of readers who prefer the simplicity and concision of stereotypical news coverage to in-depth, contextualized news reports of Aboriginal issues.

**Sympathy and Antipathy to Aboriginal Issues in the News**

While operationalizing what "sympathetic" means for the purposes of this study is a challenge, I posit that it is important to assess what Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1991) refer to as "sides presented and side favoured" (p. 168). In their grounding-breaking study of representations of crime, law and justice in the Canadian media, these authors rarely found two or more sides presented in news stories; instead, they discovered that the "norm is decidedly one-sidedness" in individual news stories (p. 172). Ponting and Gibbons (1980) placed media outlets on an "Indian Sympathy Index" in order to assess the degree to which publications were sympathetic to Aboriginal concerns. Skea (1993-1994), in looking at Canadian newspaper portrayals of the Oka situation, assessed sympathy to Aboriginal people involved in the news based on whether individual news stories reflect "anti-Native" or "pro-Native" themes (p. 20).

In this study, whether or not a news item is sympathetic to Aboriginal interests and issues was determined by assessing a number of dimensions of the article such as the presence (or absence) of stereotypes, contextualization of issues, and the inclusion of the views of Aboriginal people (see Appendix C – Coding Protocol for more detail).
Overall, 46% of news items were coded as unsympathetic, while 36% were classified as sympathetic. Only 17.8% of the news items studied were deemed neutral. Reportage on Aboriginal issues in the Vancouver tabloid, The Province, was much more likely to be unsympathetic (78%) than in the other Vancouver paper (35%) and the national paper (33%).

**Orientation of Aboriginal People to Non-Aboriginal Society**

The objective of this section is to assess how relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal society are portrayed in news texts. This relationship was variously characterized as one involving conflict, negotiation, collaboration or participation in the system. In nearly half the data (47%), Aboriginal people are portrayed as being pitted against non-Aboriginal society and institutions. Fifty-one percent of the time, Aboriginal people are seen as operating within the "rules" of the system, participating in (30%) or negotiating (13%) or collaborating (8%) with Canadian society and institutions.

**Stereotyping and the Construction of Common Sense**

Based on the findings in this study, reportage of contemporary Aboriginal issues has changed little since the days of early Canadian newspapers. Much of the news coverage in the three newspapers reiterates damaging stereotypes, is unsympathetic to the concerns of Aboriginal people and reports on critical issues, which have nuanced historical antecedents that are little understood or known by the public, in an ahistorical, de-contextualized fashion. Old stereotypes abound and as Aboriginal people seek to gain
more control over their lives, new stereotypes are emerging. The most common emergent stereotype is that of Aboriginal people as "incompetent or corrupt financial managers." Related to this are two clusters of stereotypical images: 1) *Aboriginal people as incapable of self-governance* and 2) *Aboriginal people as "taking advantage" of the system.*

The phenomenon of stereotyping – how it arises, what function it performs and its impact – has an interesting history that might provide insight into contemporary manifestations. While it may have harmful consequences on those subjected to it, in fact, stereotyping is a function of basic cognition. Hartmann and Husband (1974) describe this as a feature of "normal thinking, namely categorization" which enables people to assign "structure and meaning upon events and objects" (p. 56). In an age where people are sometimes described as being "bombarded" with information, stereotyping enables people to efficiently sort and interpret large amounts of data. Unfortunately, when this feature of "normal" cognition is applied to specific cultural and racial groups, "whole clusters of characteristics tend to become associated with the ethnic label" (p. 57).

Stereotyping performs a useful function for journalists. Reporters are not only under pressure to process vast quantities of information rapidly, they also are charged with fashioning stories about people, issues and events. By invoking stereotypes, journalists avail themselves of a ready-made structure that will support their stories. Technological advances in news production in the early to mid-twentieth century may have made the use of stereotypes almost unavoidable since the brief amount of time available to produce enormous quantities of news text and other media materials requires the use of specialized "formulas" (Adorno, 1957). By the start of the new millennium,
journalists were required to produce twice as much copy as they did in the 1960s (Goldsmith's Media Group, 2000, p. 35).

There are other factors, in addition to convenience, efficiency, and technological innovation, which account for the routine use of stereotypes by reporters. After analyzing the media's handling of the anti-war movement in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, Gitlin (1980) concluded that journalists had little direct contact with their audiences and tended to underrate their "knowledge and attention span, and form images of this abstract knowledge compounded of wish, fact and indifference" (p. 267). Journalists do not necessarily derive their stereotypes based on actual contact with those people who are the object of them; instead, they form their stereotypical ideas based on a wide variety of indirect sources. These sources include:

[their] immediate work and social circles, and from premises that filter through the organizational hierarchy: from sources, peers and superiors, on occasion from friends and spouses, and from the more prestigious media reports, especially those of the New York Times and the wire services (p. 267)

Given the demands of today's "24-hour news day," reporters, in developing their ideas about Aboriginal issues and people, may rely more on such secondary sources of information than they do on direct contact with Aboriginal people themselves.

Aboriginal people, for their part, bear the harmful consequences of stereotyping. While reporters might rely on it as a type of a journalistic "shorthand" that allows for easy story framing, stereotyping glosses over critical nuances of issues and conflates diverse individuals, communities and cultures. This leads to one-dimensional, de-contextualized coverage of important issues, which further entrenches the "communication gulf" between Canada and its third solitude. The RCAP (1996b) contends that many of the persistent "myths and misperceptions" of non-Aboriginal
people are "perpetuated by no communication, poor communication, or one-sided communication" (p. 5).

The media's handling of the so-called "Oka Crisis" was couched in stereotypical imagery of Aboriginal people. The RCAP 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. Instead, most news reports were organized around one central image – that of "bandanna-masked, khaki-clad, gun-toting" warriors (p. 6). This stereotypical image bears a remarkable resemblance to the "warbonneted warrior – the dominant film and media image of Aboriginal men in the last [19th] century" (p. 6).

Stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people are often cued by headlines. After analyzing newspaper headlines about the events at Oka in 1990, Roth, Nelson and David (1995) concluded that the news media uncritically adopted "government discourses of thuggery and terrorism," effectively associating all Mohawk people with violence (p. 77). Rather than inform audiences about the context and history of the complex issues at stake, media outlets cast the story in terms of familiar, marketable stereotypes. While this type of coverage might play into the public's fascination with conflict and violence, it results in an entrenchment of old ways of thinking. Canada's news media missed an opportunity to educate the public about issues that have profound significance for all Canadians.

Persistent stereotypes also have damaging consequences on Aboriginal identity because they contribute to reinforcing the "negative self-concepts which Native parents have come to hold" (Ponting & Kiely, 1997, p. 171). *Labelling theory* suggests that
stereotypes may become "self-fulfilling prophecies" for those individuals and groups that are subject to them. A well-known example is that of the "drunken Indian." Aboriginal people who have consistent long-term exposure to this stereotype may "feel that they have a certain license to imbibe to excess because it is expected of them by non-Natives, giving themselves permission to conform to a stereotype" (p. 172).

A stereotype that appears frequently in the selected news articles is Aboriginal people as unable to manage their own finances and services. If this stereotype becomes a regular feature of public discourse, some Aboriginal people may internalize it and begin to doubt their competence or potential in these areas.

Not all media stereotypes about Aboriginal people are overtly negative. In this study, there were three occurrences of the Aboriginal as noble environmentalist stereotype and six appearances of the image of Aboriginal as working within the system stereotype. However, even stereotypes that have some positive connotations may have a destructive impact on Aboriginal people:

the "noble Indian" stereotype allows non-Natives to think about pretend "Indians" whom non-Natives have conjured up in their imagination and entertainment media. Some First Nation people strenuously object to this image as being just as racist as the "helpless" Indian image, for they see it as implying that First Nation people acquiesce in their plight with dignity. Insofar as First Nation individuals believe that First Nation people are supposed to acquiesce, this image is disempowering and, ironically, can thereby contribute to a negative self-image (Ponting & Kiely, p. 172).

Reporting that is couched in stereotypical terms serves to close off potential avenues of interpretation and may have harmful impacts on Aboriginal identity and agency.

While the focus of this chapter is not on why media cover Aboriginal issues as they do, the discussion would be incomplete without considering some of the factors implicated in these patterns. Furniss (2001) contends that news coverage of conflicts
between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal interests is quite variable, depending on the type of resources being contested. When those resources are economic, the news is often reported in ways that "protect established economic/political interests by rejecting Aboriginal claims" (p. 29).

An issue that has indirect economic implications for all concerned is Aboriginal child welfare. In the two decades since the Manitoba government first devolved authority for child welfare services to an Aboriginal child welfare agency, dozens of First Nations across Canada have negotiated, and others are in the process of negotiating, the devolution of delegated statutory responsibility for child welfare services. Those early Aboriginal child welfare agencies in Manitoba experienced difficulty taking on this responsibility due to a lack of financial and operational support from the provincial government (Fournier & Crey, 1997).

The issue of control over child welfare is of strategic importance for Aboriginal people for a variety of reasons. For one thing, it affords Aboriginal people the opportunity to demonstrate their effectiveness at delivering child welfare services to their own people. Furthermore, capable management of these services by Aboriginal people advances the case for their increased independence from governmental authorities in other areas of jurisdiction, such as education and justice, and ultimately for self-

26 Many Aboriginal leaders contend that the cultural and linguistic survival of Aboriginal peoples is directly related to the issue of who has jurisdictional control over child welfare and education. Historically, two practices of the Canadian state have had devastating impacts on the identities, cultures and languages of Aboriginal communities: 1) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the coercion of Aboriginal parents to send their children to residential schools, and 2) in the latter half of the twentieth century, the removal of Aboriginal children from households deemed "unsupportive" or "inappropriate" by often overzealous state officials and social workers.
government itself. As a stepping-stone to greater autonomy, Aboriginal control over child welfare has clear implications for access to resources and tax revenue. In this context, the field of child welfare becomes the symbolic battleground where the inherent right of Aboriginal people to govern themselves and exercise control over their lives is contested.

In this study, nine articles focused on issues relating to Aboriginal control of child welfare services. Four of these news items (44%) portrayed unsympathetic perspectives, while three (33%) were sympathetic and two (22%) were neutral. Stereotypes were present in all but one article. The "pathetic victim" stereotype appeared in seven of these items and four articles portrayed Aboriginal child welfare authorities as either incompetent or corrupt in their management of child welfare services. Not only were stereotypes invoked in eight of these articles, inflammatory language was frequently associated with the actions of Aboriginal child welfare authorities.

News coverage of a number of other issues that have economic implications for non-Aboriginal interests was noted. Treaties, land claims, self-governance, financial management of reserves, and fishing rights were all identified as recurring themes in the data. Out of 49 news items on the above topics, 29 (59%) were coded as unsympathetic to Aboriginal people and interests, 10 (20%) were sympathetic and 9 (18%) were neutral. Of the 19 news items concerning treaties and land claims, seven (37%) were sympathetic, seven (37%) were unsympathetic, and three (16%) were neutral. However, coverage of stories relating to self-governance, financial management on reserves and fishing rights was resoundingly unsympathetic, with 70% of news items (21 out of 30)

27 Three of these news items were op/eds that were published in The Globe and Mail shortly after BC's Treaty Referendum in June 2002.
unsympathetic to Aboriginal issues and interests. Only about 7% of these articles (2 out of 30) were coded as sympathetic. Six news items were coded as neutral.

This lends support to Furniss' contention that when there is a major economic issue at stake, news media serve to protect the status quo by discrediting Aboriginal claims. The news media consistently convey the impression that Aboriginal people are incompetent at managing their financial affairs and hence incapable of governing themselves. This result diminishes the likelihood that the public will lend its support to vital initiatives such as the negotiation of treaties, the resolution of land claims and the further devolution of authority to Aboriginal people in education, justice and child welfare. A lack of public support for these processes may make it easier for governments to justify procrastinating in negotiations with Aboriginal people and obstructing the attempts of Aboriginal communities to gain more autonomy over their lives. The issue of public opinion is so important to the federal government that it "commissions expensive polling to keep its finger on the pulse of non-Aboriginal public opinion on Aboriginal issues" (Ponting & Kiely, 1997, p. 174). Effectively, the public's views about Aboriginal issues may serve to curb government support for key agreements and initiatives involving Aboriginal people.

In recent years, a number of researchers have sought to gauge the Canadian public's views about Aboriginal people and issues. Ponting and Kiely (1997) conclude that the results of the first Canada-wide survey on public opinion about Aboriginal matters in 1976 still held true in 1997. Public opinion surveys conducted in 1976, 1986 and 1994 indicate that non-Aboriginal support for Aboriginal people has consistently eroded. Other key findings of this research are summarized as follows:
1. Canadians generally have little knowledge about Aboriginal issues and attach low priority to them except when those issues affect them personally or threaten their livelihood;
2. Canadians generally oppose "special" status for Aboriginal people; and
3. Canadian support for self-government depends on how that concept is defined. If Aboriginal self-government is contingent on Provincial government authority, the Canadian public supports it, but if Aboriginal self-government is defined as Aboriginals developing and running "their own programs [in such areas as health, education and child welfare] without the province having any authority" then it is not supported by the majority of non-Aboriginal Canadians (pp. 175-177).

For Aboriginal people, self-government and self-determination are closely linked. Some Aboriginal people regard contingent self-government as not resulting in self-determination since "replacing non-Native bureaucrats with brown-faced bureaucrats who administer essentially the same provincial policies is not self-determination, by any stretch of the imagination" (p. 176).

A key determinant of public opinion on Aboriginal issues is the media's ideologically driven construction of the common sense that audiences use to interpret the news. After all, the representation of others is a "political and social" act (Lischke & McNabb, 2005, p. 3). Common sense ideas about socio-political "realities" promulgated in the news may be more effective at supporting the dominant ideology than propaganda-style messages since the latter is "contestable," while the former is not (Hartley, 1982, p. 105). Nesbitt-Larking (2001) observes that once common sense has been defined in the media, resisting it is difficult:

Common sense is a closed form of thought, resistant to curiosity, challenge or change. A successful ideological gambit mines the deepest seams of common sense and gives a particular and partial reading of the world, while appearing to be universal and uncontroversial. (2001, p. 87)

Based on the findings in this pilot study, which must be regarded as both limited and preliminary, common sense about Aboriginal issues is framed by news media in
ways that preclude Aboriginal people being "ready" to exercise complete control over their own lives. This conclusion is constructed as natural, logical and inevitable. While there appears to be general low-level sympathy for the 'plight' of Aboriginal people in reportage on some issues, such sympathy does not seem to extend to Aboriginal people engaged in contesting the state of unequal power relations that exists in Canada. Common sense notions of Canada's "best interests" preclude audience identification with "menacing" balaclava-clad warriors patrolling barricades; by extension, "sensible" audiences would not sympathize with any cause with which "warriors" are associated. In addition, Aboriginal people engaged in negotiations involving substantial financial resources are frequently portrayed in the media as being "beyond the pale" or unreasonable.

Stereotyping of Aboriginal people in the news, far from being a thing of the past, is alive and well in the new millennium. Old stereotypes are routinely employed in news stories about Aboriginal issues and new patterns of stereotyping are emerging. New stereotypes of Aboriginal people emerge in an evolving political context. It may be that the appearance of the stereotype of Aboriginal people as incompetent or corrupt financial managers represents a reaction against Aboriginal initiatives to gain more control over their lives and access to land and resources. In recent years, Aboriginal people have been increasingly asserting their voices in all forms of public discourse and contesting the very nature of their political relationship with non-Aboriginal Canadian society. For other Canadians, Aboriginal challenges to the status quo and to state authority represent a political crisis. For the news media, and other institutions, political crises are "moments of truth," which unmask "characteristics which are more latent during more 'normal
times" (Hackett and Zhao, 1994, p. 509). While self-governance may be the ultimate goal for many Aboriginal people, other Canadians tend to regard these aspirations primary in terms of the threat they pose to their lifestyle and standard of living. Aboriginal law professor John Burrows (2002) believes that when "we speak of Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs, Canadians obviously feel they have little stake in that message, other than what 'they' think 'we' take from 'them' in the process" (p. 140).

Since many Canadians are concerned that Aboriginal self-governance may result in a loss of "resources, rights and livelihoods" (p. 157), the construction of common sense notions about the inability of Aboriginal people to assume full control over their lives is functional to the preservation of the current state of power relations. Common sense definitions of Aboriginal issues that emerge in news discourse represent acts of self-defence for dominant interests in a contest that has very real social and material consequences for Aboriginal people and all other Canadians.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, techniques of content analysis were applied to 90 news items about Aboriginal issues that appeared in selected sections of three Canadian newspapers from June 1 to September 30, 2002. This pilot study expands on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples' review of Canada's communication sector, which concluded that media perpetuate stereotypes of Aboriginal people. The research findings confirmed that two of the three stereotypes they identified in 1996 were still very much present in 2002: Aboriginal as victim and Aboriginal as warrior. A number of emergent stereotypes were
also identified, including that of *Aboriginal People as Incompetent or Corrupt Financial Managers*.

Stereotyping is but one feature of the media's construction of the "common sense" that the audience uses to interpret the news. The news media reference common sense ideas already embedded in the public idiom. Common sense has been equated with the term "cultural beliefs" in that it is also used as a "basis for specific group beliefs" and as the "general base of supposed beliefs in all accounts explanations, and arguments" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 106). The common sense invoked by the Canadian news media is specific to the cultural beliefs of the audience to whom it is directed, which does not usually include Aboriginal people. This can be problematic when the focus of news coverage is on issues related to cultural groups outside the belief systems of Euro-Canadians. In addition to both tapping into and reinforcing elements of the public idiom, the news media generate new definitions of contemporary events and emerging issues through the selection and construction of the news.

The next chapter explores continuities and discontinuities in historical representations of Aboriginal people. Nineteenth century newspaper coverage of issues relating to land and child welfare is compared with reportage in late twentieth century news texts.
CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

Introduction

Understanding historical news discourse on Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations is a first step towards situating Aboriginal policy questions within a contemporary socio-political context. This chapter examines news discourse about two issues -- authority over child welfare matters and control over land and resources -- that have significant implications for power and race relations. While land and resource issues have obvious economic implications for all Canadians, the field of child welfare may be seen as a symbolic battleground where the inherent right and ability of Aboriginal people to govern themselves and exercise control over their own lives is at stake.

Textual Analysis of Four Historical Flashpoints

In this chapter, news coverage of four "flashpoints" in the history of race relations in British Columbia are examined:

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5. Opening of the province's first "residential" school in Mission (1863),
6. Colonial amendment to deny Aboriginal people land pre-emption rights (1866),
7. BC Supreme Court decision in the "Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en" case (1991), and

Methods of *discourse* and *frame analysis* are applied to 43 news texts about these events.

One of the main findings is that news discourse about Aboriginal people and issues reflects three dominant frames (see Table 3).

### Table 3: Dominant News Frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Frame</th>
<th>Variation(s)</th>
<th>Historical Period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frame #1: Aboriginal people as inferior</td>
<td>Aboriginal people as child-like</td>
<td>1860s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aboriginal people as more susceptible to corruption</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame #2: Heroic white man saving primitive Aboriginal people</td>
<td></td>
<td>1860s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame #3: Triumph of reason over emotion</td>
<td></td>
<td>1990s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See Appendix A – Data and Methodology for a detailed description of the data and a full discussion of methodological issues.

### The Opening of BC's First "Residential" School in Mission in 1863

**Background**

At the invitation of the colonial government, the Roman Catholic Church established St. Mary's Oblate Mission and Indian school in 1863. It was the first, and ultimately the largest, residential school in what is now the province of British Columbia. Two years earlier, Leon Fouquet, a priest of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI)
order, had selected the site on the banks of the Fraser River, just east of the town of Mission. In 1868, the Sisters of St. Ann opened a girls' convent at the St. Mary's site.

Much has been written about the goals and methods of the residential school system, which began with the opening of a residential school in Alderville, Ontario, in 1849. Barman, Hebert and McCaskill (1986) point out that these schools were expressly designed to perform an assimilative function. Miller (1996) describes the primary objective of the St. Mary's Residential School as effecting a "permanent conversion to Christian religious values and practices" by eradicating "all unChristian behaviour by means of strict rules, stern punishments for transgressors, and use of Indian informers" (p. 91). Stó:lō historian Keith Carlson (1997) explains the role envisaged for this school by the Xwelitem (Europeans) in 1863 in the Fraser Valley:

[The school] was named after the biblical prostitute "Mary," who had been "saved" from a life of sin by Christ. The selection of this name provides insight into the way Xwelitem viewed the Stó:lō....The government hoped missionaries would be able to save the Stó:lō from "whiskey pedlars" and other unscrupulous Xwelitem who had followed the gold miners into Stó:lō territory during the 1858 gold rush. The Stó:lō were viewed as contemporary reflections of the Biblical St. Mary – an innocent who had been corrupted by immoral men....Catholic priests could direct their efforts toward replacing traditional Stó:lō spirituality and culture with Catholic religion and European society. (p. 101)

St. Mary's provided an example of Aboriginal education that was soon emulated elsewhere in the province. Within one "generation" of BC's 1871 entry into confederation, numerous "missions and boarding schools" were established (Miller, p. 94).

As destructive as residential schools were for Aboriginal peoples and cultures, they also provided fertile soil for the seeds of resistance, not only against the residential
school system itself, but also against the whole socio-political infrastructure that sustained it:

[over the long run, these schools] aided the preservation of Indian cultural patterns, stimulated resistance to missionary and government assimilative efforts, spread a pan-Indian identity, and eventually brought about the generation of modern Indian rights movements and cultural/educational activities (Gresko, 1986, p. 102)

While residential schools may have been designed to "wean" Aboriginal people from their traditional cultures, evidence suggests that, in many cases, they may not have had the intended effect. Miller (1996) notes that those who received residential schooling were often the "most energetic in defending the practices that assimilative education was supposed to consign to oblivion" (p. 372).

Also, because residential schools brought together Aboriginal children from diverse and geographically separate nations and kept them together for sustained periods of time, they represented "ideal breeding grounds for pan-Indianism" (Tennant, 1990, p. 81). This gave birth to a powerful sense of Indian identity and solidarity that was a necessary condition for the tremendous growth of the pan-Indianism movement of the 1960s, which ultimately led to the emergence of the AFN, the Native Council of Canada, the Union of BC Indian Chiefs and a variety of other activist Aboriginal organizations.

**News Coverage**

The researcher examined three news stories about the 1863 opening of British Columbia's first "residential" school near Mission (see Table 4).
Table 4: News Texts about BC's First Residential School (1863)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 9, 1863</td>
<td>The Metlahkahtlah Mission</td>
<td>The British Columbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 13, 1863</td>
<td>Our Relations with the Indians</td>
<td>The British Columbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 20, 1863</td>
<td>Our Relations with the Indians</td>
<td>The British Columbian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three articles from the *British Columbian* would now be categorized as editorials. The first story advances the argument that before Aboriginal people can learn appropriate uses for land, their children first need to be "civilized" through a system of industrial schools run by missionaries or secular teachers (91). The writer proposes that these schools be part of a special branch of government – an "Indian Department" – that takes a more comprehensive and systematic approach to dealing with Aboriginal people.

The headline, "Our Relations with the Indians," sets the tone by establishing a binary "us and them" opposition. In discussing news coverage of protest against the 1991 Gulf War, Hackett and Zhao (1994) describe the use of oppositions in news discourse as a rhetorical/argumentation strategy, where a "binary opposition" between two parties is constructed (p. 514). No attempt is made in this article, to give voice to an Aboriginal point of view; it is addressed exclusively to a settler audience. The lead sentence entrenches the opposition between settlers and Aboriginal people: "It would be manifestly impolitic and productive of harm to put the uncivilized and unchristianized Indians of this country in possession of all the rights and privileges of citizenship" (91).

This sentence reflects one of the central news frames of coverage of Aboriginal issues in 1860s British Columbia – *Aboriginal people as inherently inferior* (see Table 3). Aboriginal people are set apart from "us" because they are "uncivilized"; furthermore, this difference is so fundamental as to warrant denying them basic human and civil rights. This unequal treatment is justified based on a utilitarian conception of what's best for
both races. The reporter reasons that "were this done they would be the greatest sufferers themselves, while they in many ways might become instruments of injury to the state in the hands of unscrupulous and designing men."

Depriving Aboriginal people of basic civil rights is not only for the greater good of settler society ("us"), it is also beneficial for Aboriginal people themselves. The "uncivilized" condition of Aboriginal people both justifies, and morally obligates, the state to "re-educate" Aboriginal people:

If anyone should dispute our right to impose upon the natives a state of tutelage, we answer that it is an absolute necessity in order that the state may perform those duties toward them to which it became morally bound in taking possession of the country (91).

Two primary connotations of the noun "tutelage" are significant. First, the word suggests a relationship between an adult guardian and a minor or an adult ward of diminished capacity. This introduces a variation of the dominant frame of the era – Aboriginal people as childlike. A second connotation is also germane – instruction or teaching of a minor by a tutor. Thus, the relationship between colonists and Aboriginal people is construed as being akin to that existing between parent and child or teacher and student.

In an apparent concession, the British Columbian proposes that Aboriginal people be compensated for their land in part "through the establishment and maintenance of suitable schools upon each reservation for the thorough training of both male and female youths in the various branches of household work in the one case, and in the practice of agriculture and the mechanical trades in the other" (91). Such schools, while replicating the sex role stereotypes of the day, would furnish "civilized" and skilled Indians for the expanding wage-labour market of the emerging settler industrial economy. The ultimate
goal of this venture is expressed in the final paragraph, wherein the writer opines that "once collected in sufficient numbers and permanently settled under the influence of a proper educational and industrial system the happiest results, moral and social, would follow".

The news frames that emerge – Frame #1: *Aboriginal people as inferior*, and its variant, *Aboriginal people as child-like* – are consistently reinforced through semantic elements of the text, particularly word choice and syntax. Aboriginal people are referred to as "uncivilized," "unchristianized," "sufferers," "the heathen," and "poor aborigines" (91). The threat they pose to settler society, and the need to control them, is emphasized several times: "the civilized settler would no longer be threatened with the destruction of his property or his life...[they] may become instruments of injury to the state...[the government needs to] exercise a more healthful constraint upon the Indians." These statements serve as justifications for differential and discriminatory treatment of Aboriginal people and contribute to the negative images of them that emerge in this article.

The second article is the only news story published in *The British Columbian* in 1863 that discusses the St. Mary's School, which opened earlier that year. The author identifies "residential schools" as critical to the success of "civilizing efforts" in other jurisdictions, including Upper Canada (92). The principal news frame identified in the first article also figures prominently in this story. The article begins with a description of how missionaries "heroically" saved the St. Clair Indians:

> these cruel warriors and degraded pagans were converted to Christianity under the earnest labours of the late Rev. James Evans. . . . Their vices were abandoned, and, under the fostering care of the government, they were led on, step by step, to the advanced state of civilization.
Here, a rhetorical tactic of *debasement* is supported by the semantical strategies of *exaggeration, dramatic contrast* and *emotional intensity*. The primitive and morally corrupt condition of Aboriginal people, in their original state, is presented as if it were a fact, beyond any doubt. In a normative argumentative move, made with great rhetorical flourish, the exalted state attained by the St. Clair Indians is attributed to their conversion to Christianity, which enabled them to adopt an agrarian lifestyle and live in houses that feature "all the usual evidences of comfort and good taste." The extreme nature of the language used in this article— including highly judgmental adjectives ("cruel," "degraded" and "earnest") and nouns ("warriors," "pagans" and "vices")— contributes initially to a sense of moral outrage and then to a feeling of relief that these "savages" have ultimately been "tamed." These rhetorical and semantical strategies serve to promote the ideological value of adaptation that is present in much *racialized* discourse (van Dijk, 1992, p. 251). Essentially, this blames problems that people of color and minorities experience as result of institutionalized racist policies and practices on their inability or unwillingness to adapt to the ways of dominant society.

Credit for this dramatic conversion is accorded to missionaries, school teachers and "government agents" (92). The industrial school is singled out for special praise for being instrumental in "the expansion and culture of the intellect and their perfection in all that constitutes men good citizens and exemplary Christians." Here, the "equation" of *Good Citizen = Good Christian* is used to support the news frame of *Aboriginal people as inferior*. Since Aboriginal people are not Christian (or at least not at the time of first contact), they cannot possibly be good citizens and, therefore, ought not to be accorded the attendant rights and privileges.
The *British Columbian* urges the government to begin implementing similar programs of education for Aboriginal children "at once." Two local examples of the residential school model are cited – the Metlakatla Mission and St. Mary's, which is described as being

so successfully founded by the equally devoted Rev. Père Fouquet, containing, in embryo, all the elements of an industrial school upon a large scale, and which we hope to have the pleasure of noticing when it is more fully developed (92).

This introduces a second frame evident in 1860s news coverage – that of envisioning the *Heroic white man saving primitive Aboriginal people*. The notion that "saving" Aboriginal people is difficult, dangerous and selfless work is asserted through word choice and considerable repetition and exaggeration. The labour of these "devoted" white men, usually missionaries, is variously described as "great and noble work," "earnest labour," "earnest and persevering efforts," and "the praiseworthy task of benefiting the Indians."

In contrast to the noble missionaries, as in the previous article, Aboriginal people merit only derogatory terms: "wretched," "degraded" (repeated three times), "wholly pagan," "drunkenness, theft, licentiousness and cruelty," and "cruel warriors" (92). This *derogation* serves to underscore the article's conclusion, which constructs Aboriginal people as representing the ultimate challenge for humanitarian endeavours. The writer's final words, "We know of no more inviting field of labour for the Christian Missionary and the philanthropist than that afforded by the native tribes," extend an invitation to the noble-hearted of his time.

The *British Columbian's* "The Metlahkahtlah Mission" (93) extols the virtues of the model Christian colony that the missionary, Mr. Duncan, established on the banks of
the Nass River for the Tsimshian people. Argumentation strategies are organized around the previously mentioned news frame. The "wise" Mr. Duncan's efforts are described as "earnest" and "indefatigable." Pitted against him is no small foe: "medicine-men" and the "ill-disposed among the chiefs" who mount "determined" resistance to his "good work that was surely undermining their evil influence." The author demonizes Aboriginal leaders, while emphasizing the heroic qualities of white men who are engaged in a project of controlling Aboriginal people and ensuring the dominance of white settler society. The underlying implication is that the newspaper has only the best of intentions towards Aboriginal people and that the work of Mr. Duncan and his ilk do a service to their community.

In celebrating Mr. Duncan's work, the newspaper links his success directly to his tactic of isolating Aboriginal people from outside influences:

It was necessary to eliminate these disciples of the truth from the mass of immorality and ungodliness with which they were surrounded....No heathenish customs or practices are allowed....We have here a picture of what may be done with the Indians when kept by themselves....It must no doubt be a sore trial to the poor Indian, and produce a sad confusion of right and wrong in his mind, when he sees the white man, so infinitely superior to himself in power, in knowledge and in civilization....alluring him and his to vice and ruin (93).

Here, a second variation of Frame #1: Aboriginal people as inferior emerges –

Aboriginal people as more susceptible to corruption than white people. Not only must Aboriginal people be removed from their traditional cultures, they must also be insulated from unsavoury elements of settler culture for their own good. The article employs a local argumentative strategy of apparent concern for the welfare of Aboriginal people

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29 This was already emerging as one of the central strategies in the colonial campaign to control Aboriginal people, as expressed in the reserve system and in the residential school system itself.
that is supported using the opposition of good vs. bad white men. This show of empathy buttresses the positive self-representation of The British Columbian, which generally couches its arguments for controlling Aboriginal people in altruistic terms.

The article concludes with a warning: "What may become of these promising and interesting people when mixed up with and tempted by the whites we cannot say" (93). The apparent praise in the first half of the sentence is contrasted with the grave danger posed by miscegenation and Aboriginal people's inherent lack of impulse control. Implicit in this warning is a dualistic view of man reflected in two oppositions. Not only are there Good (adapted) and Bad Indians (unassimilated), there are also Good and Bad White Men.

1866 Colonial Amendment to Deny Aboriginal People the Right to Pre-empt Land

Background

In 1866, the colonies of British Columbia and Vancouver Island were amalgamated into one, which was later to enter the Dominion of Canada as the province of British Columbia. On March 31, 1866, as one of its first actions, the colonial legislature passed An Ordinance further to define the law regulating acquisition of land in British Columbia. This amendment to the land pre-emption law expressly prohibited Aboriginal people from pre-empting land or "homesteading":

The right conferred on British Subjects...of pre-empting and holding in fee simple unoccupied and unsurveyed Crown lands in British Columbia shall not extend to...any of the Aborigines of this Colony (British Columbia, 1875)
This amendment did contain a provision that allowed Aboriginal people to pre-empt land if they received the written consent of the Governor of the colony. However, since colonial approval was unlikely to be given, this effectively negated any possibility of Aboriginal people pre-empting land, something that had been a feature of the Indian land policy of former governor, James Douglas. This restriction of Aboriginal rights reflected the view of the Chief Commissioner of Land and Works, Joseph Trutch, and other settlers, that the territory of British Columbia was Terra Nullius, or empty land, and that Aboriginal people should not be accorded the same land rights as non-Aboriginal residents of the colony, since they were incapable of using the land "properly" or to its fullest extent (Tennant, 1990, pp. 40-41).

**News Coverage**

The researcher examined five news stories about the 1866 Colonial amendment to deny Aboriginal people the right to pre-empt land (see Table 5).

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30 Prior to the passage of this amendment, Colonel Moody of the Royal Engineers had observed to Governor Douglas that the Stó:lō were "pre-empting land as freely as the white man" (Carlson, 1997, p. 86).

31 The writer also examined 12 news items in The British Colonist and The British Columbian that touched on the land issue peripherally, including one that extolled the virtues of the "American military solution" to the Indian "problem." Many of these articles focused on Aboriginal people's supposed innate propensity for violence and lawlessness. For a full list these articles, see Appendix B – List of News Texts.
Table 5: News Texts about Colonial Amendment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 28, 1862</td>
<td>The Indian Land Question Again</td>
<td>The British Columbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12, 1863</td>
<td>Settlement of Indian Claims</td>
<td>The British Colonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 10, 1863</td>
<td>Our Relations with the Indians</td>
<td>The British Columbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 12, 1863</td>
<td>Our Relations with the Indians</td>
<td>The British Columbian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 4, 1866</td>
<td>The Indian Land Question</td>
<td>The British Columbian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not surprisingly, the news frames identified in the previous section are also reflected in discourse about Aboriginal land rights in the colony. In "The Indian Land Question Again" (94), the resolution of the land issue is linked to the need for "facilitating the operations of the Christian Missionary." This utilizes the obverse of the argumentative move advanced in articles about the necessity of residential schools. The current state of relations between "Whites" and "Indians" is attributed to the fact that Aboriginal people have not yet been allocated "ample and suitable reserves." The lack of a fair land allocation policy has "induced" these "unfortunate aborigines" to "homestead":

Can Indians avail themselves of our pre-Emption law? Are they eligible to pre-empt and hold land as British subjects? This inquiry is rendered all the more pertinent at the present time, from the fact that a number of Indians have actually pre-empted allotments.

Here, the specific use of language serves to create a sense of uneasiness in the reader. The adverb, "actually," emphasizes that land pre-emption by Aboriginal people is not merely an abstract issue, but rather a concrete problem that must be taken seriously.

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32 The need for missionary work such as residential schools and the resolution of the "Indian land issue" were rarely discussed in isolation in the news items surveyed; most articles about the land issue at least mentioned the need for missionary work and all three articles about Missionary-run schools made the connection between the "civilizing" influence of missionary education and the resolution of land issues.
The phrase "at the present time" coupled with the adjective "pertinent" establishes the immediacy of the threat posed to colonial interests.

The unequivocal conclusion reached by the author is that Aboriginal people "ought not to possess this right" (94) to pre-empt land. The sense of uneasiness created earlier approaches the proportions of a moral panic:

To allow these people all the privileges of others in this respect would be to throw the whole Colony into confusion. Just imagine our 80,000 Indians (according to the Governor's reckoning) being allowed to locate land wherever they please.

The first sentence makes the "otherness" of Aboriginal people explicit while asserting that they ought not to be accorded equal treatment under the law. While the term "these people" invokes the familiar binary opposition of us vs. them, the use of the possessive pronoun "our" in conjunction with the noun "Indians" makes the proprietary nature of "our" relationship to "them" manifest. The explicit mention of 80,000 Indians plays into one of the oldest settler fears – that of being outnumbered by hostile natives. Even if colonists are not forcibly dispossessed by the local people, the mere prospect of having "Indians for neighbours on every side" is enough to drive settlers away:

Why they would undoubtedly have the whole country to themselves, as they had before the white man came....For assuredly no white colonists would be likely to settle with their families in a country where they would be liable to have Indians for neighbours on every side.

An argument that began defensively by advocating the provision of "ample" reserves to Aboriginal people as a matter of "justice" has taken on a more aggressive tone, concluding with a naked appeal to the self-interest and sense of "racial" superiority of the newspaper's white audience. Newspaper articles on the land issue in 1860s BC reflected the views not only of "many of their subscribers," but also of local politicians.
who were responsible for applying "much of the pressure for removing Indians from their land" (Fisher, 1992, p. 167).

In 1863, two news stories from the British Columbian reflect a somewhat more sympathetic version of the first frame. The first article begins with a complex disclaimer and an apparent concession, emphasizing the good intentions of the newspaper while acknowledging the unjust treatment of Aboriginal people by the government. Aboriginal people are described as having "as good a natural and moral right as that of the English aristocrat who hunts or farms amid his parks and plains in his own native land" (95). Furthermore, Great Britain has a "moral obligation" to treat them justly and respect the rights of "the natives of the discovered country" (the use of "discovered" is most revealing). The author catalogues a litany of negative consequences that Aboriginal people have endured because of European settlement, including that their means of subsistence has been "done away with or rendered unavailable to them."

The acknowledgement that Aboriginal people have been wronged sets up a justification for corrective action. However, redress for Aboriginal people does not involve the return of land or the restoration of rights, but rather the launching of a program of forced assimilation. Since Aboriginal people are "inferior" and in need of protection and guidance, settlers have a "moral obligation" to the aggrieved "original inhabitants" to "undertake the arduous...task of elevating, socially and religiously, those who we are fast dispossessing of their fair country" (95). No mention is made of the colony's obligation to deal "fairly" with all Aboriginal claims through the process prescribed by the 1763 Royal Proclamation. All that the colony must do to discharge its moral "duty" is convert Aboriginal people to Christianity and assimilate them into the
"superior" ways of the European. In this article, a pragmatic point – *Aboriginal people as an obstacle to colonial expansion* – is justified through a complex argumentative strategy that emphasizes the altruism of the White Man and the need of inferior peoples for protection.

The other article, dated August 12, laments the "total absence of anything like a system or justice in our dealing with the Indians" (96). This *apparent concession* quickly gives way to *derogation*. The sort of justice promoted is not that existing between equals, but rather is comparable to the discipline *meted out* by a parent to a child. Apparent concern about the unjust treatment of Aboriginal people has its basis in settler self-interest since unfair treatment of them has resulted in the "loss of the fealty of the red man." This argumentative ploy utilizes an *equation* in which the relationship between Aboriginal people and other Canadians is compared to that which existed between vassal and lord under the feudal system. Under such a system, a lord is able to exploit the labour of many vassals, who, in return, are permitted to eke out an existence due to the Lord's provision of certain necessities. According to this logic, the British colony's only mistake has been neglecting its residual obligations to Aboriginal people, which jeopardizes the whole unequal state of relations. The writer acknowledges that the "settlement of the colony is very materially retarded; for it is not to be expected that men will settle upon lands respecting which there are likely to be disputes about Indian claims." The article concludes with a dire warning about the prospect of a violent insurrection by Aboriginal people that may require "many thousands of Her Majesty's troops to quell, and several millions of British cash to pay for."
That same year, after several settlers were allegedly killed by disenchanted Aboriginal people, an article appeared in *The British Colonist*. Semantical features of the text of "Settlement of Indian Claims" (107), particularly word choice, establish that the threat posed by disenchanted Aboriginal people is grave. They are referred to as "savage wretches" who have "blood-thirsty instincts" and commit "outrages" and "massacres." The suggestion that the constitutional make-up of Aboriginal people predisposes them to committing violent crime reinforces the otherness implicit in the "us and them" opposition that is present in 1860s news discourse. The government is urged to compensate Aboriginal people for their land so that "any just grounds of complaint against their white rulers" may be "removed." In other words, Aboriginal land claims merely provide them with a convenient excuse for violent behaviour that is intrinsic to their nature. This line of argument reinforces the otherness and inferiority of Aboriginal people, while discrediting their attempts to seek redress.

The land pre-emption amendment itself was virtually ignored by both colonial newspapers in 1866. Perhaps this is because Chief Commissioner of Land and Works Joseph Trutch and others successfully shifted public discourse from the fundamental issue of Aboriginal land rights to the issue of "reserve size" (Tennant, 1990, p. 41). While the right to pre-empt land was of critical importance to Aboriginal people, once extinguished, the issue ceased to have any currency for the audiences to whom the two colonial newspapers were directed.

An article from the *British Columbian* advances the argument that not only was the idea of Aboriginal people pre-empting land anathema, the very matter of Aboriginal title to the land was beyond the pale of reasonable debate: "we cannot consent under the
color of an imaginary right, to see large districts of our most valuable lands locked up, and good settlers discouraged and driven from the country in disgust" (103). Apparently, the right to ancestral lands exists only in the *imagination* of Aboriginal people. The colony's "problems with the Indians" are attributed to the liberal policies of former governor James Douglas, including his overly generous and "injudicious" reserve allocations and, presumably, his practice of allowing Aboriginal people to pre-empt land. The point is made that the right to own land is not universal, but contingent on how it is used: "Let the Indians have all the land they can make a good use of, and nothing more." A people's claim to territory that they have inhabited for thousands of years cannot be taken seriously unless that land has been put to a "good use."33 Clearly, what constitutes "good use" is based on Eurocentric ideas:

Okanagan Indians are the possessors of more thousands of acres than they themselves are units…. [They] hold the entire tract of country from opposite Fort Kamloops to little Shuswap Lake…. And what use are they making of it? They have leased the entire range…and are themselves living on the opposite side of the river. Thus, one of the most valuable ranges in the country is locked up, and anyone who attempts to cut hay or otherwise make use of any portion of it is hunted off by the Indians.

This passage establishes two double standards regarding Indian land use present in news discourse. First, though traditional use of the land by Aboriginal people is not valued by settler society (and may even be used as a pretext to disqualify them from the right to make land claims in the first place), when they do adopt European usages for

33 In fact, this principle was applied by the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works in determining (and ultimately downsizing) reserve boundaries: "The Indians regard these extensive tracts of land as their individual property; but of by far the greater portion thereof they make no use of whatsoever and are not likely to do so; and thus the land, much of which is either rich pasture or available for cultivation and greatly desired for immediate settlement, remains in an unproductive condition - is of no real value to the Indians and utterly unprofitable to the public interests" (*Papers connected to the Indian Land Question*, 1875, p. 42).
land, such as leasing it for profit, they are portrayed as wasteful and greedy. Second, Aboriginal land ownership does not carry with it the same rights as non-Aboriginal ownership. It is unacceptable for Aboriginal people to protect their land against unauthorized trespass.

1991 BC Supreme Court Decision in the Delgamuukw vs. The Queen Case

Background

In 1987, hereditary chiefs from the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en First Nations of north-western BC took the Province of BC to court claiming ownership and jurisdiction over 57,000 square kilometres of their traditional territory. Their case was based on the argument that their right to the land had not been extinguished either by the British Government, during the years that BC was a colony, or by the governments of Canada or BC after the province joined confederation in 1871. On March 8, 1991, BC Supreme Court Chief Justice Allan McEachern ruled that "Aboriginal rights exist only at the pleasure of the crown" and that the Crown may extinguish such rights whenever it clearly indicates its intention to do so. In his ruling, McEachern quotes Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan in describing the lives of pre-contact Aboriginal people as "nasty, brutish and short."

This judgment was condemned by a broad cross-section of BC society as one that was based on ethnocentric assumptions and a flawed interpretation of history. Subsequently, the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en First Nations appealed the decision to the BC Court of Appeal where in 1993 the lower court's ruling was overturned – it was
determined that Aboriginal rights in the territory had not been "extinguished" by the Crown. This case was ultimately appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled in late 1997 that Aboriginal rights do exist and that they include a right to the "land itself"—in other words, Aboriginal title is more than simply the right to hunt, fish and gather. It is on this established right that modern treaties are being negotiated in the province of British Columbia today.

**News Coverage**

The researcher examined 19 news stories about the 1991 BC Supreme Court decision in the *Delgamuukw* case (see Table 6).

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34 While this ruling had profound implications for the land rights of Aboriginal people in BC and for treaty negotiations in the province, no decision was rendered on the actual Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en land claim. The court deemed that a new trial would be necessary in order to decide this.
Table 6: News Texts about 1991 Delgamuukw Decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 8, 1991</td>
<td>Indians lose case: They don't possess exclusive title to lands in BC, chief justice rules</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8, 1991</td>
<td>Judge firm on rule of law</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Vigorous confrontation likely, Indians say</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Tears, vow to fight on greet ruling in Smithers*</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>[no headline – sidebar]*</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Judge offers insight to those deciding next round*</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>[no headline – sidebar]*</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Foresters surprised, pleased: Judge's Gitksan ruling greeted with caution</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Death of a dream*</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Court's decision sound in law</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Common-sense cited in decision: Fisheries Council boss queries Ottawa's recent shift on policy*</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Colonial mentality criticized*</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8, 1991</td>
<td>Land judgement today: Experts expect Indians to win</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10, 1991</td>
<td>Industry cautious on land-claims judgement</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 11, 1991</td>
<td>Think about us for a change, argue Indians: Time non-natives quit concerning themselves with themselves</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 11, 1991</td>
<td>Appeal may bypass highest BC court; Appeal fast-track sought to bypass BC court</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 8, 1991</td>
<td>Natives, politicians await key land ruling</td>
<td>Times-Colonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Gitxan-Wet'suwet'en: Majority still rules</td>
<td>Times-Colonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9, 1991</td>
<td>Decision shocks Indian leaders (continued as &quot;Native Anger&quot; on p. A6)</td>
<td>Times-Colonist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Judgement Day Series

Headlines play a significant role in news discourse about the BC Supreme Court decision on Delgamuukw vs. The Queen. Along with lead paragraphs, headlines "summarize what media outlets consider most important...and are also the most likely aspect to be recalled by the audience to define the situation at a later time" (Lambertus,
2004, p. 6). In addition to summarizing the news, headlines play a key role in signalling meaning by expressing a subtle "semantic macrostructure" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 53).

One of the most striking features of the headlines about this issue is the number of general references to "Indians" and "Natives" (seven) as compared to the number of references to the specific First Nations involved in this case as plaintiffs (two). Even though this land claim was mounted by only two of British Columbia's over 50 First Nations, some of the headlines conflate the diverse cultural identities of the First Nations of BC and Canada into "Indians," signalling that it is all Aboriginal people who have "lost."36

The notion of Indians "losing" echoes an old stereotype. A theme running through 1860s media coverage in British Columbia is that of a primitive culture losing out to a more advanced one. Among historians, this view of Aboriginal-European relations in mid-19th century BC seems to have persisted late into the 20th century in spite of a lack of evidence to support it.37

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35 According to anthropologist Robert Muckle (1998), depending on which definition of First Nation is used, there are up to 200 First Nations in the Province (p. 6). Regardless of how nation is "defined," there are "thirty or forty major ethnic groups among the First Nations of British Columbia today" (p. 7).

36 Undoubtedly, this ruling did have significant implications for Aboriginal people across BC and Canada; however, based on coverage of this event in the print media, some readers may have gotten the impression that the plaintiffs were all the First Nations of Canada and, indeed, all Status Indians.

37 Carlson (1997) argues that, until recently, many historians regarded the fur trade in early to mid-19th century BC as one where "primitive" Aboriginal people were "duped" by "technologically superior" Europeans. However, more comprehensive research has found that Aboriginal people were not "dependent upon the newcomers or the newly introduced goods and technologies" and that, in many cases, they had the upper hand in the relationship (p. 42).
An opposition reflected in many headlines as well as within the body of news items, is that of *Reason vs. Emotion*. This underlies a dominant news frame about this court decision – the *triumph of reason over emotion*. Consider some of the lexical choices made in constructing the headlines – Aboriginal people "dream," "argue," cry ("tears"), "vow to fight" and threaten "confrontation." Non-Aboriginal people, as represented by the judge, "rule," and "offers [sic] insight," and make "decision[s]," based on "common sense" and a "firm" interpretation of "the rule of law." Implicit in this frame are two equations:

1. Aboriginal people = people dominated by emotions
2. Euro-Canadians = people governed by reason

This news frame, and its attendant equations, is strongly reinforced in the body of these media texts.

Seven of the articles published by *The Vancouver Sun* the day after the ruling were grouped under the rubric of "Judgment Day." This label brings into play a number of strong associations that shape the "preferred meaning" of news texts:

Labels are important, especially when applied to dramatic public events. They not only place and identify those events; they assign events to a context. Thereafter the use of the label is likely to mobilize *this whole referential context*, with all its associated meanings and connotations (Hall et al., 1978, p. 19)

One of the connotations of the term "Judgment Day" is central to Christian theology – this is the moment when God decides who will be sent to heaven and who will be condemned to eternal damnation. This resonates with a pair of timeworn oppositions in news texts about Aboriginal issues:

1) The Christian vs. The Heathen
2) Good (Europeans) vs. Evil (Aboriginal people)
In this case, Aboriginal people are being judged by the highest power (Euro-Canadian legal system) and found wanting. The term "Judgment Day" suggests that the outcome of the judgment is clear-cut and final; it is also fair, because the court is God-like in its ability to know and objectively evaluate all the facts.

The series title also references the name of a popular Hollywood movie released the same year. In *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, a messianic figure saves humanity from the forces of evil: "a 'kinder, gentler' cyborg from the future returns, this time to protect the soon-to-be saviour of humanity from destruction by a rival terminator" (Maltin, 1998, p. 1366). *Good vs. Evil* is also a central theme in this film. As in the court case, the judgment meted out to the villains by the hero in the movie is final, justified and involves one side "winning" and the other "losing."

One headline that stands out is "Colonial Mentality Criticized" (122). In this opinion piece, Nisga'a leader Frank Calder38 criticizes the "colonial mindset" of a judgment that was condemned as racist by a variety of observers. The Canadian Council of Churches stated that the ruling "appears to reflect a colonial view of society towards Aboriginal peoples" (Culhane, 1998, p. 255). Yet Calder's article is the only one that offers a discourse on the connections between the colonial assumptions underlying the ruling and the broader problem of racism in Canadian society. The author is distinguished from the writers of the other 18 articles not only by the position he has taken, but also by the fact that he is Aboriginal. Since Calder's opinion piece is the only article in the

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38 For Aboriginal people, Frank Calder is associated with a 1973 landmark legal decision on Aboriginal rights in a case that bears his name – *Calder vs. the Attorney-General of British Columbia*. Six of the seven Supreme Court of Canada judges "accepted the concept of pre-existing title [which] led to a revised Federal policy on Aboriginal claims" (Carlson, 1997, p. 148).
sample written by an Aboriginal person and the only one providing an alternative critique of the ruling, the views expressed in it are effectively consigned to the margins of discourse. van Dijk (1997) observes that the voices of "minority groups" are often "effectively marginalized, problematized or ridiculed" due to their unequal access to the "dominant media or other forms of public discourse" (p. 165).

While the introductory biographical paragraph to Calder's article establishes his partisan credentials (i.e., "Indian activist"), most of the other news stories have at least one or two sentences devoted to constructing McEachern as a fair, unbiased and objective observer (as opposed to someone representing non-Aboriginal people). In "Judge firm on rule of law" (112), he is described as a man of "principle" who has been exemplary in his past service to the province. McEachern's high level of competence – reflected in his appointment to "administer" BC's "senior" trial court – is matched by his strong work ethic and sense of social responsibility – as evidenced by his taking on "more than his fair share of trials." Not only is McEachern impartial, dedicated and highly qualified, he is doggedly determined in his quest for the "truth":

McEachern heard evidence from more than 100 witnesses, whose evidence generated more than 30,000 pages of transcripts and examined 10,000 documents. The judge criss-crossed the entire land-claim area by helicopter and spent many evenings driving through the territory to witness first-hand the economic plight of reserve Indians.

In establishing McEachern as a news source of the highest order of credibility, this paragraph utilizes a persuasive rhetorical strategy, one that "forcefully suggests truthfulness by the implied exactness of precise numbers....Few rhetorical ploys more

39 Furthermore, Calder's article is the shortest item (471 words) in the Vancouver Sun's Judgment Day series. By contrast, the other articles in this series, most of which rely heavily on quotations from Chief Justice McEachern, weigh in at between 588 and 1656 words, with the average length approximately 800 words.
convincingly suggest truthfulness than these numbers games" (Van Dijk, 1988, pp. 87-88). The numbers used in this article, and in many others, suggest that the judge was diligent in examining all available evidence and have the effect of establishing his credibility as a news source and attesting to the justness of his ruling.

Other numbers frequently cited in news coverage of this issue establish both the size of the claim - referred to as either 57,000 or 58,000 square kilometres - and the high cost of the case to taxpayers - $25 million. The repetition of the size of the claim impresses upon the reader the immense resources at stake and evokes an emotionally intense reaction. In a story that has been cast in largely binary terms, 57,000 kilometres sounds like a lot of land that they are trying to take from us. Readers could only speculate about what might have happened in the event Aboriginal people had triumphed. Would non-Aboriginal people have been thrown off their land? What effect would this have had on "our" economy? Consider the following excerpt from "Death of a Dream": "the Indians sought ownership and jurisdiction over 58,000 square kilometres of resource-rich land, an area almost the size of New Brunswick, which encompasses the towns of Smithers, Houston, Hazelton and Burns Lake (119)."

The fact that "Indians" lost a case that cost "taxpayers" millions of dollars may suggest to readers that Aboriginal people have "wasted" public money. The attribution of responsibility for the high cost of this case to "Indians" invokes an old stereotype of Aboriginal people as "lazy" and "undeserving" which is premised on the belief that they "receive immense amounts of government funding of which they are undeserving and unappreciative" (Furniss, 2001, p. 11)
"Taxpayers"\textsuperscript{40} – that is, non-Aboriginal people – on the other hand, are portrayed as victims: "the trial of the Indians' action, which began May 11, 1987 in Smithers and ended June 30, 1990 in Vancouver, consumed 374 trial days at an estimated total cost of $25 million dollars, most of it paid by taxpayers" (112). This is a highly selective accounting of the costs associated with the trial. No mention is made of the cost paid by Aboriginal people of a trial in which they were asked, effectively, to "prove that they exist." Or the cost to their lifestyle of decades of resource extraction and settlement on their traditional territory.

In support of the triumph of reason over emotion news frame, the emotionality and irrationality of Aboriginal people is emphasized through lexical choice, considerable repetition and hyperbole in a number of news stories. The plaintiffs "believe passionately" in claims that are "strident," "subjective," "exaggerated," and "seriously lacking in "reality." In the aftermath of the ruling, Aboriginal people are variously described as "shaking with anger," having "tears in their eyes," being in a state of "utter disbelief," having "ill-informed reaction[s]" and evincing "native rage." The picture that emerges is one where the plaintiffs have been making irrational claims based on emotion, nostalgia, illusion and exaggeration. News reports characterize their reactions to this ruling as those of people who are unable to "control" their emotions. This resonates with news frames from the earlier era in which Aboriginal people are constructed as primitive, child-like and lacking in impulse control.

\textsuperscript{40} Polling indicates that many Canadians subscribe to the fallacy that all Aboriginal people – not just Status Indians working on reserve – are wholly exempt from paying income tax. Thus, the term "taxpayer" may be interpreted by some readers as excluding Aboriginal people altogether.
While McEachern "sympathizes" with what Aboriginal people "might subjectively think or feel," he is in the service of a higher cause — "proving" the truth "based on the facts." McEachern's definition of what constitutes a "fact" is unchallenged in media coverage of the decision. The judge refused to admit into evidence the Gitxsan's "ada'ox," the oral tradition story of the world owned by traditional chiefs. According to McEachern, it is a fact that the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en did not have "ownership or jurisdiction of the land" because their rights had been "lawfully extinguished by the Crown in the colonial period" (111). In his estimation, it is also a fact that while they may have lived on the land, because they never used it "appropriately," they are disqualified from being owners.41

Judge McEachern's avowal to take into account only "the facts" in his decision is uncritically incorporated into argumentative structures employed in news coverage of the ruling. Research in cognitive and social psychology indicates that the success of using "facts" as a persuasive strategy in news discourse is "enhanced" when used in situations that "involve or arouse strong emotions" (van Dijk, 1988, p. 84).

In sharp contrast to the emotionality and irrationality of the "Indians," McEachern is described in news stories as "understanding" the law "very well," "never" allowing "emotional considerations" or "personal gut feelings" to "shake his belief in the rule of

41 Not only does Judge McEachern's interpretation of British Columbian history seem outmoded, his fixation on the "facts" is reminiscent of the Victorian attitudes reflected in media coverage of the two earlier flashpoints. In Hard Times, written in 1854, Dickens satirizes these attitudes through the character of the school teacher, Thomas Gradgrind, who tells his students: "Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts, sir!" (1978, p. 47)
the law" and evincing "remarkable and crystal clear analysis" and "common sense." In a ruling characterized as "neither small nor the least silly," the Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en claim is "dismissed, unequivocally." The use of "unequivocal" conveys the impression that the Aboriginal plaintiffs presented nothing that would justify even the slightest reservation on the part of the judge.

McEachern is portrayed as a heroic figure, valiant and indefatigable in his pursuit of the objective truth.42 First, he was "subjected" to arguments from "more than a dozen lawyers representing the chiefs" and both levels of government and then to the "incantations" of Gitxsan shamans who tried to "influence his thinking while he slept." This assertion that Aboriginal people are not only "emotional," but also "primitive" and "superstitious," further reinforces the binary division between us and them and is useful as a rhetorical ploy that makes it easy to discredit the merits of their case.

Finally, many articles raise the spectre of violence, referencing Oka and other situations involving Aboriginal people where violence has occurred. See Table 7 for examples of references to violence in news texts.

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42 This is eerily reminiscent of the portrayal of Duncan, the Nineteenth-Century Missionary discussed earlier in this chapter, whose "earnest" and "steadfast" efforts to convert Aboriginal people to Christianity were "resisted" by "medicine men" and "ill-disposed" chiefs who exerted an "evil influence" over their people.
Table 7: References to Violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>EXCERPT(S) FROM NEWS STORY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>[Bill Wilson, FN Congress] said native people should have exterminated white people when they had the chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>Violence? We will do anything we need to do to protect ourselves [Gitxsan leader] the fight over land and its resources will go on outside the courtroom and that fight could get violent, tribal leaders predicted some Indians may resort to unlawful acts in defence of their lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>Chief Justice McEachern's interpretation...promises to increase the temptation to employ extra-legal responses by Aboriginal people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>&quot;...resolve this issue before we end up in a mess in this province with demonstrations and blockades all over hell&quot; [quotation from labour leader]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>Times-Colonist</td>
<td>possible eruption of blockades and other confrontational actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>Province (126)</td>
<td>Action such as the Mohawk blockade at Oka, Que., last summer is among &quot;things that people will have to consider&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number immediately following the name of the newspaper is the number assigned to that news item in Appendix B – List of News Texts.

Associating Aboriginal people with violence and criminality is an argumentative ploy that has been used historically to discredit Aboriginal people and causes in news discourse.43 These venerable ideas about Aboriginal people, strongly reflected in media accounts about Aboriginal issues in 1860s BC newspapers, seem to have survived – at a minimum – late into the twentieth century.

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43 This reflects one of three persistent media stereotypes of Aboriginal people identified by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in its report (1996b) – that of Aboriginal people as "warriors."

Background

In 1991, BC's Minister of Social Services, Joan Smallwood, appointed two community panels – one Aboriginal and one non-Aboriginal – to review provincial child welfare policy and practice. The Aboriginal panel was created in response to lobbying by Aboriginal communities for the creation of an Aboriginal committee that would produce a separate report from the non-Aboriginal panel. Many Aboriginal people believed that the Family and Child Services Act did not serve their interests.

A year later, after holding discussions with Aboriginal communities around the province, the Aboriginal panel released, Liberating our Children, Liberating our Nations, a report that recommended a radical new approach to Aboriginal child welfare policy. Andrew Armitage, of the University of Victoria School of Social Work, describes this report as

one in which the distinctive Aboriginal historical experience would be recognized and an Aboriginal right to self-determination would be acknowledged. This included recognizing that Aboriginal children constituted the majority (51.6 per cent) of all children in care by court order (British Columbia 1992a, 1). For the future, policies were proposed that began with the principle of respecting Aboriginal communities. (Armitage, 1998, p. 100)

The government responded by drafting new legislation that incorporated a number of the Aboriginal panel's key recommendations. The proposed law contained provisions that made preservation of cultural identity a priority for Aboriginal children. However, the report of a judicial inquiry into the death of a child in care recommended that these

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44 Armitage (1988) points out that, in British Columbia, policy changes in the field of child welfare usually come about as a result of either judicial inquiry or community review (p. 94).
provisions not be proclaimed into law. As a result, many of the key recommendations of the Aboriginal panel were not included in the stripped down version of the legislation that was proclaimed into law in 1996.

**News Coverage**

The researcher examined four news stories about the community panel's 1992 report on Aboriginal child welfare in BC (see Table 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 3, 1992</td>
<td>Major change urged for BC's child services</td>
<td>Times-Colonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 5, 1992</td>
<td>Native leader urges caution on child welfare changes</td>
<td>Times-Colonist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 4, 1992</td>
<td>Law to focus on family</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 4, 1992</td>
<td>Minister promises to trim incidents of removing children from families</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although *Liberating our Children* proposed dramatic changes in BC's Aboriginal child welfare policy, its release was largely ignored by the province's daily newspapers. In fact, in the four news stories that reference this report, it was lumped together with the report issued by the non-Aboriginal panel.

In "Major change urged for BC's child services" (130), the significance of the report is downplayed through techniques of *relevance structuring* and *minimization*. In

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45 The report of the Gove Inquiry questioned the philosophical direction charted by the draft legislation. In particular, Judge Gove's report was critical of its emphasis on support services and the proposed use of the "family group conference" to resolve child protection issues. In June 1995, the guiding principles of Bill 45 (*Child, Family and Community Services Act*) were changed as Gove had insisted and the language of the legislation was altered so that the importance of kinship for Aboriginal people was de-emphasized (Armitage, 1998, p. 99).
the lead paragraph readers are told of "a report that recommends a major change in direction" for child welfare services. No mention is made of two panels making separate reports. Readers are informed that the report makes over 250 recommendations (in fact, this is the total number of recommendations made in both reports).

Halfway through the article, two reports are referred to - "the main report" and another produced by "a subcommittee" (130). The latter report was commissioned, the reported noted, because "one-third of the children 'in care' are natives." In fact, full reports, published separately, were produced by two autonomous panels. Referring to the Aboriginal panel as a "subcommittee" predisposes the reader to regard it, along with its report, as secondary in importance to that of the non-Aboriginal panel. The reason given for producing a second report is a gross oversimplification of why the Aboriginal panel was deemed necessary in the first place. The overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system was seen as but one of many indicators that the "system" was not working for Aboriginal people. In fact, the Minister was being pressured by First Nations to transfer authority to their communities so that they could develop and administer more effective and culturally appropriate child welfare policies. Its report focuses on the need to address cultural chauvinism entrenched in current policies and practices. Thus, this news story misconstrues the nature of the report, minimizes its significance, and sidesteps the substantive issues addressed in it.

The headline of the second Times-Colonist article is misleading: "Native leader urges caution on child-welfare changes" (131). The linking of the verb "urge" with the noun "caution" suggests that the "native leader" in question, George Watts, is alarmed at
the prospect of the proposed changes. Readers may well conclude that those changes must be very radical indeed for native leaders themselves to be urging "caution."

Later, in the same news story, readers learn that, in fact, Watts commends the Social Services Minister for being on "the right track." His concerns are not with the minister's "policy direction," but with potential problems with the pace and manner of future implementation. Few Aboriginal leaders disagree with the principle of transferring responsibility for child welfare from provincial governments to local Aboriginal authorities. First Nations have made assuming full jurisdictional authority over the area of child welfare their highest priority (Bennett, Blackstock & De La Ronde, 1997).

Since the late 1970s, dozens of First Nations across Canada have negotiated delegated responsibility for child welfare and many more are in the process of negotiating such agreements. Fournier and Crey (1997) observe that some Aboriginal agencies have experienced difficulty in taking on this responsibility because provincial governments provided "meagre financial resources and virtually no professional support" (p. 231). In effect, Aboriginal child welfare authorities have been set up to fail. Thus, while the headline implies that a prominent Aboriginal leader has misgivings about the proposals, in fact, he supports those changes but understandably is concerned about how they will be implemented and funded.

In "Law to focus on the family" (132), the emotionality of Aboriginal people is emphasized. Lavina White, a Haida woman who helped write the report is quoted as

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46 By 2005, Canadian Aboriginal people had taken control of over 125 child welfare agencies and organizations. Most of these institutions are "mandated by provincial governments, some of which provide preventative services as pre-mandated agencies and many are actively involved in negotiations with federal and provincial governments to change the locus of control over Aboriginal child welfare from provincial based to a community based one" (Bennett, Blackstock & De La Ronde, 2005, p. 27).
saying, "Things are going to change for us...The recommendations tell us that we are not wards of the government any longer." Her voice is described as "cracking with emotion." This phrase suggests that the speaker is struggling to control her emotions and is possibly on the verge of "breaking down" altogether. Since no information is given as to the nature of the recommended changes, readers might wonder why the one Aboriginal person quoted in this article is so emotional. The last sentence hints that the changes somehow may increase the autonomy of Aboriginal people, but gives no specifics. In the absence of any concrete details about the report's recommendations, the reader may infer that the one Aboriginal source is emotional simply because Aboriginal people are more emotional than non-Aboriginal people. This was an image of Aboriginal people strongly embedded in print media coverage of the BC Supreme Court decision in the 1991 Delgamuukw vs. the Queen case.

"Minister promises to trim incidents of removing children from families" (133) is largely devoted to a description of the non-Aboriginal panel's findings. A single sentence sums up the Aboriginal panel's recommendations: "The native report made 102 recommendations recognizing as necessary the transition back to Aboriginal law and that any changes to child protection legislation are only temporary measures until native governments establish their own legislation." While this may represent a fairly accurate description of two of the broader principles of the Aboriginal report, it provides no details of the actual changes recommended, nor does it sketch in the context in which the Aboriginal panel was deemed necessary. Given the scant coverage the Aboriginal report receives in this article, readers may be left with more questions than answers. For example, what does "the transition back to Aboriginal law" mean? Does this mean that
Aboriginal people will be able to bypass "our" legal system? Is this more" special"
treatment for Aboriginal people?

Since readers are provided with few details about the proposed changes, they may simply fall back on what has been described as the "public idiom" of the news media, which tends to support the interests of dominant individuals and institutions in society. In the case of Aboriginal people, the public idiom includes a number of widely held unfavourable stereotypes of Aboriginal people.

News stories on the proposed child welfare changes provide vague, incomplete or misleading information. The dearth of details about the nature of, and reasons for, the proposed policy changes for Aboriginal people may serve to reinforce the binary thinking that underpins much news discourse about race relations. They are inherently different from us; therefore, they require different services. News texts had the effect of muffling the potential impact of the Aboriginal child welfare report.

Historical Continuities and Discontinuities in the Framing of Aboriginal Issues

One of the most significant findings of this chapter is the degree to which the broader features of news discourse about Aboriginal people have remained constant over the last century and half. In the 1990s, Aboriginal issues were framed, much as they were 130 years earlier, in ways that protect dominant interests and signify Aboriginal people as a threat to such interests.

Traces of two primary news frames that emerged in the 1860s were found in 1990s news discourse. A third frame, the triumph of reason over emotion, figures
prominently in news reportage about Aboriginal land and child welfare issues in the latter era and is so pervasive that it nearly reaches the archetypal proportions of what Yellowhorn (2003) terms a *meta-narrative*. Some of the more flagrantly racist features of earlier news discourse have disappeared or been subsumed into the seemingly more neutral, though ethnocentric, assumption that Euro-Canadian conceptions of reason, science and logic must necessarily be regarded as superior to feelings, emotions and beliefs. While there are similarities between news coverage of Aboriginal issues from the two eras, news frames have evolved and the press has adjusted what Furniss (2001) terms its strategies of "political containment" (p. 27).

News discourse about Aboriginal people is no longer uncontested terrain. Most modern Aboriginal organizations have media relations branches that systematically attempt to influence reporting on Aboriginal issues and counteract "bias" in the press. Henry and Tator (2002) point out that strategies employed by organizations such as the AFN and the Native Action Committee on the Media include "petitioning the courts, lobbying 'power-brokers,' and utilizing government regulatory bodies whenever possible" (p. 203). These efforts by Aboriginal people have helped to create some space, however limited, for their voices in news discourse.

Although the views of Aboriginal people are now routinely included in the news, their impact is diluted through techniques of *deflection*, *de-contextualization*, *misrepresentation* and *tokenization*. For example, while some Aboriginal sources are quoted in news stories about a ground-breaking report on Aboriginal child welfare, the

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47 The *triumph of reason over emotion* frame is akin to the meta-narrative of the "Grand Morality Plan" which involves an epic struggle between forces of good (White people) and evil (Aboriginal people). Yellowhorn contends that this meta-narrative has informed relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people since first contact.
majority of quotations used are those that support "concerns" about the report or promote stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people. *Liberating our children, liberating our nations* (1992) provides a sharp critique of the cultural chauvinism embedded in Aboriginal child welfare policies and practices. Yet this critique is virtually ignored in the articles surveyed; in fact, the substance of this report, and the context in which it was commissioned, is not reported on at all. Rather, news reports on this issue suggest either that the changes are dangerous and radical, without providing any details, or fall back on old stereotypes, such as *Aboriginal as victim*. News texts minimize the importance of the Aboriginal report, report on it in a de-contextualized fashion, and deflect attention away from its critique of the racist societal structures that impede action on Aboriginal child welfare.

A similar strategy of deflection is apparent in news discourse about the 1991 *Delgamuukw vs. The Queen* case. Framing the story as the *triumph of reason over emotion* diverts attention away from widespread criticism of the judicial ruling, one that was eventually overturned by the BC Court of Appeal. In his ruling, Chief Justice McEachern recasts the fundamental question put before him – that of Aboriginal rights – into one of "social and economic problems" (Monture-Angus, 1999, p. 51) and the news media do not question this. Reportage on this issue, unlike in the case of the Aboriginal child welfare report, includes extensive quotations of a wide variety of Aboriginal sources. However, the fact that most of these quotations focus on the emotional reaction of Aboriginal people to this decision or on their potential for violence serves to reinforce stereotypes of Aboriginal people as "emotional," "volatile" or "war-like." Voices of
Aboriginal people are selectively incorporated into news discourse in ways that largely support the dominant frame.

While the emergence of Aboriginal voices coincides with the decline of obvious displays of racism in the press, some features of 1860s discourse survived intact late into the twentieth century. In particular, there is ample evidence of binary thinking in news coverage of Aboriginal issues in both the 1860s and 1990s. In the former era, discourse focused on two groups, "settlers" and "Indians." A wide range of oppositions were employed in news texts, beginning with the most basic ones, such as *us vs. them* and *reason vs emotion*. Many of these oppositions are also found in 1990s news coverage along with a number of venerable stereotypes, such as *Aboriginal as warrior*. One effect of casting news stories in binary terms is to close off potential avenues of interpretation from audiences.

In the 1860s, these dichotomies and stereotypes were not invented by the press, but rather reflected settler ideology and were furthered entrenched in the public imagination through official government policy. Notions of Aboriginal people as primitive, child-like and inferior were consistent with ideas about European superiority that had religious, economic, political and scientific origins. Europeans saw Aboriginal people as subservient to nature since they did not harness it for economic gain.

Christian scriptures also seemed to lend support to an economic rationale for denying the right of Aboriginal people to the land. The Book of Genesis declares that people have "dominion" over all other life on earth. Carlson (1997) believes that mid-19th century BC British settlers interpreted this injunction as giving people not only the "right," but also the "obligation to transform and harness nature" (p. 66).
At the same time, the doctrine of "manifest destiny" was widely held by Americans. One of its central tenets is that Americans were destined to control all resources – animate and inanimate – in the "new" land, including Aboriginal people. Similarly, in the British colonies, settlers found evidence of their superiority over colonized local peoples in their "massive expanding empire" (p. 66). Social scientists based their support for "scientific" racism was on new developments in the fields of "racial" psychology, physical anthropology and evolution. Berkhofer (1978) writes that Darwin's ideas about biology and "racial" selection seemed to support the conventional wisdom that "the reason that white-skinned peoples ruled the world and epitomized civilization was not accidental...but an inevitable result of biological inheritance" (p. 59).

These ideas about Aboriginal people and European superiority were realized in existing colonial policy. In the 1830s, the British colonial office was influenced not only by pre-Darwinian scientific racism, but also by a "liberal humanitarian tradition emphasizing the civilizing mission and the rights of Native people (Harris, 2002, p. 3). However, within a decade, this liberal humanitarian influence was superseded by a belief that Aboriginal people "could not be assimilated" (p. 3). Cynicism about the prospects for Aboriginal assimilation underpinned the enactment of a number of laws that would later form the basis of the Indian Act. In 1857, An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of the Indians set the tone of the relationship between Aboriginal people and Europeans that persists to this day. This legislation defined Aboriginal people as "wards" of the state – that is, consigned them to the status of children. The only alternative to wardship for Aboriginal people was to meet a set of conditions, set out by the legislation, that were so onerous for, and distasteful to, Aboriginal people that only one Aboriginal person is
known to have "accepted the invitation" (RCAP, 1996e, p. 13). Along with a number of other earlier colonial laws and policies, this law was incorporated into the 1876 *Indian Act*, which has governed the lives of Aboriginal people to the present day and treats them "throughout Canada as legal minors and approached [sic] them as a problem to be administered" (Ray, Miller, & Tough, 2000, p. 202).

Another idea frequently advanced in the 1860s press was that Aboriginal people had no right to land that they were not putting to "good use" – a term that was usually defined as land that was being lived on, cultivated or otherwise "exploited." These Eurocentric notions of what constituted land use, often accompanied by stereotypes about Aboriginal inferiority, trace their roots back to at least 1690, when an English philosopher elaborated the relationship between property rights and land utilization: "Labour, wrote Locke, was the labourer's title to land... God's injunction to subdue the earth was an invitation to improve it and, in so doing, to place labour and, therefore, property rights upon it" (Harris, 2002, p. 49).

Some settlers mistakenly assumed that Aboriginal peoples had no concept of "private property" or "ownership." In the eyes of Europeans, this, in itself, disqualified them from having the same land rights as settlers. The view of land rights being tied to private ownership was shared by the United States government which passed the *Dawes Act* in 1887, a law that proceeded on the assumption that "any high degree of civilization

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48 Concepts of ownership were part of Aboriginal cultures. Stó:lo Historian Keith Carlson (1997) writes that upper class Stó:lo families could own berry patches, fishing spots, family names and even songs. However, the purposes of ownership, and the social responsibilities associated with it, were far different for the Stó:lo than for Europeans. While the latter "typically enhanced their status by simply accumulating wealth in the form of prestige items, the Stó:lo defined and enhanced their status primarily by giving wealth away through a process of redistribution" (p. 112).
is [not] possible without individual ownership of the land" (Laselva, 1998-9, p. 43). By the 1880s, many colonists had as much confidence in the power of private property and laissez-faire capitalism to transform Aboriginal people as "missionaries in the early decades of that century [the 18th Century] had in the miraculous influence of the Bible and the Institution of the Sabbath" (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 172).

These ideas, laws, policies and practices provided fertile ground for the emergence of stereotypical imagery of Aboriginal people in all forms of public discourse. One of the most enduring images is that of the Vanishing Indian which was taken as "an article of faith until well into the twentieth century" (Francis, 1992, p. 53). This image had a particularly strong appeal to "expansionists because it disposed of a major obstacle to the extension of White civilization across the continent" (p. 57). The declining population of Aboriginal communities was seen as compelling evidence for the idea that "primitive" Aboriginal people were fundamentally incompatible with European notions of "progress" and civilization.

During the colonial period in the US, Indians were seen in dualistic terms – as either hostile or friendly (Berkhofer, 1978). That traces of this dualistic thinking were found in news discourse in both the 1860s and 1990s might be partially explained by the abiding belief that Aboriginal people are frozen in time: "In spite of centuries of contact and the changed conditions of Native American lives, Whites picture the "real Indian" as the one before contact or during the early period of that contact" (p. 28).
It is easy to see how "imaginary Indians" were consigned to extinction in the popular white imagination. Since Europeans saw Aboriginal people as incapable of change, it is not surprising that many concluded that Aboriginal people were destined to perish in the face of a "dominant" culture whose prime value was "progress."

Many of the patterns in news discourse observed in this study may be understood in the context of popular images of Aboriginal people that are utterly divorced from their actual lives and cultures. In the 1860s, settlers' views were based on pre-conceived notions that were reiterated in the press, and by ideology, religious dogma, science, government policy, popular culture and "common sense." Settlers tended to "filter out" information that did not fit with these preconceived images (Fisher, 1992, p. 90). In the press, diverse Aboriginal nations and cultures were routinely conflated into "Indians" or other generic and derogatory labels such as "savages," and "heathens." Berkhofer (1978) attributes the inability of 19th century White societies to distinguish national character, race and culture to the fact that, in the social sciences, "social heritage" and "biological heredity" had not yet been separated:

Nations, races and cultures were all basically seen as one interchangeable category for the understanding of peoples, and individuals were usually judged as members of their collectivity rather than as different, separate humans. Therefore, general terms embracing stereotyped characteristics made sense to Whites and could exist alongside knowledge of specific societies with individual characteristics or of individuals with varying qualities. (pp. 24-5)

49 In his book of this title, Francis (1992) argues that the concept of "Indian" is an invention of Europeans and bears little or no resemblance to the lives and identities of actual Aboriginal people. Yet non-Aboriginal people in North America have "long defined themselves in relation to" these imagined people (p. 8).

50 Berkhofer (1978) argues that in the United States at this time white Americans "treated all tribes alike no matter what their degree of acculturation or the conditions upon their reservations" (p. 173).
The versatility and adaptability demonstrated by Aboriginal peoples since first contact, along with the evolutionary nature of their cultures, was largely ignored by the press unless these qualities were associated with "successful" assimilation into European culture.

In 1860s British Columbia, Aboriginal people were seen as both a military threat and as an obstacle to settlement and resource exploitation. Images of Aboriginal people as child-like and antithetical to progress were easily incorporated into the state's rationale for implementing policies designed to exert control over Aboriginal people and blunt the threat they posed to White interests. However, while the press framed Aboriginal issues in ways that protected dominant interests, news discourse contained a number of contradictions. For example, while advocating that the government adopt drastic measures to control Aboriginal people and restrict their civil rights, the press openly acknowledged that Aboriginal people had been treated unjustly and that the land issue had not been properly dealt with. This reflects the fact that, in spite of the propagation of static, one-dimensional images of Aboriginal people in the press, there was some diversity of opinion about the origins of the "Indian problem" and what ought to be done about it. One historian noted that

there was a range of opinion on most native questions...[some people] were convinced that Natives were inherently inferior...[others] thought that Natives were essentially the same as everyone else...some thought that the social pathologies they observed in Native societies had been caused by whites (Harris, 2002, p. 54)

Another inconsistency in 1860s news discourse about Aboriginal people has to do with the connection between land utilization and private land ownership. Aboriginal land rights were routinely discredited in the press because Aboriginal land use did not
correspond to European ideas of what constituted appropriate land utilization; yet, when Aboriginal people did adopt European uses for land, they were vilified in the press. Yet proprietary interests in land, river and ocean resources were central concepts in Aboriginal polities.

After the end of the fur and salmon trade in BC in 1858, Aboriginal people were defined primarily in terms of obstacles posed to European settlement. Fisher (1992) writes that when trade was the main goal of Europeans, Aboriginal people were seen as "primitive but responsive" to the advantages of cooperation, but when permanent settlement became the objective, increasingly they were viewed as "hostile savage[s], a hindrance rather than a help to the new arrival" (p. 94). Perhaps, in spite of much rhetoric in the press about the urgent need to assimilate "Indians," the problem, for settler society, was not so much unassimilated Indians, but Indians in general. "Successfully" assimilated Aboriginal people also posed problems for settlers -- they could compete for land and, until 1866, were even allowed to homestead. Yet those Aboriginal people who adopted "proper" uses for land were not accorded the same rights as European landowners.

Thus, the prescription to the "Indian problem" offered in the 1860s press was that the state should treat Aboriginal people differently than Europeans. While the government's treatment of Aboriginal people was sometimes criticized in the press as unfair or immoral, the solutions that were proposed involved assigning Aboriginal people less rights than settlers, forcing them onto tiny reserves, and legislating the mandatory

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51 Carlson (1997) argues that, in BC's Fraser Valley at least, the Stó:lo were not interested in trading beaver pelts with the Hudson's Bay Company. By 1829, the Stó:lo had succeeded in shifting the commodity traded from fur to salmon in order to accommodate the Stó:lo economy.
attendance of their children at residential schools designed to remake them after a European image.

By contrast, the prescription offered by the 1990s press is to *treat everyone the same*. By the late 20th century, biological explanations of Aboriginal "inferiority" had long been discredited and society was conceived of as multicultural, secular and democratic. Moral relativism and cultural pluralism had supplanted 19th Century notions of moral absolutism and "racial" hierarchy (Berkhofer, 1978, p. 27). The solution to the "Aboriginal" situation is treating them identically to other Canadians; according to this view, the very root of the problem is the years of "special" treatment Aboriginal people have received. The Canadian legal system embodies this view of Western egalitarian society.52 In news discourse about the *Delgamuukw vs. The Queen* case, the BC Supreme Court is constructed as the final arbiter of the "truth" about Aboriginal claims. Since everyone is "equal" before the law, this system cannot be racist since it recognizes no differences among the individuals who stand before it. This proposition typifies a response of denial by modern elites to racism that is couched in terms of tolerance and equality:

Much elite text and talk about minorities may occasionally seem to express tolerance, understanding, acceptance, or humanitarian world views, although such discourse is contradicted by a situation of structural inequality largely caused or condoned by these elites (van Dijk, 1993, p. 6)

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52 However, it also fair to say that the Canadian legal system represents an opportunity for Aboriginal people to entrench or strengthen existing rights. After all, it is the *Canadian Constitution* that offers protection for all "existing treaty rights" and legal precedents supporting Aboriginal rights go back at least as far as 1763 *Royal Proclamation*. Furthermore, modern jurisprudence on Aboriginal rights includes a number of landmark decisions further entrenching or expanding the rights of Aboriginal to hunt, fish, gather and exercise control over traditional territories.
Reporters writing about the Delgamuukw vs. The Queen decision did not address issues of structural inequality, ethnocentrism and the long history of oppression of Aboriginal people by the state. A feature of contemporary journalistic writing is its tendency to fixate on the extreme socio-economic conditions of colonized peoples, while simultaneously, exhibiting a general amnesia about colonial history and its connection to the current state of affairs:

poverty exists simply as a given condition of the melodrama, created ex machina and unrelated, except for the purposes of dramatic contrast, to the prosperity that thrives on other shores – unrelated, that is, to colonial history, including its post-colonial form (Spurr, 1993, p. 48)

The strategy of invoking the principle of identical treatment for everyone as essential to the maintenance of a modern democratic state requires that the past be unyoked from the present.

The application of the identical treatment formula to Aboriginal people is problematic. Historically, Aboriginal people were displaced from their lands, their economies and their ways of living through unjust, decidedly unequal and often illegal treatment. To now insist that Aboriginal people are treated exactly the same way as all other Canadians simply ratifies structural inequality that Aboriginal people experience today as a legacy of colonial policies.

While ethnocentrism has largely replaced the blatant racism of earlier times, McEachern's ruling seems to replicate cruder elements of the "old" racism:

[McEachern's ruling] could as easily have been written by another judge one hundred, two hundred, three hundred years ago....Because Native North Americans were so different, had so few of the "badges of civilization" as Judge McEachern calls them, it was seriously debated whether they could properly be called human beings at all. (Francis, 1992, p. 6).
In this case, the role of the press in promoting racism is passive rather than active. In many news stories about the case, lengthy excerpts from the ruling, often presented uncritically, are juxtaposed with long passages praising McEachern as reasonable, diligent, impartial and fair. By ignoring the racism inherent in this decision, the press reproduces it in its coverage.

The nature of the case and the magnitude of its consequences – economic and political – may partially account for the exceptionally racialized news coverage that accompanied the ruling. While the paramount fear of settlers in 1860s BC may have been the military threat posed by Aboriginal people, in the modern era, the greatest fear of non-Aboriginal Canadians may be Aboriginal victory in the courtroom. The outcomes of their claims in our courts have profound economic implications for all Canadians.

Like the Delgamuukw vs. The Queen case, the 1866 colonial land pre-emption amendment had significant economic implications for settler society. Predictably, the press framed the issue in ways that supported dominant interests and made little effort to disguise the fact. Settler society simply could not allow Aboriginal people to compete with Europeans in pre-empting land. Accordingly, in the years leading up to the amendment, colonial newspapers strongly advocated limiting the land rights of Aboriginal people, justifying discriminatory treatment with arguments based on racist ideology and an appeal to settler fears of Aboriginal violence.

Unlike the Delgamuukw case and the pre-emption amendment, the two child welfare issues – the opening of a residential school in 1863 and the release of an Aboriginal child welfare report in 1992 – do not directly involve substantial economic resources. Yet, in the 1860s, colonial newspapers explicitly recognize that the matter of
residential schools is connected to an issue that does involve substantial economic resources – "the Indian land question." Taking Aboriginal children from their homes, depriving them of their language, culture and religion, and reforming them after a European model are portrayed as essential steps toward removing a major obstacle from the path of European settlement and resource exploitation. There was little need to disguise the strategic reasons for implementing the residential school system, since colonial newspapers were directed to European settlers and the voices of Aboriginal people found little direct expression in news discourse.

While state-sponsored child welfare measures were openly discussed by the 1860s press as an instrument for facilitating settler access to economic resources, the same connection is not made between Aboriginal child welfare issues and economic resources in the 1990s media. However, the Aboriginal panel's report emphasizes just that – the crucial relationship between Aboriginal control over child welfare and self-government. The issue of self-government has clear implications for the distribution of economic resources in British Columbia. By ignoring this aspect of the report, the press silences an important Aboriginal critique of an instrument of colonization – the child welfare system – that has inflicted and, in some cases, is still inflicting, enormous damage to the identity, culture and language of Aboriginal communities. Control over child welfare is also of strategic importance to Aboriginal people because if they can demonstrate an ability to manage child welfare services effectively, their case for assuming control over other

53 Control over the areas of child welfare and education is integral to the cultural and linguistic survival of Aboriginal peoples. The 20th century practices of coercing parents to send their children to residential schools and "abducting" Aboriginal children and placing them in non-Aboriginal foster homes and institutions have been described as acts of cultural genocide.
institutions, such as education and justice, is strengthened. Therefore, authority over child welfare may be seen as a symbolic battleground where the inherent right and ability of Aboriginal people to govern themselves and exercise control over their lives is at stake. However, the mainstream media make no connection between child welfare and self-government nor do they provide a forum for discussing the role of racism in the child welfare system. Doing so would strengthen the case for self-government and create a new discourse about racism in society.

By reporting on issues critical to Aboriginal people in a de-contextualized fashion, the news media may discourage the public from supporting vital initiatives in the areas of treaty-making, residential school recovery and self-government. Governments can then justify continued procrastination on Aboriginal claims and reductions in concessions to Aboriginal people. This sort of news coverage cannot be fully explained in terms of cultural chauvinism, ethnocentrism or even outright racism on the part of individual owners of newspapers or journalists themselves. In all four cases examined in this chapter, the press consistently employed argumentative and rhetorical moves, supported by local semantics and style, to argue in support of a grand polemic that promotes keeping Aboriginal people "in their place" while reproducing the unequal power relations between Aboriginal people and white British Columbian society.

While the 1990s media tend to report on Aboriginal issues in ways that support dominant interests, this reportage is not monolithic. For example, while situating the Delgamuukw vs. The Queen decision within dominant frames, the press also reports on some elements of the decision that were widely condemned and also provides space, albeit limited, to dissenting views. One Aboriginal author presents an eloquent critique of
the ruling which hints at the possibility of an alternative news frame, namely, that of the ethnocentric and colonial assumptions underlying the judgment. It is also apparent that some of the mainstream journalists covering this story were sympathetic to the position of Aboriginal people. Even though Terry Glavin's sidebar in the Vancouver Sun is cast within the dominant news frame," his reliance on Aboriginal, rather than elite, sources provides an opening for an oppositional discourse.

The voices of Aboriginal people, and many other voices that were formerly excluded altogether, have been selectively incorporated into discourse. The public has also demonstrated the potential for resisting racist and stereotypical interpretations of events. One of the "classic assumptions" of research into agenda-setting is that while the press may not be able to determine how we think about something, it is frequently successful in telling us what to think about (Nesbitt-Larking, 2001). In the future, one of the greatest challenges for Aboriginal people and proponents of a social justice is ensuring that everyone's story is told and that the historical context of important issues is reported.

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54 The Canadian news media were widely criticized for their one-dimensional and stereotypical coverage of the 1990 standoff between the Mohawk people and the Canadian army at the Kanasatake reserve near Oka, Québec (Roth, Nelson & David, 1995, RCAP, 1996b). Winter (1992) argues that Canadian news sources simply embraced Prime Minister Mulroney's self-serving take on Oka. The former prime minister is described as "conducting the press like a symphony" (p. 251). Yet, in spite of this one-sided coverage, many Canadians "came away from the entire 78-day standoff in 1990 feeling a sense of support for and even solidarity with the Mohawks and other Aboriginal peoples" (Nesbitt-Larking, 2001, p. 301).
Chapter Summary

In this chapter, methods of critical discourse analysis (van Dijk, 1988) were used to analyze discourse and semantic structures in news coverage of four "flashpoints" in the history of Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations in British Columbia:

1) The opening of the province's first "residential" school in Mission in 1863,
2) An 1866 colonial amendment to deny Aboriginal people the right to pre-empt land,
3) The 1991 BC Supreme Court decision in the "Gitxsan-Wet'suwiet'en" case, and

The news texts examined in this chapter, both from the 1860s and 1990s, represent dominant society's intra-group discourse about a minority group in that they are directed to Euro-Canadian audiences but have relations with Aboriginal people as their subject. These discourses have the effect of sanctioning discriminatory practices towards Aboriginal people since Euro-Canadians have historically enjoyed, and continue to hold, decisive advantages over Aboriginal people in all forms of institutional power. Today, these power relations are strongly supported not only by the mass media, but by other institutions such as education and the criminal justice system, and are reflected in laws and policies, such as the Indian Act, that ascribe Aboriginal people differential and lesser status under the law ("wards of the state").

The active biological racism of colonial times has given way to a passive and sanitized ethnocentrism characterized by the creed of "identical treatment," equality of opportunity, cultural pluralism and a denial of the existence of contemporary racist practices, attitudes and outcomes. Ethnocentric discourses help sustain, and are themselves, reinforced by, official state policy regarding Aboriginal people as well as Canadian society's general amnesia about the country's colonial history and its connection
to the starkly unequal relations that exist between Aboriginal people and other Canadians today.

News media have the potential to play a decisive role in promoting or deconstructing ethnocentric ideology and in bolstering, or challenging, white dominance in Canada. In Canada, the press devotes considerable attention to reporting on the extreme social conditions experienced by many contemporary Aboriginal people, but tends to eschew analysis of the socio-political context of these living conditions and the impact of Canada's long history of colonialism on Aboriginal people. 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 people and other Canadians.

This study also found that while some features of news discourse about Aboriginal people have remained relatively consistent over the last century and a half, the scope of discourse has broadened and the tactics for managing conflict with Aboriginal people have become more varied and sophisticated. As in the 1860s, the 1990s news media tend to frame Aboriginal issues in ways that protect dominant interests and signify Aboriginal people as a threat. Traces of two primary news frames that emerged in the 1860s were found in 1990s news discourse about Aboriginal issues. A third frame, the triumph of reason over emotion, figured prominently in news reportage about Aboriginal land and child welfare issues in the latter era.

News discourse has evolved to include a wider range of interests, including Aboriginal people and organizations, whose voices were almost entirely absent in the
nineteenth century. While late twentieth century news media often offer ethnocentric, even hegemonic, interpretations of Aboriginal issues to their audiences, the incorporation of Aboriginal voices into news discourse presents opportunities for modifying and challenging dominant representations of Aboriginal people and issues.

The next chapter introduces a model for mapping the diverse field of media theory. Special attention is paid to those processes, forces and factors that shape the news about Aboriginal issues.
CHAPTER 4:
PRODUCTION OF MEANING
ABOUT ABORIGINAL ISSUES IN THE NEWS

Introduction

Even a cursory review of the literature on the social and cultural context of, and influences on, the production of meaning in the media reveals that it is shaped by discursive forces, processes and values. In this chapter, I will elaborate a classification system that will assist in mapping theory that contributes to explaining these diverse influences.

As well, I will discuss some of the processes, forces and factors that are most influential in shaping news about Aboriginal issues. In the Canadian news media, the meaning of Aboriginal issues is forged in narrowly framed discourses that do not adequately equip the public with the basic information necessary for participation in an informed discussion. Nonetheless, recent research indicates that audiences have the capacity to resist dominant definitions of issues and, in some cases, develop a range of alternative interpretations. While hegemonic views of issues are often promoted in the press, those views are not beyond challenge because the production of meaning occurs within contested space.
A Model for Mapping Media Theory

In order to appreciate the socio-cultural context of the media and the myriad influences on the production of meaning in the news, it is first necessary to come to terms with a considerable body of literature on media theory that is diverse, rapidly evolving and marked by profound philosophical, ideological and conceptual divides. Approaches to, and theories about, media analysis may be classified according to a variety of features, including:

1. Ideological assumptions (e.g., Elite theory, Liberal-Pluralist theory),
2. Overarching philosophical traditions (e.g., Structuralism, Post-modernism),
3. Academic discipline of origin (e.g., Linguistics, Cognitive psychology), and
4. Primary focus (e.g., role of media organizations and systems; textual interpretation).

Some of the readings surveyed in this chapter are edited texts or collections of essays and thus accommodate a range of theories or, at least, some theoretical variation. As well, some are focused on the intersection of media and race, a convergence of particular relevance to my own research interests.

In an effort to navigate the theoretical terrain encompassed by these readings, I have decided to group approaches to the study of the media according to the "primary focus" categorization referred to above. Henry and Tator (2002) describe the three main categories in this model as follows:

1. Structural studies, which concentrate on media organizations and systems
2. Behavioural studies, which focus on the reactions, perceptions and effects of the media on audiences
3. Cultural studies, which involve analyzing meanings and language (p. 31)

While I will be using these broad classifications to make sense of a diverse body of theory, the numerous distinct variations within each category must be acknowledged. For example, Curran (2000a) describes at least seven "warring fractions" within the
structural studies field, including approaches that focus on the following: media production; suppliers of the news; media occupations; media ownership and control; and media performance in terms of normative theory (p. 10). What all these approaches have in common is that they are "media-centric" in that, for the most part, they attempt to explain the media in terms of their own organizational behaviour.

Behavioural studies research is concerned with the "audience" rather than media content or processes. Early behaviour studies research, particularly what is known as "limited" effects research, attempts to show that the impact of the media is diluted by a variety of constraints such as "gender, class, ethnicity, race and other subcultural variables" (Henry & Tator, p. 33). In contrast, later research in the field of behavioural studies suggested that the media had powerful effects on their audiences. Henry and Tator point out that researchers such as Schramm and Porter (1982) conclude that not only can the media "bestow" status on individuals, institutions and specific government policies, they also have the ability to "impose the social values and norms of society by exposing the divergence from these norms on the part of people and their activity" (p. 32).

While structural studies are preoccupied with media production and media systems and behavioural studies focus on audiences, much early research within the field of Cultural Studies attempted to locate media and audiences "within a society conceived of as a complex expressive totality" (Gurevitch, Curran & Woollacott, 1982, p. 27). By the early 1980s, some versions of Cultural Studies began emphasizing the disjointed and fragmented nature of media processes and texts. In part, this reflects the influence of postmodernist thinking, such as the groundbreaking theorizing by the French philosopher Michel Foucault, who began to challenge the notion of the media's linear transmission of
messages to passive audiences (Henry & Tator, p. 35). In fact, Truth, which represents one of the ideals journalists typically aspire to in their work, must be regarded not as an objective or absolute state of knowledge that be verified or otherwise attained, but rather as a pragmatic instrument of power that is subjective and fluid:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true...it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media) (Foucault, 1984, pp. 72-3)

According to this perspective, no longer does a given media text have one fixed specific meaning nor can truth ever be ascertained through journalist technique; rather meaning, and truth itself, have multiple expressions and interpretations and are variable and contingent on discursive processes. In order to deconstruct the various layers and levels of meaning in a media text, linguistic and semiotic techniques are typically employed by cultural studies researchers.

To this typology, I have added a fourth category – Synthetic Models. This category is designed to accommodate the work of those media critics who consciously set out either to facilitate theoretical rapprochement between previously "warring" theoretical factions or to synthesize two or more distinct approaches into hybrid or multidisciplinary models.

This four-category classification system is a useful, though imperfect, tool for organizing diverse levels of abstraction. The work of some researchers and theorists clearly transcends any one category. Even in some of the earlier work, where "radical" cultural studies approaches were seen as antithetical to, and incompatible with, traditional structural studies perspectives, there exists evidence of considerable theoretical cross-
 pollination in each camp. Admittedly, however, cultural studies has had far greater influence in recent years.

**Structural Studies**

In *News from Nowhere*, Epstein (1973) concludes that organizational factors shape American TV network news. He bases this conclusion on direct observation of news operations; interviews with a range of TV network employees from correspondents to executives; informal discussions with audience analysts and others; and a variety of other ethnographic techniques. Organizational considerations shaping the news that Epstein identifies include: US government broadcasting regulations; economic realities of networks; "uniform procedures for filtering and evaluating information"; and particular "practices of recruiting newsmen and producers who hold, or accept, values that are consistent with organizational needs, and reject others" (p. 43). While emphasizing the importance of journalists' values in shaping the news, Epstein cautions against a strictly Marxist interpretation where the news is seen as "largely predetermined by newsmen's [sic] economic and social class" (p. 201).

In *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality*, Tuchman (1978) emphasizes that news is socially constructed in an environment where "professionalism" reinforces the culture and processes of news institutions. News is conceived of as a closed conversation among a short list of actors such as "policy-makers and politicians, news workers and their organizational superiors, and the rest of us are eavesdroppers on that ongoing conversation" (p. x). One of the major determinants of the news according to Tuchman is journalists' "institutional processes and practices" (p. 4). As an example,
she describes how the synchronized working hours of newsrooms disadvantage women's groups and other voluntary organizations whose members are often only available to meet in the evenings, a time when many reporters are unavailable to report on events organized by these groups. Thus, the "news net" has "holes" (p. 21) in it and the less power and status individuals or groups have, the more likely they are to slip through one of those holes. While the metaphor of the news net provides a useful conceptual tool for understanding how the news sets the context for public discourse, much of Making News reflects a somewhat deterministic view of the news media's ability to shape public opinion and public policy. Nesbitt-Larking (2001) suggests that first-wave feminists such as Tuchman are out of step with contemporary feminist thinking in their "instrumentalist and conspiratorial" analysis of media effect (p. 284).

Another early voice from the structural studies field is Gans (1979) who argues, in Deciding What's News, that journalists are not paid to take an accurate and balanced "picture" of "the nation and society," but rather to "create stories (p. 5)." But these stories do not represent the views and interests of everyone equally. Instead, the "news reflects a white male social order... [and] pays most attention to and upholds the actions of elite individuals and elite institutions" (p. 61). Like Tuchman, Gans contends that institutional processes and practices of news organizations are heavily tilted in favour of "affluent organizations" that have the luxury of being able to schedule their activities in advance so as to satisfy the news media's appetite for "anticipated stories." Furthermore, their resources permit them to make available "newsworthy" sources to journalists at "short notice" (p. 122). Gans emphasizes that such elite sources are one of the most powerful forces shaping the news, even more influential than audiences, which have, at most, an
"influence" on the production of news stories. Thus, indirectly, journalists play a critical role in shaping the news through their selection of sources. Gans argues that, for a variety of reasons, journalists pay greater attention to "authoritative sources" and tend to eschew dissenting sources. This has the effect of excluding "news from, if not about, those individuals and groups whose ideas might result in pressure" being brought to bear on "powerful public officials" (p. 276).

In *The Whole World is Watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left*, Gitlin (1980) describes media as institutions that shape ideology and have a general interest in "stabilizing the liberal capitalist order as a whole" (p. 280). The corporate and political elite depend on the media to "certify the limits within which all competing definitions of reality will contend" (p. 254). This agenda-setting function of the media is what Herman and Chomsky (1989) would later describe as setting the "bounds of discourse, and among the properly educated, the bounds of thinkable thought" (p. 59). Drawing upon emerging theory about "media frames" (Goffman, 1974, Tuchman, 1978), Gitlin used frame analysis to unravel the ways in which dominant ideology is imbedded in the news. Journalists are unaware of the contribution their daily journalistic routines and practices make to their propagation of dominant frames "which they take for granted" and "do not conceive to be hegemonic" (p. 257). In this respect, Gitlin was very much in accord with Gramsci's views on hegemony, namely that "those who rule the dominant institutions secure their power in large measure directly and indirectly, by impressing their definitions of the situation upon those they rule" (p. 10). While I have

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55 The powerful influence of media hegemony is also felt in the realm of entertainment. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) point out that in *Prime Time* (1979), Gitlin advances the proposition that entertainment programs, by relying on "repeatable formulas...encourage a feeling of social stability resistant to substantial social change" (p. 234).
grouped Gitlin under the rubric of structural studies, there can also be found in his work cultural studies' influences, particularly in his emphasis on "discourse" and "narrative" and in his use of a "literary approach to cultural artefacts" (p. 303). Gitlin referred to the seminal work of Stuart Hall who observed that this type of analysis points "in detail, to the text on which an interpretation of latent meaning is based" (Hall, 1975, p. 15).

Radical media theorists Herman and Chomsky, go even further than Gitlin in underscoring the symbiotic relationship between corporate and political elites and the media, arguing that the mass media act, effectively, as an instrument of propaganda for the elite. In *Manufacturing Consent* (1988), they outline a five-filter propaganda model that "traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalize dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across" to audiences:

1. Size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth and profit orientation of major news outlets;
2. Advertising revenue as the primary income of the mass media;
3. News media reliance on information furnished by government, business and "expert" sources;
4. The use of "Flak" to discipline the mass media; and
5. The invocation of the national creed of anticommunism as a way to restrict the bounds of debate. (*adapted from* *Manufacturing Consent*, pp. 1-2)

In the NFB documentary about his work, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media* (1992), in responding to a question from a student about how the elites "control" the media, Chomsky said:

> It's like asking: How do the elites control General Motors? Well, why isn't that a question? I mean, General Motors is an institution of the elites. They don't have to control it. They own it.
Critics of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model have attacked this monolithic representation of the media, labelling it a "conspiracy theory."\textsuperscript{56} Nesbitt-Larking (2001) argues that the work of Herman and Chomsky is anachronistic in that "media theory has moved on since the era of magic bullets and hypodermics" (p. 283). Others have pointed to weaknesses in the theorization of the propaganda model such as its tendency to romanticize "popular consciousness" (Hackett, 1991, p. 39). While there is much of value in the work of Herman and Chomsky, the main drawback to their propaganda model is that, with rare exception, news is shaped by a far greater range of influences, and the nature and tone of media coverage of important issues is far less certain, than is suggested in their five filters.\textsuperscript{57} While corporate and political elites enjoy obvious advantages in getting their messages across in the media, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the media are contested space, influenced and shaped by a wide variety of actors, forces and processes.

In a more recent work, Fleras and Kunz (2001) look at the relationship between the mainstream media and ethnic minorities in Canada. They describe their approach as that of "critically informed political economy" as defined in Curran and Gurevitch's 1994 \textit{Mass Media and Society}. One way that their work differs from earlier political economy

\textsuperscript{56} Herman and Chomsky (1988) have repudiated such accusations, arguing that they "do not use any kind of 'conspiracy hypothesis' to explain mass media performance." Rather, they prefer to think of the propaganda model as a kind of "'free market' analysis, with the results largely an outcome of the working of market forces" (p. xii).

\textsuperscript{57} Although Shoemaker and Reese (1996) point to at least one situation where a crude propaganda model may have some application – the US State Department's White propaganda campaign that was designed to "plant news in the major media favourable to the Nicaraguan 'Contras' and to advance President Reagan's Central American policy to overthrow the Sandinista government" (p. 235). However, while a propagandist agenda was elaborated by political elites and largely implemented in the US media, views opposing Reagan's policies in the region were not entirely excluded from the press.
critiques is that they have incorporated postmodernist ideas about the construction and interpretation of "texts." While the work of radical critics such as Herman and Chomsky suggests that media institutions function primarily as instruments of propaganda for the elite, Fleras and Kunz see the media as "'sites' of contestation involving a struggle among competing interests for privileging priorities or controlling agendas" (pp. xi-xii). The authors suggest that a number of institutional factors account for ethnic minorities being 'miscast', 'problematised' and 'underrepresented' in the media. Pressures on media organizations to cut costs may result in less investigative journalism, the reduction of "minority contacts," and the use of reductionist and "formulaic" story framing techniques. The values of media organizations also tend to support dominant discourses while the "values and views of those who challenge convention" are often precluded. This results in news coverage of issues relating to minority groups that exerts a "controlling effect on audiences by drawing negative inferences about minorities." Finally, the need to furnish simple and easily digestible information for audiences leads to "systemic stereotyping" of minority groups. These stereotypes are constructed by "tapping into a collective portfolio of popular and unconscious images...each of which produces a readily identified frame or narrative spin" (pp. 149-152).

In *Our Media, Not Theirs*, a book for which Chomsky wrote a foreword, McChesney and Nichols (2002) present a radical critique of the media that owes much to the work of Herman and Chomsky. These authors emphasize the critical role played by elite sources in shaping the news:

> When a journalist reports what official sources are saying or debating, she is considered a "professional." When she steps outside this range of official debate to provide alternative perspectives or to raise issues those in power prefer not to discuss, she is no longer considered "professional." (p. 67).
The authors suggest that the strong bias of journalists in favour of official sources is not surprising especially in the context of increasing complicity between "big" media, business and government. The rapid conglomeration of media outlets over the last twenty years has been accompanied by an increasingly commercial institutional logic. This has had the effect of reducing the potential for individuals and groups representing alternative interests to contest dominant views. In an essay published after the events of September 11, 2001, McChesney (2002) contends that the consolidation of the media into a few vast media empires has resulted in a dramatic devaluation of journalism:

journalism accounts for a small percentage of their revenues and their profit. The new owners have paid huge sums to acquire their media empires, and they expect to generate maximum returns from their assets. Accordingly, a bald commercial logic has been applied to journalism in recent years. As a result, among other things, the number of overseas correspondents has been slashed, and international political coverage has plummeted, as that is expensive and generates little revenue. Whereas Americans once tended to be misinformed about world politics, now they are uninformed. (*September 11 and the structural limitations of journalism*, p. 99)

Undoubtedly, the increasing conglomeration of media organizations has had a powerful impact on journalism and on the production of meaning in media texts. However, overestimating the influence of media ownership could lead to a deterministic view of media processes and outcomes. While ownership is important, there are many other factors and processes that influence the production of the meaning in the media.

**Behavioural Studies**

Studies that focus on audience reactions to, and perceptions of, media messages began to emerge in the 1920s and 1930s. In 1922, Walter Lippman explored the
connections between newspaper coverage of political issues and public perception in
*Public Opinion*. In many of these early studies, researchers pointed either to the limited
impact ("limited effects" approach) of the media on the public or to a near linear
relationship between media messages and audience opinion. The limited effects
perspective came under considerable criticism in the 1960s and 1970s with the advent of
television, which gave rise to a "perception that audiences were conditioned by the media
and that they were never entirely free and sovereign" (Nesbitt-Larking, p. 290).

In research conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s in Great Britain,
Hartmann and Husband (1974), set out to measure the impact of media coverage on
public attitudes towards "coloured people". They argue that one of the central functions
of the media is to "define for people what the dimensions of the situation are" (p. 11).
Implicit in their research was the notion that people
generally accept those media-
expected definitions and react to them, albeit in a variety of ways. The press do not
merely hold a mirror up to "public consciousness" on issues relating to race and colour,
they play a major role in actually "shaping this consciousness" (p. 146). The content
analysis of Hartmann and Husband has been criticized by other media commentators such
as Braham (1982) for not attempting to differentiate between newspaper articles that
favour limiting immigration and those that promote increasing it (p. 272). In essence, for
Hartmann and Husband, such a distinction is unimportant – all that matters is that
disparate newspapers agree on *what the issues are* regarding race and colour. By ignoring
issues of tone, Braham contends that the authors of *Racism and the Mass Media* miss out
on an opportunity to capture important differences among newspapers:

Thus an article about, say, immigration control will be placed in the same
category whether it takes a restrictionist or an anti-restrictionist position....it is
one thing to say it is very difficult to measure reliably differences in tone and flavour, and another to say such differences are not very important. Even though it may not be very reliable, a division between 'favourable' and 'unfavourable' and 'neutral' items would demonstrate the distinct differences between the various newspapers (p. 272)

By the standards of more recent research on audience reception, such binary distinctions as "favourable" and "unfavourable" may be seen as "crude" and insensitive to subtle, but important, distinctions in audience perception. I will refer to more recent studies of audience reception in my discussion of those processes, forces and factors that are most influential in shaping the production of meaning about Aboriginal issues.

**Cultural Studies**

Stuart Hall produced some of the seminal work on cultural studies of the media. As one of the leaders of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies in 1970s Britain, Hall's work focused on the way in which the media encode texts and how audiences interpret or decode those texts. In "Culture, the Media and the 'Ideological Effect" in *Mass Communication and Society* (1977), Hall describes the process of encoding:

> The production of symbolic messages cannot be accomplished without passing through the relay of language, broadly understood as the system of signs which signify meaning. Events on their own cannot, as we have tried to show, signify: they must be made intelligible; and the process of social intelligibility consists precisely in those practices which translate 'real' events (whether drawn from actuality or fictionally constructed) into symbolic form. (p. 343)

However, audiences do not always decode messages in the way in which the encoders intended ("preferred reading") since this decoding takes place in the context of each individual's particular social and "material" conditions. Thus, Hall concludes that one can
only speak of the systemic tendency "to reproduce the ideological field of a society in such a way as to reproduce, also, its structure of domination" (p. 346).

In *Policing the Crisis* (1978), Hall et al. point out that the media do not "simply 'create' news on the subject of race and crime nor do they merely transmit the ideology of the 'ruling' class in a conspiratorial fashion. Instead they play a crucial but secondary role in reproducing the definitions of the elite" (p. 59). They emphasize the privileged position of dominant individuals and groups in convincing the audience to accept preferred readings; at the same time, however, they consistently caution against a "conspiratorial reading of the process" (p. 322).

Hartley is another author who applies the study of language as a system of signs to media analysis. In *Understanding News* (1982), Hartley studies TV and print news as "discourse" from a Semiotics point-of-view. Semiotics, which is an outgrowth of linguistics, "sees reality as a human construct" (p. 12). The author argues that any analysis of the news requires an understanding of the two "major determinants" of meaning: (i) the sign system or language in which it is "encoded," and (ii) the social factors which influence how its "messages are both produced and 'read'" (p. 14).

Like Hall, Hartley stresses that signs can be interpreted in many different ways, but that the news media, due to ideological factors, structures its signs in such a way so that readers will tend to prefer one "reading" over another. In fact, Hartley sees "signs" as an "arena for class struggle" where "social forces which represent contending interests fight out their differences in discourse" (p. 24). Once again, the media are portrayed as a playing field – albeit an uneven one – where class interests actively struggle for meaning.
Earlier media critics from the political economy perspective, and even more recent radical critics such as Herman and Chomsky, saw the media as less an arena for class struggle than as a factory for the production of elite propaganda. This type of analysis may lead to a simplistic view of the media – they are the bludgeons of the elite. In turn, this promotes a sense of futility and powerlessness among those alternative groups and individuals in whose interest it is to contest those preferred meanings. Hartley, however, cautions against such a deterministic view of the role of the media, insisting that to "assume that...the news media simply reproduce the ideas of those who own them" is incorrect (p. 48). Furthermore, the "impartiality and autonomy of news production are real and are actively struggled for" by those who work in the media and "the function of that hard-won space is to guarantee that the meanings constructed there are not mere propaganda, either for the government, the 'establishment' or anyone else" (p. 106). Nonetheless, Hartley, like a number of other writers discussed in this chapter, draws upon Gramsci's work on hegemony to account for why news discourses often "prefer one evaluative accent over another" and present them as "differences in fact" (p. 24). Journalistic autonomy and impartiality tend to be supportive of the "maintenance of one particular (dominant) 'reality' than mere propaganda would be" (p. 106). This is very much in line with Foucault's work on the political and "disciplinary" nature of the social construction of truth.

The influence of Hall's work may also be found in Allan's *News Culture* (1999). Using Hall's "encoding-decoding" model to analyze television audiences, Allan charts an alternative theoretical course between a model that sees audiences as "passive onlookers whose thinking is controlled by dominant ideology" and a perspective where audiences
are seen as empowered to select "any possible interpretation from a news text in an indeterminate manner" (p. 129). In resisting simplistic definitions of media influence, Allan argues that text is negotiated between audiences and media within "fluidly contradictory cultural relations" (p. 129). Thus, in answering the question – what shapes the news or, more to the point, who shapes the news, Allan's answer is both media and audience. According to this perspective, any attempt to analyze the news must address a pervasive dichotomy in the literature – namely, the disconnect between media and society (p. 2). Allan points out that most studies of the media focus either on the media themselves, posing questions about how they impact society or they "centre on the larger society in order to explore how it affects the media" (p. 2). Allan proposes that it is essential to pursue ways of synthesizing these twin poles of study so as to avoid the "analytic separation of the 'cultural' from the 'economic' and the 'political'" (p. 4).

Cottle, in *Ethnic Minorities and the Media* (2000), is concerned with media production and reception, in this case with a view to challenging the media's representation of ethnic minorities. In the introduction to this edited text, Cottle points out that recent American and British research indicates that there are numerous "negative problem-oriented" portrayals of ethnic minorities in the news and that there is a "tendency to ignore structural inequalities and lived racism experienced by minorities" (p. 7). While certain patterns of media coverage have harmful repercussions for ethnic minorities, Cottle echoes the sentiment of a number of other authors studied in this course about the presumed inevitability of such patterns:

Media representations of 'race' are a product of social and discursive processes mediated through established cultural forms; they are not a foregone conclusion and they most certainly are not beyond challenge or change (p. 10)
Henry and Tator also focus on racialized media discourse in *Discourses of Domination* (2002). Researchers such as Hall (1997), van Dijk (1988) and Fairclough (1995) influenced the work of these authors. In particular, Henry and Tator draw upon van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model in their analysis of case studies of media coverage of immigrants, blacks and Aboriginal people in Canada. They argue that news about people of colour is shaped not only by media owners, but also by their audiences who, for example, "usually" subscribe to a particular newspaper because they share that "paper's ideological positions" (p. 7). While choosing a newspaper based on its ideological affiliations may be possible in a handful of big city markets where there is at least some competition among major dailies, such as Toronto, Winnipeg and Montréal (in the francophone press), it is clearly not an option in cities where there is only one major daily newspaper, such as Victoria, or in cities where newspaper owners have monopolies such as Vancouver.

Henry and Tator contend that, while media constructions of ethnic minorities are frequently "inaccurate, biased, unbalanced, and unfair," they do not qualify as "misrepresentations" since they tend to reflect the "values and belief systems of their audiences" (p. 7). Henry and Tator caution against an overly deterministic view, arguing that media are a contested site. However, they acknowledge that this contest is "not conducted on a level playing field; both power and resources are unequally distributed" (p. 92).

58 Unlike Henry and Tator, these authors work in a European context, where there is an ongoing tradition of a partisan and national press.
Synthetic Approaches

*Mass Communication and Society* (1977), edited by Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott, represents an early attempt to bridge the theoretical divide between cultural studies and structural studies. While some of these essays clearly reflect the influence of cultural studies, others are grounded more in a structural studies approach as reflected by their emphasis on the structure and functioning of media organizations and systems. In "Technology and Control: The Interactive Dimensions of Journalism," Anthony Smith argues that the "free play of market forces" restricts diversity of opinion in the media, "rendering the press a more powerful instrument of social control" (p. 140). In "Linkages between the Mass Media and Politics: a model for analysis of political communications systems," Gurevitch and Blumler present a model of media analysis that attempts to account for both "consensus and conflict relationships in political communication transactions" (p. 288). They contend that the "erosion of the myth of the media's irresistible powers of persuasion" has resulted in a "marked broadening and diversification of the problems regarded as open to enquiry" in media research. Many of the ideas in this edited textbook have been supplanted and/or refined in its three subsequent editions.

One of these edited textbooks, *Culture, Society and the Media* (1982), focuses on the "division and opposition" between Liberal-Pluralist and Marxist views of the media. Curran, Gurevitch and Woollacott observe that Marxist scholars, after initially dismissing communications research as being "uninteresting" (since the media, they contended, were

59 Earlier in this chapter, I discussed one of the essays in this collection, "Culture, Media and the 'Ideological Effect'" in which Stuart Hall articulates his ideas on encoding and decoding media texts.
"ideological agencies that played a central role in class domination"), began to take a
"more nuanced complex view of the media":

The shift from a perception of the media as a stupefying, totally subduing force expressed, for example, by Marcuse (1972) to a more cautious assessment in which dominant meaning systems are moulded and relayed by the media, are adapted by audiences and integrated into class-based or 'situated' meaning systems articulated by McCron (1967), is characteristic of a significant shift in Marxist research that has been influenced, in part at least, by empirical communication studies (p. 15)

In "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," Hall argues that moving from a Liberal-Pluralist model of research to a critical model involves embracing a more complex form of analysis of power in society. From the media's perspective, what is at stake is "no longer specific message injunctions, by A to B, to do this or that, but a shaping of the whole ideological environment: a way of representing the order of things which endowed its limiting perspectives with that of a natural or divine inevitability which makes them appear universal, natural and coterminous with 'reality' itself" (p. 65). The idea of the media owners as one of many forces shaping a complex ideological milieu is one with which much contemporary critical research is concerned.

In Mediating the Message (1996), Shoemaker and Reese provide a concise overview of thinking about influences on the media. These authors point out that, in the past, most research has focused either on the content of the media or on its effects on the audience. This historic divide in the research has had the effect of ossifying the development of theories attempting to explain mass communication. Shoemaker and Reese contend that researchers cannot completely comprehend media "effects" until they "understand the forces that shape it" (p. 258). For this reason, the authors promote a
model of media analysis that incorporates multiple perspectives (p. 271). According to their "hierarchy of influences model," the main forces shaping mass communication include individual media workers; routines of media work; organizational influences and extra-media influences and ideology (pp. 264-271). Research that approaches the study of the news media from multiple levels offers certain advantages. For one thing, recognition of a variety of perspectives on media analysis allows the researcher to keep an open mind. Some media researchers "make observations at one level of analysis and interpret those findings at a higher level" (p. 271). For example, some researchers have simply concluded that the strong bias of reporters in favour of authoritative sources determines that media texts will inevitably reflect dominant definitions of issues in the media. This assumes a linear cause-and-effect relationship between one aspect of media production (journalists' use of sources) and the production of meaning. The dependency of mainstream journalists on elite sources may represent a "constraint" on the production of meaning in the news, but there are clearly many other factors, processes and forces at play.

In *Breaking the News* (1996), Fallows emphasizes the responsibility that journalists have to give "citizens the tools to participate in public life" (p. 269). Implicit in his work is the idea of the existence of a "public sphere," something akin to the conception articulated by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas. Fallows suggests that one reason this public sphere has not been fully realized is because journalists have become highly paid public figures and, as a consequence, they are detached from the real concerns of ordinary working class people. As a result, they need to change their "habits and attitudes" which are currently geared to "entertaining" the public, rather than
"engaging" it (p. 267). The main weakness of this Liberal-pluralist critique is its assumption that the restoration of a healthy, democratic public sphere only requires that journalists "mend their ways." Curran (2000) posits that such a public sphere never actually existed and that what did exist was based on "important exclusions" such as women, the poor, the uneducated and ethnic minorities (p. 40). Simply changing journalists' attitudes and routines is not likely, in and of itself, to give individuals and groups currently excluded from the public sphere the "tools" to engage in it.

One critic consciously engaged in an attempt to synthesize aspects of cultural studies and structural studies approaches is James Curran. In a recent edited textbook, Media Organizations in Society (2000), Curran sets out to build a bridge between media production and cultural studies in order to advance a "widescreen approach" to the study of the media. While interested in "making space" for both approaches, Curran points out that there has recently been a "reaction against [the] textual populism" engendered by cultural studies approaches to the media (p. 9). While cultural studies originally provided "liberating" insights into the contextual and shifting nature of the meaning of media texts, "there is now increased awareness that audience understandings are cued (though not necessarily determined) by the ways in which communications are encoded" (p. 9).

While audience interpretation may be "cued," there are a number of case studies presented in this book that illustrate alternative individuals and groups successfully exerting influence on shaping the news. In "The Killing of Brazilian Street Children and the rise of the International Public Sphere," Serra (2000) examines press treatment of the killing of street children by death squads and the police in the mid-1980s. Initially, the local Brazilian press paid little heed to the murder of these children, but by the early
1990s, this story was the subject of a great deal of international media attention and outrage. The scrutiny of the international media was achieved as a result of concerted pressure exerted by NGOs, the Catholic Church, child advocacy groups and opposition politicians. As well, Amnesty International played a pivotal role in garnering media attention by producing "convincing propositions" and "sensitizing the actors in the political system and the general public" (p. 167). Finally, the children themselves also played a critical role in dramatizing their situation by staging "highly emotional protests" (p. 167). Serra concludes that "peripheral groups" can influence the definition of issues that are debated in the media and dealt with by the political and administrative system via the international public sphere" (p. 169).

Another case study in Media Organizations in Society concerns a trade union's use of public relations strategies to influence the production of news. In "Public-relations campaigns and news production: the case of 'new unionism' in Britain," Davis looks at a campaign by British communications workers to derail the government's planned privatization of the Post Office in 1994. To compensate for their lack of financial and institutional resources, the union utilized its network of 14,000 members (and 160,000 members of the parent union) to disseminate the union's position through "local media, town councils, local events, and in letter-writing to MPs" (p. 181). By staking out "media-friendly lines of argument, encouraging divisions in the pro-privatization lobbies and countering each opposition proposition," the union was successful in shaping "media agendas and interpretive frameworks" (p. 185). As a result, no strike action was threatened, the effects upon union jobs were "minimized" and "positive alternatives to privatization" were put forward.
Another edited textbook published in 2000 is *Mass Media and Society* by Curran and Gurevitch. In "Rethinking Media and Democracy," Curran discusses Liberal theory's emphasis on the "watchdog" function of the media. He argues that this theory does not take into account several factors including:

1. the existence of "no-go areas" for journalists – stories that journalists are afraid to report on for fear of upsetting parent or sister companies of the media corporation that employs the journalist
2. market collusion between governments and the corporations that own the media
3. media owners' capacity for "silencing media watchdogs altogether" – Curran cites the example of the Chilean media who supported the military overthrow of Allende (pp. 123-125)

All of these factors influence the production of the news and point to the inability of the media to fulfill its watchdog function effectively in a wholly privatized media environment. Curran argues that the best way to ensure that there is a more "democratic media system" is through a *mixed* model, which has at its core, a public broadcasting system, "encircled by private enterprise, social market, professional and civic media sectors" (p. 148).

Also concerned with the increasing concentration of media ownership is David Taras, who in *Power and Betrayal* (2001), argues that the Canadian media system is dangerously "out of kilter" (p. 240). In recent years, the conglomeration of the news media coincides with a dramatic narrowing of the bounds of debate, resulting in a "right wing information infrastructure" (p. 210). Drawing upon Habermas' notion of public sphere, Taras argues that the media, as "our public squares" (p. 4), are the "essential lifeblood of a healthy democratic society" (p. 5). Like Curran, Taras argues that a robust public broadcasting system goes hand in hand with truly democratic media systems. He believes that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) must play an integral role in
restoring a democratic public sphere. Recently, efforts have been made to "defang" the CBC which has "damaged and weakened" the Canadian media system as a whole (p. 170).

Another recent critique of the Canadian media is offered by Nesbitt-Larking in *Politics, Society and the Media* (2001). The author argues that while elite and liberal approaches to the media have strengths, both have certain deficiencies when it comes to understanding the production of the news and audience reception. Nesbitt-Larking cautions us not to underestimate the emphasis that authors such as Stuart Hall placed on the media's ability to set agendas and frame issues. At the same time, he reminds us that "audiences can and do refuse, reuse and reduce" (p. 394). Nesbitt-Larking contends that only a critical approach, one which combines both structuralist and postmodernist precepts, can elucidate the "subtleties of the relationship between economic control and the politics of representation" (p. 126). This takes into account the fact that "we are not entirely conditioned by our social circumstances, including the media" and at the same time, that "we are never entirely free to shape our environments and destinies and to interpret media in any way we choose" (p. 396). Such an approach steers a middle path between the liberal emphasis on the free will of audiences to interpret the news in infinite ways and other approaches that take a more deterministic view of the potential of audiences to interpret the news in diverse ways.

**The Production of Meaning about Aboriginal Issues in the News**

In order to understand the production of meaning about Aboriginal issues in the news, it is necessary to draw upon an eclectic range of theory and research about both
media production and audience reception. News accounts of some Aboriginal issues, particularly those involving the potential transfer of resources or authority to Aboriginal people (e.g., treaties or Aboriginal child welfare initiatives), display ethnocentrism and racism, resort to stereotyping, utilize dominant news frames to contain Aboriginal voices, and report on important issues, which often have long historical antecedents, in a de-contextualized fashion.

The presence of ethnocentrism and racism in the media has long been recognized by media commentators. Hall et al. (1978) argues that the early 1970s media in Britain imported a racialized discourse about youth crime from the United States, effectively criminalizing a large segment of the British population in the eyes of the general public. Today, such overt expressions of racism in the press have largely, though not completely, given way to more subtle forms of ethnocentrism that are couched in such "universally accepted" values as democracy, equality and egalitarianism. van Dijk (1992) describes the new discrete racism as follows:

Explicit racial slurs are rare, and even in the tabloids we therefore may expect euphemisms, implicit derogation, and the usual tactical disclaimers such as apparent denials ("We have nothing against the black community, BUT...") or apparent concessions ("There are also law-abiding blacks, BUT...") (p. 249).

The RCAP reported that the lack of representation of Aboriginal people in mainstream media institutions as reporters and editors is related to their inferior economic status within Canadian society (1996b). Other factors mitigate against the institutional inclusiveness of media organizations. Fleras and Kunz (2001) document how, in the highly competitive business environment of the Canadian media, the need to maximize profit results in the curtailment of "investigative journalism" and in the reduction of "minority contacts" (p. 149). As a result, issues relating to Aboriginal people and other
ethnic groups are more likely to be treated in superficial or "formulaic" ways than they are to be explored in depth.

The RCAP (1996b), in a chapter entitled, "Arts and Heritage," discusses racism and ethnocentrism towards Aboriginal people in the Canadian media. The seven member commission concluded that Aboriginal people and issues are often excluded from the media altogether. Even when Aboriginal people are included, it was found that they were portrayed simplistically or in stereotypical ways that effectively reinforce notions of Aboriginal people as inscrutable and dangerous.

In Chapter 2, content analysis reveals that two of the three stereotypes identified by the RCAP in its 1996 report were still present in news reports about Aboriginal issues in 2002. As well, the emergence of several new stereotypes related to the ability of Aboriginal people to manage their own affairs is noted. Chapter 3 also provides ample evidence that stereotypical images of Aboriginal people in the news media have persisted since at least the 1860s. These images are embedded in frames that continue to structure news about Aboriginal people and issues.

While the presence of stereotypes provides important clues about problems with the representation of Aboriginal people in the news, it would be a mistake to attach too much significance to them. For some media critics, the concept of stereotype is a crude measure, at best, of "bias," itself, a somewhat problematic notion,\(^{60}\) and the news media cannot be objective...[and] should not be objective" (Lichtenburg, 2000, p. 238). According to this view, all representations in the news media and popular culture must be
are replete with stereotypes about all manner of groups and topics. There is a debate about whether or not stereotypes are useful at all in evaluating media content. Some critics argue that unmasking stereotypes in the media contributes nothing to media analysis (Barker, 1997), while others contend that the use of the concept in media research may lead to simplistic solutions (e.g., supplanting stereotypes with more positive forms of representation) that inhibit the "exploration of deeper causes of representation in the media":

They prevent us from engaging with the range of influences on the media production process as well as explaining why groups are misrepresented and who has the power to misrepresent them. Simply saying women, the aged and Islam are stereotyped does not enable us to analyse the working of sexism, ageism and Islamaphobia in the media. (Williams, 2003, p. 135)

Predictably, news reports reference popular stereotypes and misconceptions, if not caricatures, about Aboriginal people. This is not to suggest that stereotyping of Aboriginal people is innocuous or entirely random. In fact, Fleras (2001) suggests that "rather than an error in perception, stereotyping constitutes a system of social control through the internalization of negative images" (p. 133) Ultimately, the impact of stereotypes on Aboriginal people is that they are kept "in their place and out of sight" (ibid.).

Furthermore, while the polysemic nature of news texts has been noted, Henry and Tator (2002) argue that it is not easy for audiences to resist dominant definitions of issues that are steeped in racial stereotypes:

regarded as "cultural constructions, produced in the context of social power, with which individuals have to interact with in their everyday life, either by realizing or resisting them" (Williams, 2003, p. 136).
Media analysts have noted that people require discipline and active, self-critical awareness in order to counteract their schematic tendencies and stereotypic thinking. Most people—audience members—have neither the motivation nor the skills to challenge aspects of their own deeply engrained thought processes. This is especially evident when it comes to emotionally charged subjects such as race. (p. 29)

It is important to consider stereotypes about Aboriginal people in relation to the **types** of news stories in which they appear and to identify the conditions under which they occur. This research is only interested in those stereotypes associated with news discourse about two issues that have significant economic ramifications for the distribution of resources and jurisdictional authority in British Columbia. The significance of stereotypes is enhanced when they occur in conjunction with other features of news discourse. For example, the RCAP named *Aboriginal as warrior* as one of three prominent stereotypes in 1996. Typically this stereotype is found in news texts that do not reference any Aboriginal sources and offer scant description of the history and context of long-standing Aboriginal grievances or disputes. Stereotypes may be part of larger discourse schemata or argumentative strategies that narrowly define issues and delimit debate.

In commenting on news reporting about Muslims in the western press, Karim (2002) observes that the "institutional response of the mass media to a conflict situation is usually to react first, using clichés and stereotypes in almost unrestrained manners" (p. 114). In *Covering Islam* (1997) Said argues that such stereotypical and formulaic reporting of issues relating to Islam has its origins in the tendency of Americans to "identify with foreign societies or cultures projecting a pioneering, new spirit (e.g., Israel) of wresting the land from ill use or savages, whereas they often mistrust and do not have much interest in traditional cultures" (p. 54)
Stereotyping of Aboriginal people is but one feature of a broader formulaic pattern of representation in the Canadian news media. A number of researchers have found that complex issues relating to Aboriginal people are subsumed into limited news frames that reinforce dominant interests (see Furniss, 2001, Henry & Tator, 2002, Lambertus, 2004). Tuchman argues that news reporters routinely seek out the news frames that are essential to "ordering the web of facticity" (p. 103). This "news net" does not capture everything and some issues are excluded because they challenge, rather than "validate," dominant social institutions.

For Aboriginal people, news frames employed in the Canadian news media often have the effect of limiting informed public debate about important issues. After analyzing news coverage of a public inquiry into the relationship between Aboriginal people and the justice system, Furniss (2001) found that complex issues were subsumed into narrow news frames, effectively "silencing Aboriginal concerns" (p. 28).

The matter of how issues are framed and what issues are put on the table for discussion is related to another challenge facing Aboriginal people. The origins of many critical issues for Aboriginal people go back a long time, often to the days before the material cultures of Europeans appeared in the archaeological record. Many Canadians are unaware of the historical antecedents of these issues and the complexities of their contemporary context. Yet news coverage of Aboriginal issues is divorced from context and any historical background (see Winter, 1992, Roth et al., 1995, RCAP, 1996b, 1996e). A similar pattern of de-contextualized news reporting has been observed in media representations of Islam:

Stripped of any existential or historical context, these views of Islam as a violent and irrational religion that compels people to commit aggression against Israel in
effect vitiate anything like the reporting of what takes place on the ground and
deny it from inhabiting a more humane and understandable context (Said, p. xlvii)

In effect, what is not said in a news report may have as great an influence on the
production of meaning as what is said. The withholding of history and context about
complex issues limits the interpretative choices available to audiences, particularly to
those audience members who do not already possess or have access to more detailed
information on, and nuanced interpretations of, the issues.

News frames are related to the broader issue of agenda-setting in the media.
While the news media may not be able to dictate what audiences think, they are able to
set the menu of topics for discussion. Thus, setting an agenda that reflects the breadth of
debate about Aboriginal issues may well require establishing new media outlets dedicated
to expressing the historicity and context so often left out of mainstream news reports.

Another function of the news media is implicated in the construction of news
frames. Whereas agenda-setting results in certain issues being singled out for public
attention, priming is the process by which news media influence the criteria the public
use to evaluate matters of public policy. Media historian Kevin Williams (2003) suggests
that members of the public may not be able to bring all of their knowledge to bear in
assessing political situations:

  Priming presumes that when evaluating political phenomena, people do not take
into account all that they know – even if they wanted to, time often prevents them.
Instead people rely on what comes to mind, 'those bits and pieces of political
memory that are accessible' (p. 182).

The news media play an important role in foregrounding what is important about
Aboriginal issues, and providing the public with tools with which to navigate those
issues, such as "common sense."
In an environment where certain issues are singled out and particular ways of thinking promoted, dominant discourses emerge. While these discourses contribute to shaping the views of large audience segments, they may also influence the consciousness of minority populations excluded from them. Hackett and Carroll (2006) describe the *spiral of silence* as the "flip-side" of agenda-setting:

People who hold views which they feel are those of a minority and which are seldom expressed in public become reluctant to express them for fear of social isolation; without social reinforcement, their own adherence to these views declines (p.31).

It is possible that the absence of certain views about Aboriginal issues from the news, such as an Aboriginal perspective on the historical role played by government policies in creating the unequal socio-economic status of Aboriginal people *today*, may result in Aboriginal people gradually internalizing dominant definitions of issues.

A number of factors account for why and how the context and history of important issues are left out of news reports. Hartley and McKee (2000) emphasize the role played by journalistic "priorities" in shaping news that is bereft of history and context, particularly in the case of news coverage of issues relating to indigenous people in Australia. "History" has no place in the news, since news is "understood to be directly opposite to history" (p. 338). As well, journalistic ethics advocate that people receive *identical treatment*, yet this often precludes the provision of detailed descriptions of the context and history of issues. An odd paradox follows from this fundamental tenet of journalism since "not mentioning race for ethical reasons could deny precisely the 'background' and 'context' that would explain an event" (p. 338).

Tuchman suggests that such "ahistoricity" in news reporting serves to legitimate the state by restricting dissent and analysis. In looking at US media coverage of the
women's movement in the 1970s, Tuchman attributes responsibility for the "selective blindness toward women" in the press to

the professional ideology to which "newsmen" subscribe [that] identifies male concerns as the important news stories, and accordingly relegates topics traditionally characterized as "female" to a peripheral status as news." (p. 138)

If the word "white" or "Eurocentric" were substituted for, or perhaps used in conjunction with, the word "male" in the passage above, this description could apply equally to the representation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian media.

In looking at network television news in the 1970s, Gans found that the news reflected a "white male social order," only making space for blacks and women who attempted to participate and "succeed" in that social order (p. 61). While acknowledging the role played by the professional training and values of white male journalists in shaping the news, Gans believes that the reliance of reporters on authoritative news sources is perhaps the greatest single factor shaping the news. In fact, this very reliance on powerful elite sources or "primary definers" sustains the professional credibility of news reporters. In Our Media, Not Theirs, McChesney and Nichols (2002) argue that when reporters write about what elite sources are saying or doing, they are considered to be "professional," yet when they give voice to "alternative perspectives," they are regarded as unprofessional (p. 67). This may also shed light on why the history and context of important issues are so rarely included in news stories about ethnic minorities, such as Aboriginal people and blacks: "providing meaningful context and background for stories, if done properly, tends to commit the journalist to a definite position and enmesh him in the controversy professionalism is determined to avoid" (McChesney, 2002, p. 98).
However, it is not simply a matter of who is cited, but in what context the quotation occurs. In news coverage of the 1991 "Delgamuukw" decision (as discussed in Chapter 3), elite sources – such as the BC Supreme Court Chief Justice, lawyers and business spokespeople – were heavily quoted and almost invariably associated with logic, fairness, objectivity and reason. When Aboriginal people were quoted, they were usually associated with emotionality, irrationality, volatility and violence. Thus, what little context was provided for the Aboriginal sources locked Aboriginal people into old stereotypical representations that allowed important aspects of the BC Supreme Court ruling – such as its inherent racism – to go uncontested in news discourse (see Chapter 3).

While the primacy of authoritative or elite sources in the production of meaning in the news is stressed by a number of media commentators, it is a mistake to assume that such sources automatically create hermetically sealed definitions of issues. Schlesinger (1989) points out that while some radical critics take for granted that official sources inevitably and completely define issues as an "a priori effect of privileged access," this has not been demonstrated through empirical research (p. 284). Furthermore, depending on the nature of the issue, political and economic elites may embrace a variety of distinct, even competing, definitions of those issues. In looking at news coverage of the early days of the Vietnam War, Eldridge (1993) notes that the lack of homogeneity in the political elite was reflected in news reporting that highlighted the "disagreement over how the war should be fought" (p. 326). While this debate was confined to a "debate between elite sources," and never included the public at large, it is clear that even official sources frequently define issues differently from one another and that their official interpretations of events often encompass significant variations. The variability of primary definitions
has also been observed with respect to media coverage of the "Cold War," which contained a "certain amount of variation about the real nature of the USSR." (Hackett, 1991, p. 73).

Even when elite sources are successful at imposing their definitions on issues and events in the media, there is no guarantee that audiences will accept those interpretations. A case in point is media coverage of the 1990 events at Oka, Québec. Previously, I discussed a number of studies about news coverage of the situation that found that the English-language news media uncritically adopted the definitions of official sources, particularly the position taken by the Prime Minister's Office (Winter, 1992, Skea, 1993-1994, Roth et al., 1995, RCAP, 1996b). In spite of the hostile tone (to Aboriginal people) of much of this reportage, polling conducted shortly after these events indicated that support for Aboriginal people by Canadians remained relatively stable. 61 Even in situations where elite sources enjoy powerful advantages in defining issues, audiences have the potential to resist those primary definitions and negotiate alternative interpretations of events and issues.

**News Media as Contested Space**

Trying to explain what shapes meaning in the news is a difficult and frustrating endeavour. This is, at least in part, due to the fact that cause and effect in media analysis is rarely, if ever, "simple and unidirectional" (Nesbitt-Larking, 2001, p. 20). Instead,

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61 Polls conducted indicate that the level of "general sympathy" for Aboriginal people in the Canadian public remained relatively stable in the years following Oka (Ponting & Kiely, 1997). However, in Québec, the province in which the standoff occurred, there was a "significant deterioration of support for First Nations" (p. 174).
interpretations of the news result from a complex array of "mutual relations and multiple sites of causality are apparent" (Ibid). After reviewing theory on media production and audience reception, it is clear that the news is influenced by a wide variety of forces, processes, values and actors.

The work of early media critics of the political economy school and even more recent radical commentators, such as Herman and Chomsky, and McChesney and Nichols, is inadequate at explaining the complexity of forces shaping modern media production. For one thing, the assumption that the media simply "manufacture" the "consent" of the public, to use the words of Herman and Chomsky, ignores the role of audience reception entirely. That is, even if one accepts the notion that the media are mere purveyors of propaganda, which is in itself a highly problematic proposition, there is no guarantee that the public will simply accept the "party line" uncritically. Evidence of the potential for audience autonomy may be found in the Canadian public's response to news coverage of the Oka events, a case discussed earlier in this chapter. Various studies of audience reception emphasize the ability of audiences to negotiate meaning of media texts. In a study of audience reactions to television coverage of labour disputes in the UK, Philo (1993) found that audiences were divided into two groups: those that accepted television images as an accurate depiction of what occurred and those that "adapted parts of the message and changed key elements of its meaning" (p. 264). In another study where participants were shown images from television and documentary reports about HIV/AIDS, it was found that "people did not only reject media messages, some groups created alternative, or even oppositional, accounts" (Kitzinger, 1993, p. 296).
Clearly audiences play an important role in the contested space of news media. Even when the media are able to define the "dimensions of a situation for an audience," they are not able to determine how they feel or think about that situation—this "would seem to depend on other factors" (Hartmann & Husband, 1974, p. 111). Audience members do not necessarily accept preferred meanings of media texts and are capable of resisting hegemonic definitions of issues and refusing, reusing and reducing. Furthermore, because neither audiences, nor elite groups, are homogenous, there exists the potential for a wide variety of interpretations and discourses. However, just as it is important not to overestimate the ability of elites to use the media to put their ideological stamp on audiences, it is equally important not to overstate audience autonomy. Rather, the relationship between the media and the audience may be characterized as one where audience members are "actively involved in creating or negotiating meanings and processing information" (Fleras & Kunz, 2001, p. 51).

In "The sociology of news production revisited (again)," Schudson (2000) points out that the "flat-footed functionalism" of Herman and Chomsky cannot account for why, in the early 1970s, US Big Business interests were so "incensed at how the US media covered politics, the environment and business" (p. 180). Perhaps the media represents a space where, corporate and political elites, although possessing certain obvious advantages, not only must contend with other interests, but also are constrained by a variety of influences not entirely within their control. As a result, they are not always able to shape media content to their satisfaction. These "other interests" include groups and individuals that do not share the ideology of elite groups; while these groups and individuals may be "resource poor," they may actively vie for influence on media content,
sometimes enjoying considerable success. In this chapter, I have already referred to case studies on two of these groups – a British trade union and a coalition of groups acting in support of Brazilian street children. In both cases, these non-elite actors were able to significantly influence media framing of issues. As a result of the role they played in shaping media content, both actors were able to influence the outcome of their respective situations. The British trade union succeeded in changing the government's position on privatization of the post office and the coalition of civil society organizations and social movements "catalyzed" significant changes in Brazilian public policy with respect to street children.

While it is important not to lose sight of the fact that elite groups enjoy significant advantages in constructing media content and in persuading audiences to accept "preferred meanings," the fact that they are not always successful in doing so suggests that the mainstream media in North America are sites of contestation. This view of media as contested space is at the heart of a debate that is central to much of the literature discussed in this chapter. The main competing view that emerges is that of media as an instrument of propaganda. One of the strongest expressions of this idea is found in the work of radical media critics such as Herman and Chomsky, and to a somewhat lesser extent, McChesney and Nichols. In fairness, even many early theorists associated with the cultural studies approach, such as Hall and Hartley, incorporated into their work the idea that preferred meanings could be challenged, albeit on a playing field that was decidedly unequal. The work of a number of writers surveyed in this chapter – particularly more recent work by Fleras and Kunz (2001), Allan (1999) and Cottle (2000) – may be placed somewhere in the middle range of a continuum which has the free will
of audiences to interpret issues in infinite ways on one extreme and a purely deterministic view of a media in which elite sources impose uncontested definitions on the other. Perhaps what distinguishes the media-as-contested-space view most clearly from the propagandist position is the degree to which it acknowledges the wide range of complex and discursive factors shaping media production and interpretation.

Since influences on the media are diverse and fluid, it is helpful to draw upon a variety of theories in constructing an approach to understanding (as opposed to explaining) the production of meaning in the news that is both flexible and takes into account both media production and audience reception. Media theorists such as James Curran (2000a) have done much to foster innovative approaches to media analysis that span traditional theoretical divides. In elaborating a "Liberal-Radical" perspective on the media, Curran argues that cultural studies approaches and structural studies are "potentially complementary" (p. 11). It does not make sense to study the economics of media ownership in isolation from the politics of representation; the two domains are intimately related and the framing of issues and defining of boundaries are actively contested and meaning is negotiated, not determined. As Nesbitt-Larking (2001) puts it, while the "media have conditioned us, we are never entirely benighted… [therefore] we require something between the 'audience as dopes' perspective of the hypodermic theorists, and the 'audience as popes' perspective of limited effects researchers" (p. 396).

Chapter Summary

This chapter furnished a review of the context of, and influences on, the production of meaning about Aboriginal people and issues in the media. Literature on the
production of meaning in the news media indicates that meaning is shaped by discursive forces, processes and values. In addition to providing a general overview of the production of meaning, particular attention was paid to those processes, forces and factors that are most influential in shaping definitions of Aboriginal issues in the news. The meaning of Aboriginal issues is often forged in narrowly framed discourses that – for a variety of factors, including the absence of context and history in news reports – preclude informed public debate. Many media scholars stress the importance of looking at news production in conjunction with audience reception or "interpretation."

The framing of Aboriginal issues within restrictive discourses must be viewed in the context of recent research which indicates that audiences are, under certain circumstances, able to resist dominant definitions of issues and, in some cases, develop a range of alternative interpretations. While hegemonic views of issues are promoted in the media, those views are not beyond challenge. The production of meaning in the media occurs within contested space. Furthermore, because news texts themselves are polysemic (Fiske, 1989b, p. 5) and subject to multiple readings, simplistic or definitive conclusions about interpretive possibilities are ill-advised.

The next chapter features a headline analysis of 188 news stories about four case studies on issues related to treaties and child welfare. Dominant and secondary discourses about these issues are examined.
CHAPTER 5: 
HEADLINE ANALYSIS

Introduction

The next four chapters focus on news coverage of issues and events related to Aboriginal child welfare and treaties in British Columbia in the years 1998, 2002, and 2003. In this chapter, techniques of content analysis are applied to 188 headlines of news items in major daily newspapers and "community" newspapers in order to elucidate some of the major features of news discourse, including dominant and secondary news frames (see Appendix B for a complete list of headlines). Chapter 6 furnishes a detailed study of news frames, rhetorical arguments and other features of discourse in mainstream news texts while Chapter 7 is devoted to an analysis of secondary frames. Finally, Chapter 8 examines frames emerging in the Aboriginal press and provides a comparative analysis of discourses in Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal media.

Four Case Studies

The first issue under analysis is the Nisga'a Final Agreement, BC's first modern treaty, which came into effect with its formal ratification by the Canadian Senate on April 13, 2000. This case study focuses on news coverage of an exercise in democracy initiated and conducted by the Nisga'a themselves – their own referendum on the Nisga'a Treaty.
News coverage included 85 news texts published in the selected newspapers in the weeks following the Nisga'a referendum, which was held on November 6, and 7, 1998.

The second case is the BC referendum on the treaty process, which took place in the spring of 2002. This province-wide referendum was widely criticized as a poorly constructed attempt to lend legitimacy to the provincial government's political agenda, specifically its desire to impose limitations on the BC treaty process. This story unfolded over more than a year, beginning with the passage of the eight referendum questions on May 12, 2001 in the BC legislature, fulfilling an election promise made by Gordon Campbell's Liberal Party in the election campaign earlier that year, and culminating in the release of the referendum results on July 3, 2002. Coverage of the release of the referendum results in Vancouver's major dailies was interrupted by a labour dispute at Pacific Newspaper Group, the parent company of the Province and Vancouver Sun, from the day the referendum results were released and until Sunday, July 21, 2002.

However, another event in the arc of this story that attracted intense media scrutiny was the mailing of referendum ballots to BC's registered voters, which commenced on April 2, 2002. This was also the day that BC Attorney-General Geoff Plant and Chief Electoral Officer Robert Patterson attempted to explain the referendum process to the public. Eighty-five articles appeared in the selected publications, including 15 in the Aboriginal media in the weeks following referendum ballot mail-out.

The two child welfare issues were accorded significantly less media attention than the two treaty issues. Following the September 21, 2002, discovery of the body of an Aboriginal child under the care of Xyolhemeylh, the Stó:lō Nation's delegated child
welfare agency, 24 news texts appeared in the selected publications, including one in an Aboriginal publication.

The final case study includes news coverage of two separate legal attempts by Aboriginal child welfare authorities to "repatriate" Aboriginal children in 2003. The practice of repatriating Aboriginal children from non-Aboriginal homes coincided with the establishment of Aboriginal child welfare agencies in the mid-1980s. Some of these agencies aggressively pursued policies of "repatriation" taking Aboriginal children who had been in long-term foster care in non-Aboriginal settings and returning them to their reserves and to a native culture that was alien to them. (Bala et al, 2004, 224)

The first court case involves an attempt by the Squamish Nation's child welfare authority to repatriate two Squamish girls from separate foster homes in Ontario, while the second involves the efforts of Xyolhemeylh to repatriate two Stó:lo sisters from foster parents in BC's interior. Twenty-nine news texts about the two repatriation cases are included in this study, including two articles in Aboriginal publications (see Table 9). For a detailed description of the data for chapters 5 through 8, see Appendix A.
Table 9: Number of Headlines Analysed in Chapter 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>ISSUE #1 Nisga’a Treaty</th>
<th>ISSUE #2 BC Treaty Referendum</th>
<th>ISSUE #3 Death of a Child</th>
<th>ISSUE #4 Repatriation</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Daily</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilliwack Times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission City Record</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Sentinel</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NI = Headlines from this newspaper are not included in this case study

Reading Between the Headlines

Why Headline Analysis?

Headlines direct audiences' attention to what are considered prominent semantic features of news texts. While headlines sometimes summarize the content of news texts, they are more likely to represent selected aspects of news stories as more important than others. The content of headlines, along with lead paragraphs, is arguably the "most likely" feature of news texts to be remembered by audiences when defining issues and events at a later date (Lambertus, 2004, p. 6). Headlines, which are usually written by specialized editors and not by the reporters that wrote the news stories in the first place, serve to reinforce certain elements of news texts while having an additive effect on the overall meaning of news stories. As such, they may be analysed relatively independently.
from news texts since they "constitute an important unit of meaning in themselves: cumulatively, headlines can create impressions of events and groups even for readers who do not read accompanying articles" (Hackett & Zhao, 1993, p. 61).

Because headlines contain potent and highly compressed information that cue audience interpretation of news issues and events, an analysis of them may yield important clues about news frames, semantic strategies, linguistic techniques, and other features of news discourse. In this chapter, an analysis of headlines for the 188 news stories that appeared in the mainstream press provides a map of dominant and secondary news frames and a number of associated textual features. In Chapter 7, techniques of discourse analysis are applied to news texts that best represent these frames and techniques. This analysis will illuminate ways in which textual features and rhetorical strategies bolster or undercut dominant news frames and will assist in identifying the presence of broader patterns of news discourse about Aboriginal people and issues.

**Harmful Behaviour of Aboriginal People**

"Harmful behaviour" of Aboriginal actors is a significant theme in the 188 headlines about the four case studies. For the purposes of this research, harmful behaviour is defined as actions, proposals or threats that cause or are likely to cause physical, mental, economic, political or social harm to non-Aboriginal or Aboriginal people. Behaviours or actions referenced in headlines include the incompetent, corrupt or undemocratic actions of Aboriginal institutions or leaders; the initiation or participation of Aboriginal people in government misinformation exercises; initiatives that undermine non-Aboriginal economic interests; and actions that threaten nuclear families headed by non-Aboriginal parents. Fifty-six percent of all headlines mention the harmful behaviours
of Aboriginal people and/or the consequences of these behaviours for both Aboriginal people and other Canadians (see Table 10).

Table 10: Types of Harmful Behaviour of Aboriginal People in News Headlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of harmful behaviour of Aboriginal person, institution or organization</th>
<th>Headlines – Child Welfare News items</th>
<th>Headlines – Treaty news stories</th>
<th>Headlines – all news stories, N=188</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Case #1 Repatriation</td>
<td>Case #2 Death of a child</td>
<td>Case #3 Nisga’a Treaty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incompetent, corrupt or undemocratic action of institutions or leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil disobedience or violence (or prospect of)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controversial actions/proposals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harming nuclear families headed by non-Aboriginal people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harming interests of Aboriginal people</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harming the financial interests of non-Aboriginal individuals or businesses</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefiting from &amp;/or harming others, by participating in ineffective, corrupt or undemocratic initiatives (sometimes initiated by government)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating or participating in (usually with government) propaganda exercises</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No harmful behaviour referenced in headline</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
1) In the case of headlines that reference more than one type of harmful behaviour, only the first activity mentioned was coded.
2) Because percentages have been rounded off to the nearest whole number, total percentages may not add up to exactly 100%.
Nearly one in four headlines (23%) about the two case studies on treaties signal that Aboriginal people may be benefiting from their participation in corrupt or undemocratic initiatives, sometimes initiated by federal or provincial governments. For example, one headline about the Nisga'a Treaty in the *National Post* associates it with a "failed and discredited federal policy" (Smith, 1998, November 21, p. B7). As well, some headlines about the BC Treaty Referendum construct the objections of Aboriginal people and their allies to the plebiscite as opposition to the democratic "will of the people."

Approximately one in nine headlines suggest that Aboriginal actors are engaging in behaviours that harm the interests of their "own people." The theme of Aboriginal people victimizing other Aboriginal people is prominent in coverage of the two child welfare stories, where 40% of headlines reference this type of behaviour. In headlines about the repatriation issue, Aboriginal leaders, Aboriginal child welfare agencies and, sometimes, even whole First Nations are characterized as harming or threatening the interests of Aboriginal children. The Aboriginal children that are the object of repatriation attempts are described as "begging" or "pleading" with Aboriginal child welfare authorities not to "tear" them away from their foster families, while First Nations and Aboriginal child welfare agencies are depicted as "fighting" with foster families.

As well, 9% of all headlines reference supposedly incompetent, corrupt or undemocratic actions of Aboriginal institutions or leaders. For example, a number of headlines about the death of an Aboriginal child suggest that the local Aboriginal child welfare agency may be partially culpable for the child's death. A headline on the front page of the *Province* goes further, asserting that "if the people responsible for her [Xyolhemeylh] could have done more to help her, she'd be alive today" (Fournier &
Grindley, 2002, Sept 26, A1). Still other headlines suggest that Aboriginal people are initiating or participating in misinformation campaigns to deceive the public into supporting policy changes or arrangements that are harmful to the interests of non-Aboriginal people.

**Normative Violations**

In the headlines of many news stories about the first three case studies, Aboriginal people are situated outside the normative basis of broader society. Aboriginal people are frequently defined in terms of the threat they pose to core values and beliefs of Euro-Canadians. Some of the values being threatened or contravened by Aboriginal people include the sanctity of the nuclear family, individual rights and interests of children, representative democracy, equality of all citizens (usually defined as synonymous with identical treatment) as well as principles of economic freedom and private ownership. In headlines for news stories about the death of a child under the care of an Aboriginal agency, Aboriginal people are positioned outside of mainstream Canadian society by virtue of the "dysfunctional" nature of their communities and institutions.

**Repatriation**

Some headlines construct the attempts of Aboriginal child welfare agencies to repatriate Aboriginal children from non-Aboriginal foster or adoptive families as posing a threat to family values. An opposition implicit in some headlines is Aboriginal leaders and child welfare agencies vs. the sanctity of the nuclear family (see Table 11).
Table 11: Headlines: Aboriginal People Threaten the Sanctity of the Nuclear Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Torn between 2 ‘families’</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>August 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFN defends move to stop adoptions</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>September 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC Native girls to ask Judge to let them stay with foster parents</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>October 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native foster girls to stay with 'mom, dad'</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>October 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls want to stay with family</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>October 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native teens plead to stay in foster care: BC band fights with white</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>October 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family for custody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Sisters win battle to stay with foster parents</td>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>October 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last minute deal with Sto:lo lets sisters stay in the foster home</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>October 25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the two Aboriginal agencies at the centre of the repatriation stories consistently emphasize that they are attempting to respond to the needs of extended families and communities, news headlines refer only to parents and their adopted or foster children. Extended family members are not mentioned and the term "family" is used exclusively to refer to nuclear families. Headlines for stories that mention the collective rights or role of extended Aboriginal families and communities in the body of news texts tend to signal that an individualistic approach to the rights of children ought to prevail (see Table 12).
Table 12: Headlines: Aboriginal People Threaten Interests/Rights of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Lisa wants</td>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>August 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls beg band not to make them move</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>September 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In whose best interests</td>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>September 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The children's interests</td>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>September 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She was pretty clear she didn't want to go</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>September 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native girls want band to let them be</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>October 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future of Tug-of-war teenagers now rests in hands of judge</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>October 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundreds of native kids in line to suffer same fate</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>October 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Children’s interests must always be first</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>October 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall impression created is that Aboriginal child welfare agencies are acting in ways that threaten the individual rights and well-being of children. None of these headlines makes reference to critical factors that could account for the current policies and practices of Aboriginal child welfare agencies such as the residential school system, which endured from 1849 until 1984, and the wholesale "adoption out" of Aboriginal children that occurred in the latter half of the 20th Century. Underlying repatriation efforts by Aboriginal child welfare agencies is an emphasis on the collective rights of extended Aboriginal families, communities, and First Nations, that were devastated by the imposition of culturally inappropriate state adoption and education policies.

Nisga’a Referendum

A number of headlines suggest that Aboriginal people have not been receiving identical treatment to that accorded other Canadians. For example, the implication of one headline is that the Nisga’a Treaty creates injustice for non-Aboriginal people: "Justice based on race and ethnicity is no justice at all" (180). Another in The Northern Sentinel
suggests that the "special" treatment the treaty affords Aboriginal people may be problematic: "Nisga'a self government and fishery provisions bother Libs" (216). Many other headlines associate the treaty, or the negotiation process, with a threat to representative democracy itself (see Table 13).

### Table 13: Aboriginal People/Initiatives as a Threat to Representative Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>HEADLINE</strong></th>
<th><strong>NEWSPAPER</strong></th>
<th><strong>DATE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polls close, but results of vote on Nisga'a deal delayed: Officials offer no reason for the delay in giving results</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What you get from behind closed doors – a rotten deal: With native ratification, we become dangerously close to having a divisive, possibly illegal treaty foisted on BC</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC Liberals attack Chrétien over Nisga'a deal: Ignores court case: PM accused of undermining legal process</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>November 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform MP wonders at the need to sell the treaty: Back-room dealers are criticized for following the same failed path as Charletown</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close vote on Nisga'a deal 'disappointing': Premier Clark and provincial Aboriginal affairs minister stand united in lamenting early poll results reporting only 51% of eligible votes support BC's first modern day treaty</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public wants Nisga'a vote, two polls say</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>November 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbians want vote on Nisga'a Treaty: surveys say: But Premier Glen Clark has no intention of holding a referendum</td>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>November 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put the treaty to the test</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>November 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell challenges 61% Nisga'a vote: The opposition leader says the number of registered voters eligible to cast ballots on the referendum was less than expected</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let the people speak on the Nisga'a treaty: The affected Aboriginal citizens were given the right to vote on the treaty in a referendum – an option denied the rest of BC</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisga'a Chief demands probe into treaty vote</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>November 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-treaty forces disregard the will of the people</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Not only are the nature and process of the treaty cast into doubt, the fairness of the Nisga'a's own plebiscite on the deal is also called into question. First, there is a
suggestion that the referendum may not have been conducted fairly – one headline notes a dissident Nisga'a leader's call for a "probe" into the vote (165), while another references Nisga'a election officials being unresponsive to questions about a "delay" in the tabulation of votes (178). Other headlines raise questions about the low voter support for the treaty, estimated in one headline as "only 51-per-cent of eligible voters" (187).

Several headlines signal that the accord is a special deal that was foisted upon British Columbians who were denied a basic democratic right exercised by the Nisga'a – the right to vote on the treaty. Finally, a number of headlines focus on the threat posed by the treaty to the economic values of non-Aboriginal people (see Table 14). In particular, the threat posed to the economic rights of corporate interests is emphasised.

**Table 14: Aboriginal People/Initiatives as Threatening Economic Freedom**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resources cause for some treaty concern treaty: The future economic opportunity for the Nisga'a is largely based on natural resources. But non-Aboriginals have valid concerns about bureaucracy, forestry, fishing and land access</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who have to pay ought to have the say</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>November 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria won't discuss treaty, forest firms say: They claim the B.C. government has rejected all attempts to clarify compensation concerns</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clark bribe buys shame-faced loggers' silence</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>November 19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The BC Treaty Referendum*

While the texts of a number of articles on the treaty referendum also emphasize the threat posed by treaties to economic freedom and private ownership of property, only one headline reflects this theme: "They wrote it: 'Yes' will protect private property" (266). However, in numerous headlines, the treaty referendum is framed as a valid, and
valuable, exercise in democracy. Others suggest that Aboriginal people and their allies are obstructing democracy through their opposition to the plebiscite (see Table 15).

Table 15: The Treaty Referendum and Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BC churches blast treaty referendum: 'Mostly uninformed majority' accorded too much power</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>April 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty referendum raises a storm: Bishops call on Anglicans to vote no or reject ballots</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>April 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treaty referendum raises a storm: Participate in democracy, A-G urges as ballots burn</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>April 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's up to the people now</td>
<td>Chilliwack Times</td>
<td>April 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Campbell v. BC's bien pensants</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send in your ballot, answered or not: Referendum a poor vehicle but the issues deserve our attention</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendum vote size irrelevant: A-G: Result will count even 'if three people vote'</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>April 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referendum will count even if few vote – AG</td>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>April 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia's clerics and sheep</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>April 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natives go to court as boycott pushed</td>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>April 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia: Campbell criticizes churches' call for referendum boycott</td>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>April 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vote 'no' if you want – but vote</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>April 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les says treaty referendum will supply guidance</td>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>April 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Les says referendum good for democracy</td>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>May 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jabs from two sides bode well, Plant says: 'Vote Yes or vote No. Vote so your voice is heard.'</td>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>April 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal group tries to shut down referendum</td>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>May 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuswap leaders put ballots in flames: Hundreds of ballots burned to protest treaty referendum</td>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>May 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cutting remarks: Len Marchand joins protest against referendum, shreds ballot</td>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>May 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judge dismisses effort to halt treaty referendum</td>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>May 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Headlines variously construct church leaders who support a referendum boycott as arrogant, ridiculed in one headline as "bien pensants" (231); contemptuous of the public – one church official is quoted as referring to the "mostly uninformed majority"(229); or incapable of independent thought, comparing them to "sheep"(234). Other headlines emphasize the violent or dramatic nature of the Aboriginal-led boycott. For example, the Attorney-General's plea for democratic participation is juxtaposed with the actions of Aboriginal protesters who "burn" ballots (244). In another headline, Aboriginal people are described as trying to "shut down the referendum" (294).

**Death of a Child**

News stories about this case study are distinguished from news coverage of the other cases in that there are no op/ed pieces – all the articles published during the research period were "hard news" items. However, a number of the headlines about this case indirectly support the dominant frame by associating Aboriginal people with dysfunctional living conditions that are outside Euro-Canadian standards and values. As well, 48% of headlines (11 of 23) racialize this news story, linking the child's death with a distinctly Aboriginal locale (see Table 16) or with Aboriginal institutions. The racialization of this story – as one about the death of an Aboriginal child on reserve – furnishes a familiar interpretative context for readers. First, the victim is associated with a population that has long been stereotyped as victims (see RCAP, 1996b) and, second, the crime scene is identified as an "Aboriginal community" or a "reserve," venues which have long associations in the media with a variety of extreme social conditions, including crime, poverty, and family dysfunction. The attachment of a racial label to this story
limits the interpretative choices available to readers. In writing about the racialization of crime in 1970s Britain, Stuart Hall et al. (1978) observe:

Labels are important, especially when applied to dramatic public events. They not only place and identify those events; they assign events to a context. Thereafter the use of the label is likely to mobilize this whole referential context, with all its associated meanings and connotations. (p. 19)

Table 16: Racialization of Crime Venue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baby's death stuns native community: Two-year-old's body found but cause of death not revealed</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>September 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby's death hits Indian band hard: Counsellors to aid grieving members deal with tragedy</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>September 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native leader not welcome at memorial: Family members of Chassidy Whitford feel disrespected</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>October 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service set for girl, 2, on reserve near Mission: Chassidy Whitford's dad is charged with murder in her death</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>October 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implicit in a number of headlines is the suggestion that the Aboriginal child welfare agency entrusted with the care of the child did not act appropriately. Within two days of the first mention of the child's death in the news, news headlines began signalling that Xyolhemeylh, the Stó:lō child welfare agency entrusted with the care of the child, may have had some culpability for what happened. One headline states that the agency ignored an important report; others suggest that the program or even the entire agency was to be reviewed (in fact, it was only the agency's handling of this particular case that was targeted for review); and one headline contains a quotation that declares that the child would "be alive today" if only the agency "had done more to help her" (see Table 17).
Table 17: Conduct of the Aboriginal Child Welfare Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did baby Chastity have to die?: 'She was a beautiful little girl, and if the people responsible for her could have done more to help her, she'd be alive today</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>September 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External child agency review will be done: Lakahahmen FN Chief Susan McKamey assured review of Xyolhemeylh will be conducted</td>
<td>Mission City Record</td>
<td>September 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddler remembered; Chief discourages blame</td>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>October 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tot's death sparks review of native child agency: Could more have been done to save her life</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>October 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical report ignored</td>
<td>Chilliwack Times</td>
<td>October 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassidy's death sparks program review</td>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>October 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death leads to review: But not of Xyolhemeylh program</td>
<td>Chilliwack Times</td>
<td>October 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Construction of News Frames

In headline analysis of the four cases, one dominant news frame emerges – *that of Aboriginal people as a threat to Euro-Canadian values*. More than half of all headlines reference the harmful behaviour of Aboriginal people. Many of these headlines are steeped in the language of threats and warnings. Some of the potential consequences of Aboriginal behaviour forewarned in headlines include the destabilization of society; the destruction of nuclear families headed by non-Aboriginal parents; the undermining of the economic rights and security of non-Aboriginal people and business interests; and the imposition of unjust "race-based" government policies on non-Aboriginal Canadians (see Table 18).
Table 18: Consequences of Aboriginal Initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Headline</th>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What you get from behind closed doors - a rotten deal: With native ratification, we become dangerously close to having a divisive, possibly illegal treaty foisted on BC</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 10, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice based on race and ethnicity is no justice at all</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 10, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisga’a deal worries BC forest industry: Companies are concerned about the security of investments</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 12, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources cause for some treaty concern treaty: The future economic opportunity for the Nisga’a is largely based on natural resources. But non-Aboriginals have valid concerns about bureaucracy, forestry, fishing and land access</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>November 14, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They wrote it: ‘Yes’ will protect private property</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>April 9, 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hundreds of native kids in line to suffer same fate</td>
<td>The Province</td>
<td>October 31, 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all four case studies, Aboriginal people or organizations are portrayed as violating the core values, beliefs or standards of "Canadian" society. This frame is particularly prominent in news coverage of the repatriation of Aboriginal children and the Nisga’a Treaty. Aboriginal people are constructed as being in conflict with representative democracy, individualism, equality (principle of identical treatment), private ownership (as opposed to collective), and family values. As well, Aboriginal initiatives such as self-government and treaty-making are constructed as a threat to the lifestyle of individual British Columbians, the economic health of corporate interests, the province itself, and to the democratic fabric of "our" society.

While headlines on the two child welfare stories generally support the Aboriginal people as a threat frame, news headlines on the BC Treaty Referendum and, to a lesser extent, the Nisga’a treaty, afford some space for other discourses. An alternative news frame, reflected in some Globe and Mail coverage of the Nisga’a Treaty, is that these
issues are valid topics for public debate with rational and convincing arguments to be made by both sides. This is similar to what Hackett and Zhao (1994) describe as the *Legitimate Controversy Frame*, where news discourse assumes "a more 'detached,' 'balanced' or 'neutral' posture – one corresponding to conventional journalism's self-image as an open forum, a mirror of the community or objective observer" (p. 522).

Another secondary news frame, the *Minority rights frame*, is reflected primarily in coverage of the Treaty Referendum in the *Kamloops Daily News* and the *Globe and Mail*, and, to a much lesser degree, in the *Vancouver Sun* and *National Post*. This frame embodies a liberal-pluralist vision of a "democratic free society" that depends on the vigorous protection and defence of the rights of minority groups.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, techniques of content analysis were applied to 188 headlines of news items published in both national newspapers, two major dailies and a total of five community newspapers. The dominant news frame that emerged was that of *Aboriginal People as a Threat to Euro-Canadian Values*. Aboriginal people are situated as being in conflict with the normative fabric of Canadian society. Headlines constructed Aboriginal people as at odds with representative democracy, individualism, private ownership, family values, and equality – as embodied in the principle of identical treatment. Lexical and semantic choices in headlines emphasized the negative consequences of Aboriginal self-governance initiatives and treaties for Euro-Canadians. Indeed, these initiatives were constructed as a threat to the lifestyle of "ordinary" British Columbians, the economic vitality of corporate interests, and to the democratic fabric of "our" society.
The next chapter provides an analysis of the news stories associated with the
headlines examined in Chapter 5. A detailed textual analysis of 63 op/ed pieces and 125
hard news stories illustrates how the dominant news frame and its underlying discourse
and semantic structures are reflected in the news.
CHAPTER 6:
DOMINANT FRAMES IN THE MAINSTREAM PRESS

Introduction

In the previous chapter, content analysis of 188 news headlines about treaty and Aboriginal child welfare issues revealed the predominance of one news frame – that of Aboriginal people as a threat to Euro-Canadian interests and values. Further supporting evidence of the prominence of this frame in discourse about Aboriginal people was found in this chapter, in which techniques of critical discourse analysis were applied to texts and headlines of 63 op/ed pieces, including unsigned editorials, and 125 hard news stories about the four cases. For a detailed discussion of methodological issues associated with critical discourse analysis, see Appendix A – Data and Methodology.

Textual Analysis of National, City and Community Newspapers

A detailed textual analysis was conducted on news coverage of the four case studies at three different levels. The research sample consisted of forty-six news stories from Canada's two national newspapers, 90 news items published in the two Vancouver dailies, and 52 articles that appeared in five community newspapers in British Columbia.

62 News coverage of other Aboriginal issues may reflect entirely different news frames. Even this research found significant evidence of secondary news frames such as "the legitimate controversy" frame, which will be discussed later in the next chapter.
Almost exactly one-third of the news items considered in these case studies (33.2%) were op/eds, while two-thirds (66.8%) were hard news stories. See Table 19 for a summary of the data under study.

Table 19: Number of News Items Analysed in Ch. 6 by Newspaper, Issue & Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>ISSUE #1 Nisga’a Treaty</th>
<th>ISSUE #2 BC Treaty Referendum</th>
<th>ISSUE #3 Death of a Child</th>
<th>ISSUE #4 Repatriation</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HN</td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>HN</td>
<td>OE</td>
<td>HN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Daily</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilliwack Times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission City Record</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Sentinel</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HN = Hard news stories
OE = Op/eds
NI = News items from this newspaper are not included in this case study

With the exception of the Kamloops Daily News, which is published every day but Sunday, the community newspapers included in this research are published once or twice per week. The two national newspapers and two major dailies are published six times weekly and generally provide significantly more news coverage than their community counterparts. In order to generate comparable quantities of data, a longer period of reportage was surveyed from community newspapers than for daily and
national newspapers. Table 20 displays the date range of the publications surveyed in this chapter.

Table 20: Date Range(s) of Data

|----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Note: All articles published during the above date ranges that referenced the specific issue were included in this study.

**Discourse Schemata**

In three of the four case studies, the dominant news frame – *Aboriginal people as a threat to Euro-Canadian interests and values* – is reflected in several rhetorical arguments (summarized in Table 21).
### Table 21: Rhetorical Arguments Supporting the Dominant News Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISSUE</th>
<th>RHETORICAL ARGUMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Repatriation</td>
<td>1. First Nations are &quot;bullying&quot; kind-hearted white foster or adoptive parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Aboriginal communities and families are &quot;unable&quot; or &quot;unready&quot; to care for their own children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. &quot;Our&quot; governments are implementing race-based rights and entitlements for Aboriginal people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisga'a Treaty</td>
<td>1. &quot;Our&quot; government is colluding with First Nations to impose race-based governments on British Columbians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Race-based policies will gravely undermine democracy and destabilize &quot;our&quot; society and economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC Treaty Referendum</td>
<td>1. The referendum is an essential and valid exercise in democracy because it gives the people of British Columbia a voice on important issues that affect &quot;all of us.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The referendum design is imperfect, but there is nothing inherently wrong with referenda on this matter or other minority rights issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The will of the majority must prevail over the political manoeuvrings of minorities and other &quot;special interest groups.&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

News discourse about the fourth case, the death of a child under Aboriginal care, revolves around two scripts: 1) Routine Aboriginal Crime Story and 2) Tragedy caused by the incompetence of an Aboriginal child welfare agency. These rhetorical arguments and scripts are supported by a variety of rhetorical strategies, including threats, warnings, apparent concern, historical metaphors, positive self-representation, equations and oppositions as well as lexical choice.

In all four case studies, Aboriginal people are portrayed as violating core values and beliefs of mainstream society. This frame is strongly reflected in news texts about the repatriation of Aboriginal children, the death of an Aboriginal child, and the Nisga'a Treaty. Aboriginal people are constructed as being in conflict with representative democracy, individualism, equality (principle of identical treatment), private ownership (as opposed to collective) and family values. As well, Aboriginal initiatives such as self-
government and treaty-making are portrayed as posing a threat to the lifestyle of
individual British Columbians, the economic health of corporate interests and the
province as a whole and to the democratic character of non-Aboriginal society. While the
Aboriginal people as a threat frame was largely uncontested in news discourse about
both child welfare cases, coverage of the BC Treaty Referendum, and to a lesser degree
the Nisga'a Treaty, included secondary discourses – these will be discussed in the next
chapter.

Case Study #1: Repatriation

The dominant frame is most strongly reflected in news discourse on two attempts
by separate Aboriginal child welfare agencies to repatriate Aboriginal children from
white adoptive or foster families. News coverage is anchored in three central rhetorical
arguments:

1. First Nations are "bullying" kind-hearted white foster or adoptive parents
2. Aboriginal communities and families are unable to care for their own children
3. "Our" governments are implementing race-based rights and entitlements for
   Aboriginal people

These arguments employ highly emotive language, exaggeration and a variety of
rhetorical devices to create an atmosphere of moral panic. For example, the author of an
op/ed in the Vancouver Sun advocates that the two Aboriginal girls at the centre of the
Stó:lō Nation's repatriation efforts "should not be ripped from the arms of the only family
they have known" (149). The phrases "ripped from the arms" and "the only family they
have known" have been appropriated from the girl's lawyer and are repeated verbatim,
not as quotations, but as part of descriptive passages, in the other op/ed and the only hard news story on the topic in this newspaper. Also, this description is remarkably similar to that contained in a *Globe and Mail* editorial about the other repatriation case where the Squamish Nation is portrayed as "trying to tear two small children from their loving foster parents over the issue of native identity" (146).

**Rhetorical Argument #1: First Nations are "bullying" kind-hearted white foster or adoptive parents**

In news texts about both repatriation cases, the entire First Nations involved, not just their Aboriginal child welfare agencies, are criticized for their efforts to repatriate foster children. In his column, Mulgrew (149) refers to the "hard-nosed attitude of the Stó:lō," conflating and condemning all Stó:lō people, even though it is Xyolhemeylh, the Stó:lō child welfare agency, that is pursuing the repatriation. It is difficult to conceive of a situation in which all British Columbians would be held accountable, and derogated, for the actions of the Ministry of Children and Family Development.

On the other hand, the white foster parents in both cases are celebrated as "loving" dedicated caregivers. This contrast represents an opposition that is found in much discourse on repatriation: *Aboriginal Child Welfare Agency vs. Loving White Foster Parents*. In a *Vancouver Sun* editorial, terms used to describe the foster parents and the environments they provide for their charges include "kind-hearted families," "loving, stable home," and "secure and loving home" (151). While the two sets of foster parents are often venerated in news texts, the birth mothers in both cases are consistently derogated. Consider Mulgrew's description of the birth mother of the two children at the centre of the Stó:lō repatriation case in the *Vancouver Sun*:
Their mother is an Aboriginal woman believed living on Vancouver Island with severe alcohol and drug problems. She has seven children, all from different fathers, all of whom are living under public care (149).

The selection of details in this passage is revealing. In addition to being associated with "severe" substance abuse, the birth mother is unable or unwilling to take care of any of her children, and morally suspect – her children are "all from different fathers." This mini-biography is repeated, with minor variations, in a number of news stories, even finding its way into a news story in the Chilliwack Times, the only item on repatriation published in a community newspaper: "Their biological mother, an alcoholic, has given birth to seven children – all in foster care today – and is believed to be living somewhere on Vancouver Island" (160). The conclusion to this sentence further stigmatizes the Aboriginal mother, implying that her life is so chaotic and itinerant that ascertaining her whereabouts is impossible.

Derogation of the birth mother is also a feature of news coverage in the Globe and Mail, where Wente writes in her column that the birth mother, who is from "the Sto:lo reserve...has several other kids too, by different fathers, and because she is hopelessly addicted to alcohol, all of them are in foster care" (142). Wente's take on the girls' mother is interesting for a couple of reasons. First, she conflates over 20 diverse Sto:lö communities, dispersed over a territory spanning about 100 kilometres, and widely varying in population, demographics and politics, into "the" Sto:lö reserve. Second, the use of the phrase "hopelessly addicted to alcohol" suggests that perhaps the author has access to inside information since she is the only reporter to conclude that the mother's addiction is beyond hope. The author, who furnishes no evidence in support of this claim,
may be invoking the stereotype of Aboriginal people as incorrigible alcoholics that is part of the "public idiom" about Aboriginal people.

Descriptions of the birth mother in the Squamish repatriation case are eerily similar. An editorial in the *Globe and Mail* refers to the biological mother as a "substance-abusing" woman who allowed her child to "suck" on "crack cocaine at the age of one" (146). Two days later, the same newspaper reports that this Aboriginal woman, in addition to being a drug addict, is a criminal: "Her mother, born on the Squamish Nation of British Columbia, was a drug addict and dealer" (147).

The provision of detailed and highly derogatory descriptions of the birth mothers not only provides for a dramatic contrast with the stable, loving homes offered by white foster parents, they also serve to undercut the credibility of the Aboriginal child welfare agencies involved in both cases. Even though both agencies expressed no intention to place the children with their birth mothers (and, in fact, planned to place the children with other families in their respective communities), the racialized nature of the reportage and the inclusion of largely irrelevant details about the birth mothers associates the Stó:lō and Squamish child welfare agencies with dysfunctional Stó:lō and Squamish mothers.

A semiotic concept associated with the work of Jakobson and Halle (1956) is helpful in understanding the symbolic significance of the association of the "dysfunctional" mother with a particular First Nation. *Metonymy* is a rhetorical device where a part of something is used to represent the whole. Media theorist John Fiske (1990) acknowledges that while it is inevitable that metonymies will be used in representations of reality, the problem is that the arbitrariness of their selection "is often disguised or at least ignored, and the metonym is made to appear a natural index and thus
is given the status of the 'real,' the 'not to be questioned'' (p. 96). In looking at news
coverage of protests against the Gulf War, Hackett and Zhao (1994), describe the use of
metonymy as "malevolent" when it is used to discredit whole social movements based on
the actions of a few individuals. In the two repatriation cases, the Bad Mothers, in effect,
stand in for the entire Stó:lō and Squamish Nations.

The contrast between the apparent quality of their Aboriginal homes and those
offered by white foster parents also points to an opposition present in a number of news
stories about the repatriation issue: Dysfunctional Aboriginal families vs. well-adjusted
white foster parents. In news coverage of the two repatriation cases, white foster parents
are portrayed as having rescued Aboriginal children from unhealthy or dangerous home
environments. This echoes a theme observed in 1860s news discourse about Aboriginal
people – that of the heroic white man saving primitive Aboriginal people.

Some news items focus on the supposed "inability" of Aboriginal communities to
care for their own children. A Globe and Mail columnist writes that "Across the country,
native bands are taking children away from white foster families... even if there is no
family to adopt them there, and even if the kids don't want to go" (145). Aside from
conveying the sense that repatriation is a crisis of national proportions, this sentence
establishes that Aboriginal communities are unable to provide adoptive families for these
children. Finally, this statement fixes the racialized nature of the problem – a conflict
between Aboriginal people and "white" people – even though parents from a variety of
racial and ethnic backgrounds are adopting Aboriginal children. "Us," in the opposition
that is set up in this article does not include all non-Aboriginal people, only "white"
people.
Rhetorical Argument #2: Aboriginal communities and families are "unable" or "unready" to care for their own children

In a column in the Province, repatriation is condemned as a "do-good plan" with "major holes...namely [that] there are no homes for these kids to return to" (159). The article concludes its argument on a sarcastic note: "Natives aren't exactly signing foster agreements in droves." The conclusion that Aboriginal communities are unable to furnish adoptive/foster homes for their own children is reached in the context of a single repatriation case. No supporting evidence or statistics about the availability of Aboriginal adoptive or foster homes in the province's Aboriginal communities is provided. Once again, in the absence of any concrete evidence to support the newspaper's claim, readers may have little choice but to rely on common sense notions about the unhealthy state of Aboriginal communities and the inability of Aboriginal families to provide substitute care for Aboriginal children.

This line of argument is further developed in other news texts. Since Aboriginal parents are apparently unable to provide healthy homes for their own children, well-adjusted white families generously offer stable, loving homes to Aboriginal children. Furthermore, since adoptive families cannot be found in Aboriginal communities, questions are raised about the competence of Aboriginal child welfare agencies. A Vancouver Sun columnist traces the origin of Aboriginal child welfare problems to the point at which Aboriginal child welfare agencies began looking after their own children: "everything seemed to be fine until 1997 when the provincial government decided to hand over the responsibility for native children in care to Aboriginal agencies" (149).

If this assessment is accepted at face value, it legitimates a key argumentative point – that Aboriginal children were significantly better off before responsibility for
child welfare matters was devolved to Aboriginal authorities. However, the suggestion that up to until 1997 "everything was fine" for Aboriginal children under the care of provincial child welfare authorities is highly contestable to say the least. The writer offers no evidence that would indicate that child welfare outcomes have deteriorated in the six years following the graduated devolution of responsibility to Aboriginal authorities.\textsuperscript{63}

The use of the phrase "decided to hand over responsibility" (149) creates the impression that it may have been an abrupt, whimsical, and irresponsible decision on the part of government bureaucrats, rather than a carefully planned transfer of responsibility that was negotiated between provincial and federal governments and First Nations over a number of years.

One argument advanced in op/ed pages is that while Aboriginal child welfare agencies are not up to the task of taking care of their own children, they have good intentions. An editorial in the \textit{Vancouver Sun} begins by asserting the "correct" ethnic position of the paper: "We believe there is a genuine desire by First Nations to strengthen their communities by bringing home to their extended families children who have been lost through adoption or placement with foster parents" (151). In this move of positive self-representation, the newspaper makes it clear that it is not suggesting that Aboriginal

\textsuperscript{63} The outcomes for Aboriginal children under the care of the provincial children's ministry were so disturbing in the late 1980s and early 1990s that the BC government appointed an Aboriginal committee to "hold public meetings and to receive submissions concerning child welfare legislation and services" (Walmsley, 2006, p. 26). In the Aboriginal committee's report, the ministry's complete insensitivity to Aboriginal culture is identified as a contributing fact in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child welfare system. This overrepresentation is characterized as constituting a "gross violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child," one that has "negatively affected every facet of Aboriginal family life" (British Columbia, 1992, p.2).
people are being disingenuous or have ulterior motives in pursuing repatriation. Next, the editorial proceeds to sketch in a partial context for Aboriginal efforts to gain control over the field of child welfare: "We also recognize that harm was done through the practice of allowing native children to be adopted out of their culture by kind hearted families."

Lexical choices in this sentence minimize both the culpability of the state and other non-Aboriginal actors and the consequences of recent child welfare practices on Aboriginal people. "Harm" greatly understates the impact that child welfare polices, frequently described as resulting in "cultural genocide," had on thousands of Aboriginal families and hundreds of Aboriginal communities in British Columbia and across the country. Use of the word "allowing" defines the role of non-Aboriginal child welfare authorities in these adoption practices as a passive one and the fact that these children were adopted into "kind-hearted families" implies that these authorities were acting on good intentions. This minimizes the responsibility of the non-Aboriginal child welfare authorities for applying ethnocentric standards to adoption cases and ignoring extended family resources available in Aboriginal communities.

64 For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, child welfare authorities in Manitoba and other provinces dispatched as many as 15,000 Aboriginal children to the "homes of white middle-class couples in Canada and the United States, on the assumption that these couples would make better parents than low-income families on Indian reserves and in Métis communities... [These children] were submerged in another culture, and their native identity soon disappeared. They became a lost generation" (York, 1992, pp. 202-206). In 1985, after conducting an inquiry into these practices in Manitoba, Judge Edwin Kimelman concluded that "cultural genocide has been taking place in a systematic routine matter. One gets an image of children stacked in foster homes as used cars are stacked on corner lots, just waiting for the right buyer to stroll by" (quoted in Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 88). Aboriginal communities had virtually no input into the wholesale apprehension of their children by non-Aboriginal social workers acting on behalf of provincial child welfare authorities. In BC, the scale of displacement of Aboriginal children from their families was comparable. Due to the "rapid rate of child apprehensions" in the early years of the Sixties Scoop, the number of Aboriginal children in care in BC increased from "29 in 1955 to 1,446 in 1964" (Hughes, 2006, p. 50).
This minimization of responsibility for policies that resulted in the loss of thousands of Aboriginal children segues into an ambitious whitewashing of colonial history in Canada: "There is no question that Europeans who colonized North America and their descendents did a lot of harm to First Nations." (151) This apparent concession is immediately preceded by an attempt to absolve all those instrumental in inflicting that "harm" of any responsibility: "Whether it was malice, ignorance or kindness, we will never know."

The architects of the residential school system itself are relieved of any responsibility: "The politicians, bureaucrats and clerics who dreamed up and operated residential schools were not...evil people" (151). After asserting the impossibility of ascertaining the motivation of the colonizers, the editorialist is now doing precisely that -- asserting that those who set up and ran residential schools were not acting on bad intentions.

Finally, the ultimate apology and dismissal of culpability for those responsible for the residential school system is offered: "They were simply missionaries..." (151). The implication is that these white missionaries had little real power and that their interests were completely unrelated to those of government, business and settlers. The author concludes by ascribing a positive motivation to the missionaries: "[they] were under the misapprehension that they needed to save children." Thus, a system that endured from 1849 to 1984 and had a catastrophic impact on Aboriginal families, communities and cultures across Canada resulted from a mere "misapprehension."

While this editorial provides an historical context – albeit one that is highly selective and seriously flawed – for repatriation and the creation of Aboriginal child
welfare agencies, many other articles provided little or no context whatsoever. One exception was an opinion piece in the *Province* by Stó:lô Grand Chief Clarence Pennier that provides a very different assessment of the "harm" caused by government policies than the previous Globe and Mail editorial: "This destructive and failed effort created horrendous economic and social problems. Stó:lô communities are no longer self-reliant and independent" (158).

According to Pennier, these policies were not random acts of "malice, ignorance or kindness" and did not result from "misapprehension" as suggested in the *Globe and Mail* editorial, rather they were part of a conscious and concerted attempt to destroy Aboriginal culture: "The goal of the Indian Act, residential schools and federal policies was to assimilate us into mainstream Canada" (158). The author also acknowledges that "relentless media coverage" of Xyolhemeylh, the Stó:lô child welfare agency, has "hindered efforts to restore balance to the program." However, Pennier's opinion piece is the only one of the 27 news texts on the repatriation issue that is written from an Aboriginal perspective and the ideas in it are not reflected in any of the other news texts on this issue.65

*Rhetorical Argument #3: "Our" governments are implementing race-based rights for Aboriginal people*

On September 5, 2003, AFN Grand Chief Phil Fontaine faxed a letter to Justice George Czutrin, the presiding judge in the Squamish repatriation case, in which he

65 In news discourse on the repatriation issue, there is, however, evidence of Aboriginal voice in letters-to-the-editor sections of newspapers. For example, in a letter to the *Abbotsford Times*, Stó:lô Chief Doug Kelly takes issue with the "many stories, columns, and editorials" criticizing the Stó:lô Nation's actions in the repatriation, making many of the same arguments made by Pennier (November 11, 2003, p. 9). However, letters to the editor have not been included in this study.
requested that the cultural heritage of the girls be taken into consideration. This event became a flashpoint in news coverage of the repatriation issue. In three op/ed pieces and two hard news stories published in the *Globe & Mail* and in two hard news stories published in the *National Post*, Fontaine is taken to task for violating one of the core values of the Canadian legal system, that of "judicial independence" (143). A week after Fontaine faxed the letter to the judge, he is condemned in a *Globe and Mail* column for "unethical" behaviour and Aboriginal people are chided for supporting his intervention: "While legal-ethics experts said it was inappropriate for Mr. Fontaine, head of Canada's most powerful Aboriginal organization, to send the letter, native supporters cheered him on" (145).

In news stories in the *National Post*, he is described as a "special interest group" attempting to "influence the judicial process through the back door" (136), and exerting "undue influence over the judicial system (137)." An opinion piece in the *Globe and Mail* emphasizes the gravity of Mr. Fontaine's transgression, hinting that the consequences may be severe: "Judicial independence is a fundamental principle of Canadian courts, with politicians who even appear to have breached it often paying a harsh price" (143).

In an interesting argumentative move in an editorial in the same paper, the suggestion is made that the AFN Chief's transgression in itself reflects all that is problematic with repatriation: "Mr. Fontaine's error in judgment underscores all that is wrong with this child welfare case. It is too much about politics, and too little about the children involved" (146). Dismissing Fontaine's concerns about the need for Aboriginal people to look after their own children as "politics" closes off any potential debate about
a serious longstanding grievance – control over child welfare is an issue that Aboriginal people across Canada regard as key to their cultural survival.

While Fontaine is criticized for violating a sacrosanct principle of the Canadian legal system, Aboriginal people are seen as undermining an even more basic Canadian value – the sanctity of individual rights. The opposition between community rights and individual rights is expressed quite plainly in one news story in the *Globe and Mail*:

On one side are *Aboriginal communities* who want their children brought back home. On the other are *individual children* [emphasis mine] like Dawn and Lisa who have been away for so long that they've put down roots elsewhere. (148)

The notion that at the core of the repatriation issue is a clash between alternative conceptions of rights is not fully explored in news coverage, which focuses on the threat posed by government policies that grant "special cultural rights" to particular "racial" or "ethnic" groups. The first editorial appearing on the repatriation issue in the *Globe and Mail* sets the tone for much of the coverage to follow: "race politics should not be a deciding factor in determining the best interest of a child" (141). While representatives of the two Aboriginal child welfare agencies emphasize that repatriation is about cultural preservation and not race, the story is portrayed as being about "race politics" in many news texts, even those that occur much later in the arc of the repatriation stories. In fact, in both the repatriation cases, the Aboriginal child welfare agencies had planned to place the two sets of children with single white women who lived on or near the reserves and who had *strong cultural ties to the communities*. Race was not an issue for the two First Nations involved, rather repatriation is about cultural preservation and a First Nation's right to exercise autonomy over their own affairs.
An editorial in the *Vancouver Sun* opens with a warning in the form of a rhetorical question: "Where will the provincial government be when the cultural views of Aboriginal authorities are allowed to overrun all others?" (151). In a *Province* column entitled, "Hundreds of natives in line to suffer the same fate," repatriation is compared to the infamous "Sixties Scoop"\(^{66}\): "If repatriation of native children seems like the flip side of the white government's callous 1960s wholesale removal of kids from the reserves, it is" (159). Thus, a defensive argumentative move of apparent concern for the past treatment of Aboriginal people is used to invalidate repatriation as a whole, not just in this case. Escalating the sense of moral panic about what Aboriginal people are doing to white people (and their own as well), the writer continues with the consequence part of the warning: "There are an estimated 4000 native children in care in BC – most in white homes. And they are just as vulnerable to removal by Aboriginal ancestors as Dawn and Lisa."

Not only is the repatriation issue cast as a story about "reverse racism," it is also replete with anti-government discourse. After all, non-Aboriginal government is facilitating the implementation of race-based policies such as repatriation. Many news texts place an emphasis on the costs to the public purse associated with repatriation cases as well as the government's "high-handed" tactics. A news story in the *Province* decries the waste of public money by an Aboriginal agency and expresses hope that "the court will put a stop to the hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on a blizzard of bills, reports and expert opinions [on the Stó:lō repatriation case]" (155). The lead sentence of a

\(^{66}\) This term, which was first used in a 1983 report by the Canadian Council on Social Development, refers to the wholesale apprehension of Aboriginal children that occurred in the 1960s that increased the number of Aboriginal children in care from 29 in 1955 to 1,446 in 1964 (Hughes, 50, 2006).
column published the same day in the *Province* goes a step further, attacking the
government not simply for wasting money, but for neglecting the needs of the children
and then spending public money to "uproot" them from their home. The journalist opines:

I can't think of a more shameful manoeuvre by a government than to have
abandoned two native teens to rummage in charity bins for clothes to wear before
a judge, while officials spend public coin to confront them in court in a bid to
uproot them from their foster home. (156)

A column in the *Vancouver Sun* suggests that government child welfare officials
in the Stó:lō case mechanically enforced the Aboriginal repatriation policy. According to
the columnist, the court proceedings "revealed a seemingly mindless application by
bureaucrats of the policy to repatriate Aboriginal children" (149). This characterization of
Aboriginal people appears to have been inspired by the words of the lawyer for the two
girls, who is paraphrased later in the column as referring to the "blind application of the
repatriation policy adopted by Aboriginal groups."

By affixing the label of "race politics" to these two repatriation cases, and by
associating them with anti-government discourse, repatriation is discredited and a more
thorough debate about the issue is closed off. Some op/ed pieces reach the conclusion
that repatriation ought not to be an option for adopted Aboriginal children, regardless of
the circumstances. In a column in the *Globe and Mail*, Margaret Wente discredits the
arguments in favour of repatriation articulated by Aboriginal people:

The standard explanation is that loss of culture is the cause of these disasters
[cross-cultural adoptions that don't work out]. The native child feels lost and adrift
in a world that doesn't welcome him. Trapped by two worlds, he flounders. This is
the case made by many native leaders against cross-cultural adoption, and it is
accepted wisdom among the social-work establishment (145)
The use of the noun "standard" implies that it is a contestable argument, one made automatically as though it is part of some sort of politically correct canon. By attributing this view to the "social work establishment" and "native leaders," Wente situates it as an elitist discourse, one that may not be shared by those on the "ground" such as front line social workers and ordinary Aboriginal people. Indeed, the author professes to know better:

But there's another factor. It's so obvious, and so threatening to the project of repatriation, that even native social workers who believe it don't dare say so publicly. The real problem isn't loss of culture. It's FAS, fetal alcohol syndrome.

Wente has insights into the "real problem" with cross-cultural adoptions. She also claims inside knowledge of what "even" front-line Aboriginal social workers "believe." The use of the phrase "don't dare say so publicly," implies that to do so would invite corrective action, perhaps on the part of the government, to censure those social workers for voicing politically incorrect positions on this issue.

In a number of news texts not only is repatriation misrepresented and discredited, but also the Aboriginal agencies with whom it is associated are constructed as a threat to a "universal" value. For example, an editorial in the Vancouver Sun illustrates the danger posed by Aboriginal agencies committed to repatriation by asking a rhetorical question:

Where will the provincial government be in the future, when and if cultural considerations by Aboriginal children's authorities, which will be fully independent in two years, are allowed to overrun the universal interest of a secure and loving home for kids? (151)

67 One such leader is AFN Grand Chief Phil Fontaine whom the author chides for "weighing in" on the repatriation issue by writing a letter to the Judge in the Squamish case in which he cites the "usual 'loss of culture' arguments."
The phrase, "which will be fully independent in two years," lends a sense of urgency to the warning. The imminent autonomy of Aboriginal institutions is problematic for non-Aboriginal government and represents a threat to the wellbeing of Aboriginal children themselves.

Case Study #2: Nisga'a Treaty

As with the repatriation issue, news coverage of the Nisga'a Treaty is highly racialized and organized around the threat that Aboriginal people pose to Euro-Canadian values.\(^6\) News discourse orbits two central rhetorical arguments:

1. "Our" government is colluding with First Nations to impose race-based governments on British Columbians, and
2. Race-based policies will gravely undermine democracy and destabilize "our" society and economy.

**Rhetorical Argument #1: "Our" government is colluding with First Nations to impose race-based governments on British Columbians**

Early on in the arc of this story, a news report in the *National Post* sets the tone, warning that some commentators say the Nisga'a treaty "establishes a race-based form of government" (162). In an opinion piece published the same day in the *Vancouver Sun*, the Nisga'a are portrayed as hypocritical for "vehemently and justly denouncing any race-based law, policy or practice that does them harm" while simultaneously "seeking benefits on the basis of race or ethnicity" through the Nisga'a Treaty (180). The treaty is characterized as a threat to the normative basis of non-Aboriginal society: "Treaties

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\(^6\) The one publication that offered space for an alternative discourse was the *Globe and Mail*. This will be discussed in Chapter 7: Secondary Frames.
reached in defiance of the values most important to the non-Aboriginal population are bound in the long run to lead to division and strife."

The treaty violates the concept of identical treatment for everyone regardless of race and threatens competitive capitalism by giving Aboriginal people permanent "race or ethnic-based economic rights that trump the rights of other Canadians." Two days later, in a news report on the front page of the same newspaper, the provincial government is taken to task for failing to assure large commercial interests, such as the "forest industry," that the treaty will not "destabilize BC's investment climate" (183). The *Vancouver Sun* quotes an unnamed "draft report" prepared by the Council of Forest Industries, as saying that the Nisga'a Treaty will have a "profound impact" on the "the province's largest employer – the forest industry" which "could mean lost harvesting jobs, increased costs and more red tape." While the government is condemned for its "intransigence," the forest industry is lauded for "attempting to address their issues [with the Nisga'a Treaty] through quiet diplomacy." According to a forestry spokesperson quoted in the article, the reason that forestry companies refrained from voicing their concerns earlier is that they didn't want to be "painted as racists." The article creates the impression that the provincial government is not being forthcoming about the negative economic impact of the treaty on commercial interests.

In op/eds, the suggestion is made that the provincial government may be colluding with the Nisga'a people and criticize it for being disingenuous in its representation of the treaty to British Columbians. In an editorial in *The Province*, the provincial government is charged with implementing an information campaign designed to mislead the public: "The NDP has tried to blind everyone with propaganda about the
Nisga'a Treaty and the race-based government it entrenches" (210). The notion of the
government engaging in a Soviet-style propaganda exercise permeates a great deal of
news coverage, particularly editorials and opinion pieces, on this issue. Predictably, in the
newspaper located in the region most affected by the treaty, allegations of a government
disinformation campaign are among the strongest. An editorial published in the Northern
Sentinel just prior to the Nisga'a referendum on the treaty poses the rhetorical question:
"Why is the government afraid of the truth?" (217). The newspaper accuses the provincial
government of assembling a team of "42 spin doctors with an admitted budget of $5
million to sell the treaty to British Columbians" using "Hollywood style TV advertising,"
"misleading pamphlets" and "deliberately misleading ads." The editorial concludes by
warning that if the government is successful in implementing the Nisga'a Treaty, it will
be "establishing apartheid in BC for all time."

The idea that the government was trying to "buy" public acceptance of the Nisga'a
accord is not confined to opinion pieces and editorials. Even in many hard news stories
on the Nisga'a Treaty, both levels of government, and sometimes also Nisga'a officials,
are routinely described as trying to "sell," "spin" or make "sales pitches" about the treaty
as opposed to informing the public about the history and complexities of negotiation
processes that were initiated well over a hundred years earlier by Nisga'a leaders. Nisga'a
Tribal Council President Joe Gosnell is accused of travelling to Europe to "sell" the deal.
The use of the verbs "sell" and "spin" suggest that the Aboriginal people and government
officials who negotiated the treaty may have ulterior motives of personal profit and self-
interest, as all "salespeople" do. It also implies that proponents of the treaty do not
necessarily believe that the treaty is saleable as is and that, therefore, the "product" needs
to be embellished with slick, less than honest, sales techniques. While the charge that the
government is biased in its representations of the treaty to the BC public appears in
numerous news texts, no specific examples of inaccuracies or bias is given in any news
item. In the absence of any substantive details, some readers may simply assume that the
bias is so obvious as to be self-evident or that these information initiatives are invalidated
by the mere fact of their association with the government or the Nisga'a.

The government is also associated with the threat that the Nisga'a and the treaty
pose to a prime value of Euro-Canadian society – that of representative democracy itself.
In the first few days after the Nisga'a Referendum, a number of news texts suggest that
the Nisga'a had not conducted the referendum fairly or "properly." The first indication
that something may be amiss came in a *Vancouver Sun* headline two days after polling
closed: "Polls close, but results of vote on Nisga'a deal delayed: Officials offer no reason
for the delay in giving results" (178).

The latter half of the headline gives rise to certain questions. For example, *why
wouldn't Nisga'a officials explain why there was a delay?* It may also lead to speculation
by readers as to the motivation of Nisga'a officials. *Are they being evasive or covering up
casting irregularities?* In the body of the article, it is revealed that a Nisga'a referendum
official accounted for the delay by saying that they were "just being very careful." A
number of news texts in the same newspaper cast doubt on the validity of the results
based on the "relatively low" turnout. At this point, the votes of 51% of eligible voters
had been counted. By the time the count was complete, this percentage had risen to 61%.
While the counting was still ongoing, the *Vancouver Sun* reported that the treaty was
"endorsed by just 51% of eligible voters" (183). Yet this news story never mentions the
actual result of the election – approximately 75% of those who voted cast a "yes" vote. The use of the adverb "just" creates the impression that this is indeed a low total and that the treaty is not very popular even among the Nisga'a people themselves. Subsequently, several news texts appropriated the "51%" in their coverage of the referendum and neglected to mention the actual rate at which voters voted "yes" in the referendum.

The next day, the same newspaper reported that the leader of the provincial opposition was challenging the results of the Nisga'a referendum because the "number of registered voters was less than might be expected" (188). Later in this news story, it is revealed that Gordon Campbell, then leader of the provincial opposition, extrapolated the Nisga'a majority age population based on Statistics Canada data. The Liberal leader's estimate that "44 per cent of the BC Aboriginal population" was younger than 19 was based on the assumption that the demographic profile for the total provincial Aboriginal population would be identical to that of the Nisga'a people. In making this assumption, he was conflating disparate Aboriginal populations, with diverse demographics, including those who live in the north, the south and the interior, and on-reserve and off-reserve populations. Yet this questionable assumption, along with the rest of Campbell's "methodology," goes unchallenged in this lengthy news report. Other news texts that gave space to Campbell's allegations do not question it either.

The next day, the National Post reported the opposition leader's claim that "the voting process that led to the Nisga'a approving a landmark treaty appears flawed and should be investigated" (165). Even though Campbell gave no specifics and admitted he had no proof of wrong-doing, three days later an editorial in the Province mentions alleged flaws in the referendum process: "A voting procedure which, as it turns out, has
been criticized for irregularities" (210). After looking into Campbell's allegations, on November 19th, 1998, Indian Affairs Minister Jane Stewart concluded that she was "satisfied with the procedures used to conduct this month's referendum on the Nisga'a treaty" (177). After this, the issue of voting irregularities received no more attention in the news media. But the media's initial emphasis on unexplained delays, irregularities in voter registration and other "problems" with the Nisga'a plebiscite plays into common sense notions about Aboriginal people such as Aboriginal communities as bastions of corruption, incompetence and cronyism and Aboriginal people are not ready for democracy.

Not all news stories were critical of the Nisga'a referendum. In fact, a number of op/eds employ a rhetorical strategy of apparent praise of the Nisga'a people for holding a referendum. An editorial in the Globe and Mail twice uses the word "courage" to describe Nisga'a people: "Their leaders had the courage to stand up and defend the compromises they had made, and the Nisga'a themselves had the courage to say yes" (172).

However, praise for the courage of the Nisga'a is used to justify an attack on the provincial government, which is seen as sorely lacking that same quality: "So why will the government of BC not show the same courage? Mr. Clark [BC Premier]...refuses to give his voters the same chance to bind themselves to a negotiated future with the Nisga'a [emphasis mine] (172)."

Commending the Nisga'a is a move of positive self-representation that serves to justify a call for a provincial referendum on the Nisga'a Treaty. In calling for a referendum of the majority on an agreement that protects minority rights, the newspaper is mounting a serious attack not only on the Nisga'a treaty, but also on the very right of
Aboriginal people to negotiate binding treaties with non-Aboriginal governments. Some First Nations might be unwilling to participate in lengthy and expensive treaty negotiation processes if the final agreements were to be subjected to a vote of the majority. The conclusion of the editorial repeats its simple rhetorical strategy: "The Nisga'a didn't shrink from doing this right. Neither should Mr. Clark" (172).

**Rhetorical Argument #2: Race-based policies will gravely undermine democracy and destabilize "our" society and economy**

The issue of the right of all British Columbians of voting age to have "their" referendum on the Nisga'a Treaty became a major preoccupation of the press. In the days following the Nisga'a referendum, op/ed writers frequently appropriated the "public voice" by purporting to speak for all British Columbians on the topic of the treaty. In taking the public voice, the news media assumes its "most active campaigning role," enlisting "public legitimacy for views which the newspaper itself is expressing" (Hall et al., 1978, p. 63). In a National Post column, Barbara Yaffe asserts that "The People" are at loggerheads with the government over the accord:

Half of British Columbians don't like the Nisga'a treaty. Nearly 60% want a referendum so they can have their say. Well, that's too darn bad. Because, in the view of the federal and BC governments, the deal is done, regardless of how The People feel about it (166).

The author dismisses the arguments of proponents of the treaty as "happy talk" before concluding, "Of course, everyone wants those things." Yaffe presents herself as someone who understands what The People want. The choice of the folksy phrase "well, that's too darn bad" signals that not only does she understand what "ordinary people" want, she is one. It comes as no surprise then, that the ensuing warning is couched in common sense terms:
Anyone with a morsel of common sense knows it would be better to take the time to settle this, the first treaty in BC. The politicians must either sell the deal on its own merits or go back and address the points in the treaty vs. The People question. To do otherwise would be to cultivate a dangerously hostile climate for future treaty-making.

A binary definition of the issue – the Treaty vs. The People\textsuperscript{69} – assumes that proponents of the treaty are \textit{ipso facto} aligned against the people, that is, non-Aboriginal British Columbians. This allows for no compromise or middle ground in which the treaty may be endorsed as a pragmatic course of action that is good for all British Columbians.

In a column published the previous week in the \textit{Vancouver Sun}, the same author (Barbara Yaffe) was more specific about the nature of this dangerously polarized climate:

\begin{quote}
If that Nisga'a treaty is disrupted in any way, serious instability will surely ensue. Aboriginal people across BC will feel bitter and betrayed. They might well abandon treaty talks and revert to mounting road blockades and court challenges
\end{quote}

The stereotypical image of angry Aboriginal warriors figures in a number of news texts on the Nisga'a Treaty, but this instance is notable for a lexical choice made by the author. "Revert," suggests that Aboriginal people may be tempted to return to a \textit{former state}, where violent protest and destabilizing activities come "naturally." The implication is that treaties and other non-confrontational methods are "alien" to Aboriginal people and that, under duress, they may revert to their default disposition. In fact, historically, treaties were used to maintain relations between Aboriginal peoples long before the Europeans arrived in the Americas (RCAP, 1996e).

\textsuperscript{69}Although, given the anti-government discourse that underlies much news coverage of treaty issues, this opposition could also expressed as \textit{Big Government vs. The People}. Here, as in other news stories analyzed in this study, the rhetorical device of metonymy is employed. In effect, Treaty Negotiations are used to stand in for Government – that is, they represent all that is wrong with government intervention in the private lives of the "people."
A more ominous warning is issued in a *Province* news story. Its headline reads, "Tribal leader warns again of armed confrontation" (200). The use of the archaic "Tribal leader" coupled with the reference to "armed confrontation" recalls a much earlier time in Canada's colonial history, where white settlers lived in fear of the "tribes" who surrounded and outnumbered them. In no other news text on this topic is "Tribal Leader" used to refer to an Aboriginal leader. The article focuses on speculation by Nisga'a leader Joseph Gosnell about the consequences of the treaty being "derailed." Gosnell does indeed forecast serious repercussions in the event the treaty is not implemented, but the article provides absolutely no context for the Nisga'a leader's personal and political stake in the issue.70

In a *National Post* column, Andrew Coyne also issues a warning, predicting that "racial mistrust in the province" will result from the government's "legislative steamrolling over the protests of much of the population" to establish "a system of government on essentially racial foundations" (164). The author invokes an historical metaphor – the debate over the construction of a bridge from PEI to New Brunswick that took place in the 1990s:

> When it came time to decide whether to build a bridge connecting Prince Edward Island to New Brunswick, it was thought proper to leave it to the Islanders themselves to decide, via a plebiscite. It was only later that it occurred to someone on the mainland to ask: Wait a minute, shouldn't we be consulted, too?

In making an equation between the Nisga'a Treaty and the construction of a bridge, the article utilizes the rhetorical device of *setting up a straw target*. This argumentation ploy

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70 For over one hundred years, Gosnell and his ancestors had been petitioning the provincial and federal governments for a negotiated settlement of Nisga'a claims.
eschews the exploration of substantive arguments about an issue, instead opting to "set up facile, glib arguments ripe for rebuttal" (Hackett & Zhao, 1994, 514-515). In this case, if readers accept the author's analogy at face value, few would disagree with his conclusion that the BC electorate ought to have a vote on the treaty via a referendum. However, the Nisga'a treaty is in no way comparable to the construction of a bridge, yet the author does not even mention any differences. When BC came into confederation in 1871, the governments of Canada and BC, inherited from the British Crown, an obligation to extinguish the land rights of Aboriginal people. These obligations trace their roots back to the 1763 Royal Proclamation and other legal precedents. Yet prior to the implementation of the Nisga'a Treaty, the two senior levels of government had not fulfilled this obligation to the Nisga'a people (nor to the other First Nations of BC for that matter). Setting up a straw target puts proponents of the Nisga'a Treaty on the defensive. Not only do they have to defend the merits of the treaty, they now have to defend themselves against charges that the ratification process is undemocratic.

An editorial in the Province goes a step further arguing that only those who pay taxes ought to decide the fate of the treaty: "It's the people who should have the say – the ones who have to pay" (210). Given that many Canadians believe that Aboriginal people do not pay taxes, "the people" may be interpreted by some readers as not including Aboriginal people. Also, no mention is made of the price that the Nisga'a people have

71 In 1888, in its decision in the St. Catherine's Milling case, the Judicial Committee of the highest court in the British Empire, the Privy Council, decreed that provinces could not use Aboriginal title lands "as a source of revenue [until] the estate of the Crown is disencumbered of Aboriginal title." In spite of this definitive legal ruling, for over a century, the province of British Columbia "maintained that there was no Aboriginal title in the province or that it had already been extinguished." (BC Treaty Commission website, March 4, 2006)
paid for over a century of illegal occupation and exploitation of their traditional territory or the substantial concessions they are giving up in this treaty (which engendered significant internal opposition), including a 90% reduction in their traditional land area. The author invokes an historical metaphor – the failed Meech Lake Accord – as an example of "another" situation where the public realized it was "conned." In the case of the Meech Lake accord, the people had an opportunity to reject a set of constitutional changes that did not reflect their will.

Criticisms about the potential impact of a referendum on "minority rights" are dismissed: "So, isn't that democracy? Majority rule" (210). The editorialist speculates that "minority rights" in general may be responsible for our current social malaise: "If we held more majority votes on minority rights, maybe we wouldn't have so many darn rights in the first place – ones which divide people along class and race lines." Thus, the mere existence of minority rights is problematized. The rights of minority groups are not to be defended, but eliminated altogether.

One of those minority rights under attack in a number of news items is the right of Aboriginal people to determine their approach to the issue of ownership of property and resource distribution among their own people. In writing about the collective system of ownership reflected in the reserve system, the National Post\textsuperscript{72} concludes it "is a system based on the collective rather the individual ownership and therefore has discouraged self-reliance, individual initiative, and personal rewards for success" (168). Thus, it is Aboriginal people's failure to embrace the creed of rugged individualism and competitive capitalism that has kept "natives in their backward condition."

\textsuperscript{72} A nearly identical version of this opinion piece was published in The Northern Sentinel on November 4, 1998.
Similarly, a Vancouver Sun columnist argues that the collective disbursement of the cash portion of the treaty settlement is wrong, since "any cash redress should go to individuals, not collectives" (181). Aboriginal practices and values that emphasize sharing resources and collective responsibility, even when confined to their own communities, are constructed as a violation of two core values of Euro-Canadian society, namely, individualism and private control of capital.

According to this conception of the "majority rules" principle, minority rights are illegitimate, even unnatural, and therefore not self-sustaining. In the case of Aboriginal people, their rights are "propped up" with the considerable assistance of the "unrelenting efforts of the 'Indian Industry' – the national native leadership, the many lawyers, consultants, advisors and academics, all government-funded, who keep it going in perpetuity" (168). The impression the author of this National Post opinion piece creates is of an elitist, free-spending government that is out of touch with the interests of ordinary people. This government has created a problem ("Aboriginal people") in order to prop up a lavishly funded de facto branch of government.

Aside from the costs to the public purse of the "Indian Industry," news texts place considerable emphasis of the material costs of the Nisga'a treaty to British Columbia and its (non-Aboriginal) people. The selective use of exact numbers and dollar figures to describe Nisga'a "compensation" in many texts is a rhetorical device that suggests accuracy and precision, while creating a sense of panic in readers about the magnitude of what is being "given" to the Nisga'a. In the second sentence of the first news item published in the Vancouver Sun after the treaty referendum, the costs to non-Aboriginal British Columbians are set at "2000 square kilometres of land, and $190 million in cash,
among other benefits" (178). The National Post juxtaposes the magnitude of the cash and land "given" to the Nisga'a under the treaty with the size of the Nisga'a population:

what drives governments to give 5,500 Nisga'a, only 2000 of whom actually live in the Nass Valley, outright ownership of 1930 square kilometres of publicly-owned land (17 times the size of Vancouver) including timber, mineral rights, water rights, plus cash payments well in excess of $275 million, and wildlife resource co-management in an area five times as large again [emphasis mine] (168)

"Give," a verb used to describe Nisga'a compensation in 7 of the 19 op/eds and news stories that reference the details of the settlement, suggests that this was a one-way process, where one side received expensive "gifts," but gave up nothing in return. The legitimacy of the Nisga'a is undercut by the fact that "only 2000" people "actually" live on a tract of land 17 times larger than the largest urban centre in the province. The notion that land rights are tied to permanent settlement dates back to the earliest days of non-Aboriginal settlement in British Columbia. A Vancouver Sun columnist warns that the treaty will cost "nearly $500 million for just 6000 Nisga'a" (181). The implication is that each Nisga'a will receive a cheque for $80,000 for simply being Nisga'a, but, in fact, the purpose of the cash settlement is to compensate the Nisga'a First Nation for thousands of square kilometres of their traditional territory that non-Aboriginal people will be able to exploit in perpetuity. Yet estimates of the scale of Nisga'a land concessions are not mentioned in this article.

73 The other verbs used to describe the federal and provincial government's action in relation to the Nisga'a compensation package under the treaty include "grant" (3), "provide" (3) and "hand over," "won," "transfer" and "recognize" [Nisga'a ownership of] (1 each).

74 This resonates with historical findings discussed in Chapter 3, where it was found that Aboriginal people who did not put the land to good use - usually defined as either permanent settlement, cultivation or other "economic" activity - were characterized in the 1860s press as having no right to it.
The emphasis on the magnitude of the resources being "transferred" to the Nisga'a may create anxiety in readers about the cost of the treaty – and by implication, of any future treaties – to non-Aboriginal British Columbians. It is an especially large amount of land and cash to turn over to people who may lack the necessary financial skills to manage it properly:

It's unwise to hand over sums of cash to groups that haven't shown prowess on the accounting front. Last week it was reported the Nisga'a just a few years ago spent $1 million on irregular welfare payments (181). This is a variation of the venerable "Aboriginal people are incapable of using land" argument that was invoked as a justification for, among other things, denying Aboriginal people the right to homestead on land in 1860s British Columbia. In this case, the columnist appears to be referencing a Province news report about an entirely different issue that was grafted onto a number of "breaking" news reports about the Nisga'a referendum results: "The Kincolith Band, one of four that make up the Nisga'a tribal council, made $1 million in irregular welfare payments to its members, according to documents leaked to the National Post" (199).

This allegation is inserted towards the end of a news story about the Nisga'a referendum, entitled, "Chief confident but voters see good and bad." Initially, the relevance of the contents of this "leaked document" to a story about the Nisga'a vote is unclear (199). Towards the end of the story, however, the reporter writes that these "irregularities raise questions about the band's ability to handle its own affairs." By the next day, the Nisga'a leadership has been put on the defensive about their ability to manage their own affairs:
Executive Chairman of the Nisga'a Tribal Council "said a recent audit by the Department of Indian Affairs – showing more than $1 million of questionable welfare payments made between 1996-97 by a Nisga'a-administered program in Kincolith – does not prove the natives are incapable of running health, legal and education systems. He blamed the department [of Indian Affairs] in part for the controversy and made no apologies.

The lack of details about the nature and credibility of the allegations may predispose readers to question the Nisga'a leader's motives for denying responsibility for the Tribal Council's inappropriate conduct. Associating Aboriginal people with "welfare" and reserves with financial incompetence plays into doubts about their ability to govern themselves. These time-worn associations provide a justification for the status quo as reflected in the Indian Act and the relationship of "wardship" that it creates between the federal government and Aboriginal people.

**Case Study #3: BC Referendum on Treaty Process**

Three main rhetorical arguments support the dominant frame in news reporting on the BC treaty referendum:

1. The referendum is an essential and valid exercise in democracy because it gives the people of British Columbia a voice on important issues that affect "all of us."\(^75\)
2. The referendum design is imperfect, but there is nothing inherently wrong with referenda on this matter or other minority rights issues.
3. The will of the majority must prevail over the political manoeuvrings of minorities and other "special interest groups."

In addition to these arguments, there is a significant alternative discourse, chiefly in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Kamloops Daily News*, that constructs the referendum as a

\(^75\) Essentially, this is the position that was embraced by the Liberal government in its promotion of the plebiscite.
threat to Aboriginal people because it is a plebiscite on minority rights and/or it is so poorly constructed as to be a "sham." This line of argument lends support to a secondary news frame that will be discussed in the next section.

Rhetorical Argument #1: The referendum is an essential and valid exercise in democracy because it gives the people of British Columbia a voice on important issues that affect "all of us."

This argument is advanced most emphatically in the Province. Authorship of three of the seven op/ed pieces appearing in the newspaper is attributed to the Canadian Taxpayer's Federation (CTF) or its Aboriginal affairs branch - the Centre for Aboriginal Policy Change (CAPC). While its name may suggest that it represents the views of Aboriginal people, in fact, CAPC is dominated by the same politically partisan and business-friendly agenda as the CTF itself. In addition to the three op/ed pieces, Tanis Fiss, the director of CAPC, is featured as one of two "experts" on the treaty referendum in a lengthy news feature about the treaty referendum organized around a point-counterpoint format.

In a named business editorial published in the Province, CAPC uses a basic literary device to emphasize the value of consulting British Columbians on the treaty process: "Treaties, similar to diamonds, are likely to last forever; therefore, treaty

76 While the name of the organization suggests that it represents a broad-cross section of "ordinary" Canadians, it is actually little more than a public relations enterprise representing elite corporate interests. NewsWatch Canada describes the CTF as "ostensibly an expression of a 'grassroots' Canadian tax revolt... [it] is in fact headed by a board of lawyers, bankers, and business leaders." (Hackett et al., 185, 2000) While the group bill itself as non-partisan, it is very closely connected to the federal conservative party and also has ties to a number of provincial conservative parties.
principles are too critical not to solicit the opinions of British Columbians" (262). This simile has an in-built warning about the threat posed by treaties to the normative basis of our society – urgent attention is needed or British Columbians may be binding themselves to lasting treaties that don't reflect their "principles." This warning segues into a catalogue of the threats posed by Aboriginal people to fundamental values of British Columbians. For example, Aboriginal people and their claims are portrayed as endangering free-market capitalism and "private property rights":

Resource development has been increasingly disrupted by Aboriginal land claims over the last decade. Supposedly secure tenure rights have been thrown into question. To be fair to treaty claimants, taxpayers and commercial interests, and for investors to be attracted to BC, guarantees are needed that reduce an investor's exposure to losses due to land claims.

Lexical choices establish a strong causal connection between Aboriginal interests and harm to non-Aboriginal commercial interests. Aboriginal land claims have "disrupted" resource development, "thrown into question" secure tenure rights and caused "losses." In spite of the show of apparent concern about fairness to "treaty claimants" (along with taxpayer's and commercial interests), only the views of non-Aboriginal interests are represented. There is no reference to the vast harm caused to the economies and cultures of Aboriginal peoples by the government's historical unwillingness or inability to fulfill its legal obligation to extinguish Aboriginal land rights.

In an opinion piece by CAPC published the next day in the Province, the audience is told that anything other than delegated Aboriginal self-government will lead to 'abuses of power': "The local government model has established checks and balances, thus providing a degree of certainty and accountability. Such government, because it is delegated, is also changeable if the governance structure is not working" (263). Non-
delegated Aboriginal self-government is discredited through the mere assertion that the "local government model" is superior. No attempt is made to address the merits of any other model and no indication is given as to why full Aboriginal self-government would be incompatible with systems of "checks and balances" that ensure "a degree of certainty and accountability." Perhaps what is problematic about Aboriginal self-government for the CAPC is that it is not subject to the "checks and balances" of non-Aboriginal government. The implication is that if the federal or provincial government determines that Aboriginal self-government is "not working," that governance structure could be changed through new legislation. How well Aboriginal governance serves the interests of the aforementioned "taxpayers, commercial interests and investors" may be the determining factor in how "not working" would be defined in a delegated model. CPAC is advocating the extension of long-standing paternalistic practices into a very limited form of self-government for Aboriginal people.

In the same op/ed, a case is made that Aboriginal people unfairly benefit from taxation policies:

Taxation at all levels should be phased in for Aboriginals. As it is now, an unfair competitive advantage for Aboriginal businesses is emerging. Taxes should be set on income, meaning if people do not pay them it should be because they are poor and not because of ancestry (263)

This references the widely-held myth that all Aboriginal people are exempt from tax. In fact, the term "Aboriginal" includes Status Indians, Non-Status Indians, Métis and Inuit people. Only a subset of the Status Indian population – those who live on reserve or work for reserve-based businesses – are excused from paying tax. In British Columbia, according to the 2001 Census, approximately 39% of the province's total Aboriginal population does not have "Status" (66,475) – these individuals pay exactly the same taxes
as other residents of the province. In addition, a significant proportion of the large populations of Status Indians residing in major urban centres (according to the Canadian Census, Vancouver had an Aboriginal population of 36,855 in 2001) also are subject to the same taxation rules as other BC residents. As well, many of the Status Indians who live on reserve are unemployed or underemployed and thus have low or no incomes and hence would make negligible tax contributions even if they were subject to taxation.

Those Aboriginal people who live on reserve or work for businesses based there have very good reasons for their tax-free status, none of which are even mentioned in this article.77

The theme of Aboriginal people receiving unfair advantages based on "race" is further developed in a third Province op/ed written by the CTF (265). Two central oppositions illustrate a "clash of values" between Aboriginal people and other Canadians:

1. Private Property Rights vs. Race-based "Laws and Treaties"
2. Individual Rights vs. Group Rights

The CTF's presumption that it knows which values most British Columbians hold betrays the fact that they are taking the public voice:

One view, probably the majority, is that individual rights and individual ownership of property should reign supreme, treaties should be final, laws and treaties ought to be as racially blind as possible given certain exceptions posed by the courts. The other position is one where group rights and group definitions would instead take precedence.

77 Murray Brown, a lawyer specializing in First Nations issues, addresses some of these reasons: "Many First Nations people see the tax exemption as a right and one of the few benefits they continue to receive in return for all of the lands, resources, and culture that have been wrongly taken from them. In addition, one sovereign nation cannot tax another. First Nations were regarded historically as sovereign nations. Finally, representatives of the Crown historically made specific promises that First Nations would never be taxed" (opinion piece by Brown in Kahtou, May 02, p. 19).
In this view, Aboriginal people constitute a threat to the twin values of individualism and private property ownership. A warning specifies the grim consequences of the triumph of Aboriginal values for the rest of us:

That would splinter BC into a multiplicity of miniature nation-states, some based on race, some not, with selected governments forever supported by other taxpayers who have little or no say in the affairs of such racially-based territories. In this vision of the brave new post-treaty world, the costs of financing "racist" and undemocratic Aboriginal regimes would be borne by "other taxpayers."

Hard news stories in the *Province*, the *Abbotsford Times* and the *Chilliwack Times* also lend support to the argument that the referendum is an essential and valid exercise in democracy discourse. The three news stories in the *Abbotsford Times* represent the positions taken by BC's Liberal government, while largely excluding other voices on the treaty referendum. The first article begins by describing rank and file opposition within BC's Anglican Church to the critical position taken by the church's bishops on the referendum (273). Parishioners who object to the Church's attempt to "dictate" how they vote are quoted. Church leaders are portrayed as attempting to stifle the right to freedom of speech of local churches and individual congregation members. The last third of the article summarizes the views of Abbotsford MLA John Van Dongen: "The importance of a referendum, he explained, is to engage "all people in BC" in discussion. That way "it can help to revitalize and move forward" treaty negotiations."

No mention is made of persistent criticisms of the referendum's design and no Aboriginal voices are cited. In fact, it is left to the local MLA to represent, and dismiss, the concerns of Aboriginal people themselves: "The First Nations people, he said, believe
that the referendum is an infringement on their minority rights. However, 'it's certainly not the case. They will not be impacted (273)."

The second news story in the Abbotsford Times, entitled "Les says treaty will supply guidance," provides a forum for the views of other pro-referendum government spokespeople such as Chilliwack MLA John Les and Attorney-General Geoff Plant (274). In the lead paragraph, past treaty negotiations are discredited by the author, who writes:

It has now been close to a decade since most Lower Mainland native bands first embarked upon the provincial treaty-making process. None to date have successfully completed negotiations leading to a finalized agreement in principle. In fact, some have given up along the way. And some have been assigned to the back burner without their consent, including Stó:lō Nation, representing 21 bands from Langley to Yale. Everyone agrees the process is stalled for Stó:lō Nation.

Elsewhere, negotiations are described as proceeding at a "painfully slow pace." Other lexical choices such as "given up," "stalled," "placed on the backburner" contribute to an impression of the current treaty process as unworkable and doomed to failure. This serves as a justification for the treaty referendum, described as a "tool of direct democracy," that will, in the words of BC's Attorney-General "engage BC in a conversation about a very important subject – treaties." Far from taking the Attorney-General to task for this highly contestable, and contested, assertion, the newspaper lauds the Liberals for "making good on an election promise."

In one news story, an equation is made between the unworkable treaty process and the current state of the local First Nation, the Stó:lō. Exclusive responsibility for the treaty process being "stalled" in the Fraser Valley is attributed exclusively to the Stó:lō, not to the other two parties to the negotiations:
"It's fair to say negotiations have been stalled and will be stalled until Stó:lō Nation figures out their leadership position...I think that's [Stó:lō politics] got all the earmarks of dysfunction and political controversy," he [John Les] said (274)

The association of the local First Nation with "dysfunction" plays into old stereotypes of incompetent reserve governments.

The third news story in the *Abbotsford Times*, entitled "Les says referendum is good for democracy," reports on the Chilliwack-Sumas MLA John Les "after one year on the job" (275). Les lauds the treaty referendum for generating "public discussion" and engaging the "average British Columbian." Only Les's views are presented and the notion that the treaty referendum is a healthy exercise in democracy goes unchallenged.

Like the news coverage in its sister publication in Abbotsford, the two items in the *Chilliwack Times*, one hard news story and one op/ed, give prominence to the views of local government representatives and strongly support the dominant frame. In "It's up to the people now," John Les is given space to disparage the current treaty process: "I think they're [people] watching with growing chagrin as half a billion dollars is frittered away and there's no treaties to show for it...if we continue along, we're going to run out of money" (276). At the end of the news report, Les characterizes anyone who plans to vote "no" in the referendum as apathetic about important issues:

Les said the government is hoping everyone will vote yes on the eight questions. "If you vote no that also sends a message," Les said. That would tell the government people don't care about proper compensation, phasing out of tax exemptions and other issues, he said.

Les's derogation of voters who may have the temerity to vote against the government's position on treaty "principles" is not countered by any other spokespeople on the issue. While this is ostensibly a news story by a reporter and not an opinion piece by a
politician, no sources other than Les are referenced, the reporter does not challenge any of the local politician's views, and makes no attempt to contextualize any of his claims. For example, he never mentions the numerous criticisms of the design of the referendum questions or the growing opposition to a referendum on "minority rights."

The other item in the Chilliwack Times, an opinion piece by the local MLA, John Les, features many of the same arguments that are advanced in the previous story (277). No news stories featuring alternative views on the referendum were published in the two Fraser Valley newspapers during the period of this study.

Rhetorical Argument #2: The referendum design is imperfect, but there is nothing inherently wrong with referenda on this matter or other minority rights issues.

While the first rhetorical argument effectively embraces the provincial government's pro-referendum position, this line of argument offers a qualified endorsement of the treaty referendum. This position is articulated in op/ed pieces in the Vancouver Sun and Province. The headline for the only editorial in the Vancouver Sun on the treaty referendum reads, "Send in your ballot, answered or not: Referendum a poor vehicle but the issues deserve our attention" (246). While criticizing the methodology underlying the construction of the referendum questions, the newspaper advocates that people participate in the referendum since the "principles involved are too critical, and they deserve full public attention." In the editorial, the views of BC's Attorney-General and the CTF are referenced:

Attorney-General Geoff Plant is urging voters to ignore all of the "inflammatory rhetoric" from what he calls "special interest groups" opposed to the referendum. He wants us to participate. The BC Taxpayer's Federation is also urging voters to fill in their ballots because the principles guiding treaty negotiations are too important to be left up to various elites.
The repetition of the verb "urge" in consecutive sentences establishes the high priority that both the provincial government and the CTF attach to referendum participation. As with discourse on the Nisga’a treaty, references to "special interest groups" and "various elites" create the impression that a small influential minority is attempting to dictate the terms of the treaty process to the majority of British Columbians. Boycotting the referendum is dismissed as a viable option since "those who ignore the treaty process will too easily be dismissed by same as uninterested in it." While conceding that the referendum has shortcomings, this editorial gives the provincial government the benefit of the doubt: "Still, if this referendum process does, as Mr. Plant claims it will, legitimize the treaty-making process and give it a slight nudge forward, some good may come of it."

The final sentence affirms the newspaper’s commitment to treaties: "Treaties are the only thing that will allow all of us to put a century of abuse and tragedy well behind us" (246). This may be seen as a move of positive self-representation on the part of the writer – that is, while the newspaper approves of the treaty referendum, it also recognizes that there is a real need to negotiate treaties with Aboriginal people. Since there are no other references to "abuse" or "tragedy" in this article, exactly what the editor is talking about or including is unknown. Readers may assume that the writer is alluding to the residential school system, which endured for about 130 years, or perhaps the paternalistic Indian Act, which was passed in 1876. The vagueness of this reference serves to de-contextualize race relations in British Columbia and detach an undisclosed century of "abuse" and "tragedy" from any sense of culpability. The editor may as well be writing about the destruction and suffering caused by a natural disaster, such as a hurricane or tsunami, a tragic event, about which not much was known and nothing could be done.
Also, the use of "all of us" is significant – it is the only time this expression is used – the rest of the article is directed to "the voters," "British Columbians," "us," "the public" and "people." It is tacit acknowledgement that, while the rest of the editorial was directed to non-Aboriginal British Columbians, Aboriginal people are included in the final prescription. Finally other lexical choices in this sentence are significant. The use of the verb "legitimize" signifies that the treaty-making process, as it is currently configured, lacks legitimacy. Since there is no discussion of what about the treaty-making process is illegitimate and no supporting evidence is offered, this editorial plays into common sense assumptions about treaties and Aboriginal people. That is, since everyone knows that the treaty-making process is wasteful and ineffective, there is no need to engage the audience in a discussion about specific aspects of the current treaty process.

Vaughn Palmer, in a column published in the same newspaper a week later, describes the referendum as a "sham," but defends it against charges that it is "dangerous." The columnist argues that the negotiating principles in the treaty referendum ought not to cause alarm since they simply represent an extension of the previous NDP government's policies: "If people take the Liberal's advice, which is to vote "yes" on the foregoing seven principles for negotiation, they will also be embracing positions maintained by the NDP during its years at the bargaining table" (256).

Palmer concedes that the NDP did not embrace one of the principles advocated by the current government: "Aboriginal self-government should have the characteristics of local government, with powers delegated from Canada and BC" (256). However, this is dismissed as a "symbolic departure" from the previous government's bargaining position. The description of the imposition of a delegated version of self-government on treaty
negotiations as "symbolic" is problematic since many Aboriginal organizations have consistently called for non-delegated and constitutionally-entrenched self-government for Aboriginal people.

Finally, the author sidesteps two of the main issues that were addressed in alternative discourse on this issue:

1. The problematic nature of participating in a referendum in which the questions are constructed in such a way as to predispose respondents to certain answers, and
2. The ethical implications, from a human rights perspective, of holding a referendum on "minority rights" (256).

The latter issue is mentioned in a column in the Province, but quickly dismissed as a "red herring":

Incidentally, one thing that the referendum is not is an attempt to deal with "rights," as claimed by my church, the Anglicans, who are really trying to suck up to natives on the residential schools issue that threatens to bankrupt them (267)

This is another example of setting up *a straw target*. Here, an argument is discredited merely by asserting that it is not true and attributing it to an opponent that is simultaneously derogated. The argument against having referenda on minority rights is discredited by its mere association with a religious organization that is constructed as undignified in its pursuit of self-interest. While this news text attributes this argument solely to the Anglican Church, in fact, a broad cross-section of churches, trade unions, social service organizations and public figures advocated boycotting the referendum because it was seen as a vote on minority rights.

Adding to the confusion, an editorialist in the same newspaper argues that the act of supporting the referendum boycott, in itself, negates a person's right to express any views on treaty issues:
If you don't vote or if you decide to spoil your treaty ballot, please keep your mouth shut if you don't like the results. It is ironic how those who spoil their ballots or don't vote often have the most to say. If you spoil your ballot, it isn't counted. You're not heard (269).

In other words, those who don't participate in this democratic exercise ought not to have a voice on the issue. The second sentence derogates anyone who opts to boycott the referendum, portraying them as "loudmouths" and "crybabies." The Province treats this vote as if it were no different from any other. The underlying logic is that responsible citizens exercise their democratic rights, while those who opt not to participate in "democratic exercises" forfeit their right to self-expression. As in a number of other news texts, this editorial sidesteps flaws in the referendum design and ignores ethical questions arising from holding a referendum on minority rights.

Rhetorical Argument #3: The will of the majority must prevail over the political manoeuvrings of minorities and other "special interest groups."

This argument anchors the two op/ed pieces published in the National Post. The central argument in "Gordon Campbell v. BC's bien pensants" is that elite groups in BC society are attempting to derail an important and legitimate exercise in democracy. These elites include

those so wonderfully described by former Vancouver Sun columnist Denny Boyd as "Higher Purpose People." These are the folks who know better than you and me on just about everything. They talk to each other on the Peoples Network of Canada, and view with alarm from pulpit, university and punditry pedestals the uninformed thoughts of the great unwashed (231).

Lexical choices in this passage establish a binary opposition between "us" and "them." The use of the phrase, "folks who know better than you and me on just about everything," aligns the author with "the people" against "know-it-alls" such as the CBC, church clergy,
university professors and, what are described elsewhere in the article as "a sympathetic media." Not only are these people misinforming British Columbians about the referendum, they are also responsible for "the Indian problem" to begin with:

Among other beliefs of the Higher Purpose People is that they know what is best for Indians. Of course, the estate of Indians in Canada is directly chargeable to the HPPs of the last century; but never mind, they'll get it right this time, and without the ignorant input of the public, thank you. This group and their flocks will vote No and propagandize mightily to the end.

This column conflates significant differences within the ranks of those opposing the treaty referendum, and constructs them as an easy target for ridicule and contempt. Actors as diverse as the BC Federation of Labour, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Anglican Church, the Council of Senior Citizens, the David Suzuki Foundation and Thomas Berger are portrayed as a single monolithic entity that is pitted against "the public" (231). No evidence or explanation is provided for vague and contentious claims, such as the attribution of responsibility for the current "estate of Indians" to HPP. Nor is the substance of any anti-referendum arguments addressed anywhere in the column.

The author not only conflates diverse individuals and groups in his condemnation of referendum opponents, he also utilizes the rhetorical ploy of claiming to have intimate knowledge of how "they" think. Those opposed to the referendum are constructed as contemptuous of the public's intelligence - they regard the public's views as "ignorant" and "uninformed" and ascribe "evil" motivations to them: "There is a darker side to this. The hidden premise of the HPPs is that British Columbians are a bunch of racist rednecks who will not treat their fellow human beings fairly." The common sense arguments presented in this column are used to support one simple and inevitable conclusion. The only reasonable course of action for "ordinary citizens" is to reject the specious
arguments of elitist referendum opponents and "consider the questions carefully and cast their vote" in the plebiscite.

The other op/ed piece in the National Post, "British Columbia's clerics and sheep," takes a similar tact, casting the referendum debate as a contest between the views of overbearing elite groups and those of "ordinary British Columbians" (234). The editorial begins with an attack on Reverend Tony Plomp of the Presbyterian Church for describing the referendum as a vote of a "mostly uniformed majority" on the rights of a minority "with rightful claims." The Reverend's view that the public possesses inadequate information about the history and context of treaties is described as "one of the most arrogant condemnations of voters' intelligence in history." In spite of the Reverend's emphasis on the public's lack of education about treaty matters, the editorial constructs him as attacking voter's "intelligence." Other religious organizations are also derided for voicing their views on the issue. The United Church of Canada "piped up with its objections." The newspaper expresses its relief that the views of church groups are not affecting the government's resolve: "Fortunately, Gordon Campbell, the Premier, recognizes this clerical mischief for what it is, and is giving it short shrift."

As a justification for the referendum, the editorial cites the Nisga'a Treaty, which was ratified in 1998: "The Nisga'a Treaty, which was imposed by Ottawa, Victoria and native bands on non-natives in northern BC, set off a controversy that has led to the current referendum" (234). Describing a treaty that involved the return to a First Nation of a tiny fraction of their traditional land - one that was ratified after many years of negotiation by duly elected provincial and federal governments - as an arrangement that was "imposed" on non-Aboriginal people by government and "native bands," is, at best,
misleading. This racialized assessment of the Nisga'a Treaty segues into a series of dramatic threats and warnings:

That treaty took away the rights of non-natives living or owning property in the new treaty lands...Since nearly every square kilometre of the province is subject to a land claim, almost every British Columbian has a direct legitimate interest in contributing to the debate over how such rights may or may not be similarly circumscribed in future.

The threat to "non-natives" is clear, the principle of identical treatment has been violated and "property rights" have been imperilled. A technique of exaggeration is employed to create the sense that all non-Aboriginal people are at risk, no matter where they live.78

Now that the scale of risk to non-native rights has been established, the treaty referendum may be recast as a vote on the protection of majority rights from a very real threat: "Far from subjecting the rights of the minority to the whim of the majority, the referendum gives every citizen in British Columbia a say in the processes by which their rights may be denied." Thus, treaties, by their very nature, are constructed as a threat to one of the most fundamental values of non-Aboriginal society – individual civil rights.

Case Study #4: Death of a Child under Aboriginal Care

News texts on this topic are distinguished from those associated with the other cases by the complete absence of any op/ed pieces. As a result, news discourse is not organized around clearly articulated rhetorical arguments, but is best understood through

78While this news text creates the impression that an individual family's fee simple private property will be negotiated away through treaties, in fact, only Crown lands will be transferred under treaties negotiated through the BC treaty process. The BC Treaty Commission has always maintained that the treaty process will be "guided by the principle that private property (fee simple land) is not on the negotiation table, except on a willing-buyer, willing-seller basis" (BC Treaty Commission, May 1, 2006).
an analysis of other semantic structures. The 23 hard news stories that were published reflected two main cultural scripts, both of which support the dominant frame.

Initially, news discourse on this case draws on a script that has populated dominant discourse about Aboriginal people for many years, that of the routine Aboriginal crime story. This script invokes the stereotype of Aboriginal people as victims – in this case, "of themselves." Two days after the story broke, the initial script is subsumed by a second that has emerged in recent years – that of a tragedy caused by the incompetence of an Aboriginal child welfare agency. This script resonates with a pair of emergent stereotypes of Aboriginal people identified in Chapter 3.

News coverage of this case is noteworthy for two reasons. First, this story garnered coverage at the local and provincial levels and even on the national stage. During the two weeks after the discovery of the child's body, 14 news items on the topic were published in the two Vancouver daily newspapers and two articles appeared in The National Post. In addition, seven articles appeared in three Fraser Valley community newspapers in the four weeks of coverage under analysis. The intensity of this reportage needs to be seen in the context of the scale of risk that vulnerable children face in Canada – every year, hundreds of children under the care of, or receiving services from, provincial child welfare authorities die in this country and many thousands more are injured. For example, a review conducted by a provincial court judge in British Columbia in 2006 found that, over a 6½-year period, 243 children either under the care of or receiving services from the provincial children's ministry, died from a variety of causes, including accident, suicide and homicide (Hughes, 2006, p. 130). Regrettably, the death
of a child involved with a child welfare authority is not unusual; yet only select cases ever receive sustained attention from the news media.

Second, news about this case is highly racialized – race is assigned to all Aboriginal actors with any connection to the daughter, the father, the family, the community and the child welfare agency. On the other hand, the ethnicity or race of non-Aboriginal actors, is generally not mentioned. Approximately half (11 of 23) of the headlines of the news texts on this topic established an Aboriginal connection to this tragedy. These signifiers include references to the locale of the crime (First Nation, reserve, Indian band, band, native community), the Aboriginal child welfare agency and actors associated with the local First Nation (Native leader, Chief, Stó:lō leaders). The body of all but one news text associates this story with Aboriginality.

Script #1: Routine Aboriginal Crime Story

The crime story has been described as the quintessential news story. Hall et al. (1978) suggest that crime is news "because its treatment evokes threats to, but also reaffirms, the consensual morality of the society" (p. 66). Not all crimes draw the scrutiny of the news media, only those that have certain defining and dramatic characteristics. One of those defining features, especially in the context of Canada's "increasingly, heterogeneous society" is "interracial or intercultural" (Henry & Tator, 2002, p. 163). News coverage of crime involving Aboriginal people or other racial or ethnic minorities, has been noted to exhibit certain double standards. For example, a crime committed by white person is "framed as individual aberration while a black offender is defined as typical of the community at large" (Fleras, A. & Kunz, J. L., 2001, p. 53). A similar
pattern has been found for Aboriginal people who are predominantly associated with conflict in new reports (Grenier, 1992).

In addition to race and culture, class also figures prominently in many crime stories. The media's fascination with the role played by race and class in crime reporting is not surprising given the "tendency" to "police crimes associated with the poor and with racial minority groups" (Jiwani, 2006, p. 47). News reports about crimes committed on reserves meet both of these criteria as many reserves endure conditions of extreme poverty.

This story first broke in the *Province* with the publication of "Tot's body found near Mission" on September 24, 2002, three days after the girl's body was found (307). This story quickly establishes the Aboriginality of the victim - "a member of the Lakahahmen native band" - and the locale - "on the reserve" - where the body was found. Stereotypical elements of a crime story are present, including a sense of mystery - "Mission RCMP are investigating the mysterious death of a toddler"; gruesome clichés - "body was found...in a shallow grave;" emotional testimonials to the dramatic impact of the death on the victim's kin - "It is definitely devastating;" and finally, the authoritative voice of the police who are "following a number of leads." Many of these details are repeated in other articles during the first three days of coverage of the story. The reference to the child's body being discovered "in a shallow grave" is included in more than half of the news texts on this issue (12/23). Even before the death is described as a homicide, the police are paraphrased as not having "rule[d] out foul play."

The next day, the crime story continues to unfold in the pages of the *National Post* and *Vancouver Sun*. The father is now in custody, after having "turned himself in" to
police in Alberta. The headline in the *Vancouver Sun* emphasizes the impact on the Aboriginal community: "Baby's death stuns native community: Two-year-old's body found but cause of death not revealed" (300). The use of "baby" in the headline as opposed to descriptors in other articles such as "tot," "toddler," "child" or "girl," heightens the tragedy by maximizing the helplessness of the victim. This article also contradicts the earlier *Province* assertion that the child was a member of the local First Nation: "Neither the girl nor her father were Lakahahmen band members."

On September 26, the *Vancouver Sun* reported that the father had been "charged" in his daughter's death and the story assumed all the dimensions of an Aboriginal crime story (301). This story also delves into the impact of this crime on non-Aboriginal members of the community: "The band rents mobile homes to non-natives on the reserve in a site called Nicomin Village Park and many who live there said they were shocked by the girl's death." Presumably, the band rents these homes to anyone who wants to rent them, regardless of whether they are Aboriginal or not. Yet this is one of the few times the ethnicity of anyone other than Aboriginal actors is signified. The newspaper interviews a local non-Aboriginal resident who expresses concern for the safety of her children. The implication is that the violence that has occurred, so "endemic" to Aboriginal communities, becomes even more newsworthy when it is not only Aboriginal people who are affected.

*Script #2: Tragedy caused by the incompetence of an Aboriginal child welfare agency*

Two days after the first news item was published in the *Province*, this crime story has a new twist – there is more than one guilty party implicated. Not only is the father culpable for what happened to his daughter, a *Province* headline hints that others also
bear responsibility: "Did baby Chastity have to die?: 'She was a beautiful little child, and if the people responsible for her could have done more to help her, she'd be alive today'" (309). In this story, an anonymous resident of the reserve "and other members of the Stó:lō Nation" are "raising questions about why the Stó:lō child and family service agency Xyolhemeylh, which had concerns about the little girl, didn't do more to save her life."

From this point forward, a new discourse emerges in news coverage of this story – that of an incompetent, possibly corrupt, Aboriginal child welfare agency failing to protect one of its own. Apparently, the Province newspaper had already begun its own investigation focusing, not on the role of the father charged by the RCMP, but on Xyolhemeylh:

"We found a little girl that passed away. As a result of the investigation we have laid a charge in reference to improperly interfering with human remains," Robinson said. "That's what I'm telling you at this time." But a Province investigation has found that Chastity's misery in the Lakahahmen home was an open secret on reserve. Neighbours say that Shawn Mackinaw was her father and that he arrived several months ago from Alberta to visit his uncle, who was living with a Lakahahmen band member who herself has two young children. Brandy, the woman with whom Shawn Mackinaw was staying with, is the niece of Lakahahmen Chief Susan McKamey, who told the Province yesterday: "There were never any questions raised about the health of the child." But The Province has learned that neighbours were very concerned about the child's well-being, and as a result of their calls, the Stó:lō agency Xyolhemeylh was called in to examine the girl. [emphasis mine] (309)

The use of the cliché "open secret" suggests that if most residents of the community were aware that something was amiss in the child's home, then surely the Aboriginal child welfare agency, whose mandate requires it to be fully informed about the family circumstances of their charges, ought to know. The repetition of the conjunction "but" signals that the newspaper is contesting, in the first instance, the RCMP's sole attribution
of responsibility to an individual. Secondly, it casts doubt on the Chief’s denial that the First Nation had any reason to be concerned about the safety of the girl. The mention, in the same sentence, of the Chief’s kinship with someone living in the house of the accused, a commonplace occurrence in a small community of large extended families, serves to undercut her credibility. After all, she cannot be objective if she is so closely connected to the people involved in this crime.

The rest of the article focuses on questions about the conduct of the First Nation and the Aboriginal child welfare agency:

[Xyolhemeylh Manager] Ludeman insisted Chief McKamey will not be involved in the internal review of what led to Chastity's death. But neighbours say Xyolhemeylh should have probed deeper into Chastity's plight and not sent her back to the home on the Lakahahmen reserve. [emphasis mine] (309)

The third usage of "But" signals that the newspaper is raising questions about the veracity of statements made by Aboriginal officials. Unnamed neighbours, whose opinions have already been heavily paraphrased, are now being constructed as child protection experts, second-guessing the actions of the Aboriginal child welfare agency. Since no representative of the local First Nation or the child welfare agency is referenced, effectively, anonymous "neighbours" are given the last word on the matter.

The newspaper also affords space to Stó:lō leaders who are critical of the Stó:lō Nation and of Xyolhemeylh itself. Soowahlie Chief Doug Kelly alleges that the current Stó:lō Nation Grand Chief "installed himself in office" and that Xyolhemeylh is not maintaining "professional standards" (309). Kelly's choice of words about the Stó:lō leader suggest that his criticisms may be related to a larger political dispute within the Stó:lō Nation itself. Yet the news story does not refer to the very public schism that was
occurring in the Stó:lō Nation at the time and thus provides no meaningful context for the criticisms of Xyolhemeylh by opponents of the current Stó:lō Nation administration.  

The article concludes with a reference to the findings of an "independent evaluation" of Xyolhemeylh two years previous that concluded that

of 41 child protection and guardianship files reviewed, "72.3 per cent did not have a plan of care on file and 83%, or 24 files, did not have an immediate safety assessment on file...or even a risk assessment." Last year, Xyolhemeylh received $3.3 million in funding from federal Indian Affairs and $6.9 million from Victoria (309)

The story would have been more informative for readers if these figures had been placed in the context of the nature of child protection work generally. Low completion rate for risk assessments may be more attributable to high caseloads that result from chronic under funding than to the incompetence of individual workers or agencies. All child protection social workers working for the provincial ministry interviewed in a recent study indicated that their excessive workload had "a major impact on the quality of their practice" (Walmsley, 2006, p. 67). They reported caseloads ranging from 40 to 92 – the Child Welfare League of America recommends a caseload of 20. The impact of excessive caseloads is "superficial intervention" and a "reactive" style of practice that typically precludes having the time to do risk assessments. Child protection workers for Aboriginal agencies face additional pressures:

79 Of the eight articles in the Vancouver Sun, Province, Abbotsford Times and Chilliwack Times, that reference criticisms of Xyolhemeylh by internal opponents of the current Stó:lō Nation administration, only two make even the slightest reference to the political division in the nation. The headline for one article implies that Stó:lō leadership as a whole is advocating a review of the agency: "Child suffers injuries 2 months before death: Stó:lō leaders call for review into native child welfare agency" (303). No mention is made in the body of this article of any dissension within the Stó:lō Nation, although in reference to those leaders calling for a review, a qualifier is added: "Some Stó:lō Nation leaders said."
Another pressure confronting Aboriginal organizations is the BC MCFD's [Ministry of Children and Family Development] "off-loading" of Aboriginal youth onto an Aboriginal child welfare organization. Previously these youth were in the care of MCFD, but they are now being returned to Aboriginal communities... This trend can be viewed positively as recognizing the responsibility of the Aboriginal community to care for its children. At the same time, when children have particular needs but the Aboriginal community does not have the services to meet them, then this trend creates a condition of "responsibility without resources" (Walmsley, p. 60).

In the absence of any context for these figures, some readers – especially those unfamiliar with the nature of child protection work in British Columbia – may regard this as conclusive evidence of Xyolhemeylh's incompetence. By immediately following this damning evaluation of Xyolhemeylh's performance with a reference to the amount of funding received by the agency, the newspaper reinforces a stereotype of Aboriginal people and institutions squandering vast sums of government money (309). References to the amount of government funding of the agency are included in other articles on this story in this newspaper and in the Vancouver Sun. Presumably in keeping with the theme of Aboriginal people "wasting" large sums of money, an article in the Province includes a reference to the large gas and oil royalties received by members of the deceased girl's father's First Nation: "Mackinaw, 21, is a member of the wealthy Alberta Ermineskin band, whose members receive several thousand dollars in oil and gas royalties when they turn 21" (310). How these details are relevant to this story is open to conjecture. One "common sense" implication is that the combination of young Aboriginal men and large sums of money is bound to lead to "trouble."

The need for a review of Xyolhemeylh became a focus of a number of news stories. From the outset, Xyolhemeylh declared that an independent review would be conducted of the handling of this particular case as part of the standard procedure in any
case involving the death of a child under care. However, a number of news texts imply that the entire program is suspect and subject to review. Consider the four headlines that reference the planned review (Table 22).

Table 22: Headlines Referencing "Review" of Xyolhemeylh Agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tot's death sparks review of native child agency:</td>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>October 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could more have been done to save her life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External child agency review will be done:</td>
<td>Mission City</td>
<td>October 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakakahmen First Nation Chief Susan McKamey assured review of</td>
<td>Record</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xyolhemeylh will be conducted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chassidy's death sparks program review</td>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>October 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death leads to review: But not of Xyolhemeylh program</td>
<td>Chilliwack Times</td>
<td>October 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three of the four headlines erroneously state that the agency itself or its child protection program are to be scrutinized. Unfortunately, the death or serious injury of a child under the care of a child welfare authority in British Columbia, or in Canada for that matter, is not a rare event. It is one thing to argue that the death or serious injury of a child under care justifies a review of those procedures followed in that particular case and quite another to suggest that an overall program review ought to be conducted. In news stories about the death of this child, newspapers appeared to be advocating just that.

News discourse about the death of Chassidy Whitford is steeped in the public idiom about Aboriginal people. News texts draw upon familiar scripts about the behaviour of Aboriginal people, are couched in old stereotypes that associate them and their communities with violence, crime and dysfunction, and construct an Aboriginal child welfare agency as a bastion of incompetence and waste. These features of news discourse about a single child welfare case lead to a common sense conclusion:
Aboriginal people are not ready to assume responsibility for their own programs in child welfare and education. Perhaps the unwritten corollary to this is that they are certainly not ready for self-government.

Chapter Summary

This chapter furnishes an examination of the ways in which the dominant news frame and its underlying discourse and semantic structures were reflected in news texts. News coverage of these four cases was organized around several rhetorical arguments and scripts. These rhetorical arguments present readers with definitions of issues and solutions that are steeped in dominance.

The Aboriginal people as a threat frame is most strongly reflected in news discourse about two attempts by separate Aboriginal child welfare agencies to repatriate Aboriginal children from non-Aboriginal adoptive or foster families. News coverage is anchored in three central rhetorical arguments:

1. First Nations are bullying kind-hearted white foster or adoptive parents,
2. Aboriginal communities and families are "unable" or "unready" to care for their own children, and
3. "Our" governments are implementing race-based rights for Aboriginal people.

As with the repatriation issue, news coverage of the Nisga'a Treaty is highly racialized and organized around the threat that Aboriginal people pose to Euro-Canadian values."

Discourse orbits two related rhetorical arguments:

1. "Our" government is colluding with First Nations to impose race-based governments on British Columbians, and
2. Race-based policies will gravely undermine democracy and destabilize "our" society and economy.
One of the major themes in news discourse about the provincial treaty referendum is that all British Columbians have a right and an obligation, as individual citizens, to exercise their democratic franchise by voting in the referendum. Three rhetorical arguments support the dominant frame in news reporting on the BC treaty referendum:

1. The referendum is an essential and valid exercise in democracy because it gives the people of British Columbia a voice on important issues that affect "all of us";
2. The referendum design is imperfect, but there is nothing inherently wrong with referenda on this matter or other minority rights issues; and
3. The will of the majority must prevail over the political manoeuvrings of minorities and other "special interest groups."

News texts about the death of a child under the care of an Aboriginal child welfare agency are distinguished from those associated with the other cases by the absence of any op/ed pieces. As a result, news discourse is not organized around clearly articulated rhetorical arguments and is best understood through the analysis of other semantic structures. The 23 hard news stories that were published reflect two main cultural scripts, both of which lent support to the dominant frame:

1. Routine Aboriginal crime story, and
2. Tragedy caused by the incompetence of an Aboriginal child welfare agency.

Initially, news discourse on this case draws on a script that has populated dominant discourse about Aboriginal people for many years, that of the routine Aboriginal crime story. This script invokes the stereotype of Aboriginal people as victim – in this case, "of themselves." Eventually, the initial script is subsumed by a second – that of a tragedy caused by the incompetence of an Aboriginal child welfare agency. This script is built around a pair of emergent stereotypes of Aboriginal people identified in Chapter 2.
While these four case studies underline the dominance of certain frames and associated argumentative strategies, evidence of significant secondary discourse was found. The next chapter focuses on two main secondary news frames.
CHAPTER 7: SECONDARY FRAMES

Introduction

While the *Aboriginal people as a threat* frame was largely uncontested in two cases, media coverage of the Nisga’a Treaty and the BC Treaty Referendum afforded some space for minority discourses. One alternative news frame, reflected in some *Globe & Mail* coverage of the Nisga’a Treaty, is that these issues are *valid topics for public debate*, with persuasive arguments to be made on both sides of the issue. In looking at news discourse about the first Gulf War, Hackett and Zhao (1994), identify the *Legitimate Controversy Frame* as one where core journalistic principles such as balance, neutrality and detachment hold sway. In effect, the news media offer the public a round-table where a wide range of positions may be presented and debated.

A second alternative frame, the *Minority rights frame*, emerges in news coverage of the Treaty Referendum in the *Kamloops Daily News, Globe and Mail*, and to a lesser degree, in the *Vancouver Sun* and *National Post*. This frame reflects a liberal-pluralist conception of democracy in which the rights of minority groups are strongly promoted and defended.
Valid Topic for Public Debate Frame

While the one editorial in the Globe and Mail strongly supports the dominant frame, hard news coverage in the paper tends to treat the Nisga'a Treaty as a legitimate topic of public debate. For example, in "Treaty expanding Nisga'a land wins overwhelming approval" (169), arguments from both supporters and detractors of the treaty are given space. While this news story samples the views of non-Aboriginal critics of the treaty such as the federal Reform Party and the provincial Liberal Party, the voices of a wide range of Nisga'a actors are also incorporated, including some who do not support the treaty.

While other breaking news stories on the Nisga'a referendum on the treaty equated the delay in the vote count with possible voting irregularities, this news story presents a different explanation: "Final returns were delayed by an unexpectedly large turnout of unregistered votes who had to have their credentials carefully checked before their ballots were counted (169)." Predictably, the Nisga'a voted "strongly in favour" of the treaty and only the actual vote results are mentioned in this article: "as many as 75 per cent supported the comprehensive, 252-page treaty." This contrasts sharply with coverage in the Vancouver Sun, which minimizes the level of Nisga'a support for the treaty. A number of reports in this newspaper fail even to mention the actual vote, opting instead to publish journalists' calculations of what percentage of "eligible voters" cast a vote in favour of the treaty as opposed to the percentage of actual voters who voted in favour.

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80 However, the construction of the headline signifies that the article represents the point-of-view of non-Aboriginal people. Given that the Nisga'a surrendered their claim to 92% of their traditional territory in the treaty, if the headline were re-written from a Nisga'a perspective, it might read something like "Treating shrinking Nisga'a land wins overwhelming approval" or "Treaty partially restores Nisga'a land base."
This news story also furnishes details about the context of the Nisga'a treaty negotiation process, which are either ignored or minimized in news coverage in other newspapers. For example, while most news reports focus on how much land is being "given" to the Nisga'a under the treaty (e.g., "2000 square kilometres" or "17 times the size of the City of Vancouver"), this article juxtaposes the size of the Nisga'a land settlement negotiated under the treaty with the magnitude of their traditional territory. The report puts the figure at "10 times the area they receive under the treaty" (169).

While the dominant discourse offers to audiences two basic interpretive choices on the topic – the treaty gives Aboriginal people a massive parcel of land or it expands Nisga'a territory, secondary discourse provides readers with an alternative – the treaty represents a significant compromise on the part of the Nisga'a.

The article concludes by hinting that other Aboriginal peoples in the province may have legitimate grounds for grievances with the provincial government: "BC is the only province in Canada where the vast majority of natives were shunted onto reserves without treaties" (169). Lexical choices in this one sentence define the issue as one affecting more than just the Nisga'a people ("the vast majority of natives" in BC), name the injustice ("shunted onto reserves without treaties") and single out the jurisdiction of BC as one that has been particularly unfair to Aboriginal people. This article hints that perhaps an even more radical discourse about Aboriginal rights is possible, namely that historical issues such as racism and colonialism are connected to the present situation and require redress.
Minority Rights Frame

All five news texts on the BC treaty referendum in the Globe and Mail provide some support for this frame. However, the Minority rights frame is most strongly reflected in news coverage of the referendum in the Kamloops Daily News. News coverage in this daily newspaper is remarkable for three reasons. First, for the high level of coverage this story is afforded. In the six-week period after the referendum ballots were mailed to British Columbians, 16 hard news stories and four op/ed pieces were published that had the referendum as their primary topic. During this same period, nine news items that had the referendum as a secondary topic and 17 letters-to-the-editors that address referendum issues were printed. Coverage in the Kamloops Daily News was also noteworthy for its consistently sympathetic stance towards the position of Aboriginal people. Nearly every opinion piece and news story supported one or both of the two alternative news frames. Finally, there was a greater variety of perspectives presented in this newspaper than in any other mainstream publication.

An opinion piece that exemplifies this news frame is headlined "Majority has no right to oppress minority through referendum" (284). This opinion piece is distinguished from much other mainstream media discourse by its argumentative moves and lexical choices and by the suggestion that the referendum itself is racist. The Minority rights frame takes as its starting point the idea that referenda on issues that disproportionately impact minority populations have no place in a democracy. Clearly, this frame invokes a different definition of democracy than is present in dominant discourse, where democracy is equated with the unconditional application of the "majority rule" principle. Compare this absolutist conception of democracy with that in the Kamloops Daily News opinion
piece, where it is argued that there is "nothing inherently just or fair about majority rule." The argument advanced is that the principle of majority rule must be balanced with society's obligation to protect the rights of minority groups: "Minorities are inherently vulnerable to the oppression of the majority and often need the protection of the rules of the law and access to the courts." The term "oppression" is associated with the referendum in a number of other news texts in the Kamloops Daily News and the Globe and Mail.

Other lexical choices associated with the treaty referendum include "tyrannical," "unfair," and "justifiably intolerable to the minority" (284). The column also includes a suggestion that the referendum creates an opportunity for groups with a "racist agenda that would create division and contention within the province." While this idea finds expression in the Aboriginal media, it is largely absent from the mainstream press. Ironically, some opinion pieces in the Province and the National Post make a similar argument about a "racist agenda," except that the majority is constructed as the potential victim of Aboriginal race-based governments, and not the other way around.

Another opinion piece about the referendum in the "Outdoors" section of the same paper also references the issue of racism. Writing from the perspective of a recreational angler and hunter, in his column "On the Fly," Robert Koopmans admits to ignorance about Aboriginal issues that may have its genesis in racism:

I've come to the cheerless conclusion I've been a bit ignorant, and I suspect many others who hunt and fish in BC have been as well....Many hunters sneer when they hear about Aboriginal rights allowing them to hunt year round for food. Anglers openly attack fishing policies that give natives first crack at salmon stocks. I've done my own share of scoffing and made occasional remarks about Aboriginal hunting and fishing when in the company of people I know felt the same. Perhaps it's just easier to condemn something we don't like than to try to understand or accept it. But over the past several months, I've listened more
iently to assertions from the Aboriginal community and watched more closely the actions of government. I realize I feel more in common with Indians when they talk about the environment, hunting and fishing than I do with those in power. Recent debates about the merits of the Liberal government's referendum on the treaty process have made me realize my views may have been entrenched in cultural and political biases and a misplaced sense of ownership of BC's wild places. (Some could argue, and it might be hard to defend, my thinking smelled suspiciously racist) (295).

This opinion piece is set apart from all others by both its confessional tone and the fact that it offers a starting point for a truly oppositional discourse – namely that newcomers to BC ought to take responsibility for their assumptions about Aboriginal people and seek to (re)educate themselves. The reporter also challenges the opinion of those, including himself, who feel that they "own" the province's "wild places." Calling into question non-Aboriginal "ownership" of traditional Aboriginal land is an idea that never becomes part of the dominant discourse on the treaty referendum.

An issue related to land ownership is that of access to the land. One of the questions on the referendum ballot asks voters if "hunting, fishing and recreational opportunities on Crown land should be insured for all British Columbians." Koopmans' opinion piece suggests that perhaps it is large corporations, not Aboriginal people, who pose the greatest threat to recreational access to Crown Land:

I've not yet been denied access to a backcountry place by an Indian band, but Sun Peaks Resort blocked me from driving a road to the high country near Tod Mountain with a gate a few years ago, even though it was summer and their license to control recreation there wasn't in effect. Many other industrial companies also seal off valleys and drainages with locked gates while they work there – try to get a key from them that will allow you to get through (295)

The very real obstacles posed by commercial interests to land access for "ordinary British Columbians" are not explored in the dominant discourse. In fact, Koopmans' article is the only one in the mainstream media that explores the relationship between Big Business
and referendum issues. By contrast, in the Aboriginal media, the referendum is constructed as an exercise implemented by the provincial government, but driven by commercial interests. In Koopmans' opinion piece, the implication is that the government's concern about land access for British Columbians is directed only at some British Columbians:

Of course, the BC Assets and Land Corp. sells and licenses Crown lands to private individuals, with little thought about what it means to my ability to enjoy or travel through them. And the cash-starved Liberals seem willing to entertain private control of Crown lands, even if it means people will only be allowed access for a fee. An economic barrier to a place is as real as a physical one if you can't afford the price of entry.

Instead of constructing an opposition between the interests of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people, this article situates the main source of conflict as between ordinary people – both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – and wealthy people and corporate interests. While emphasizing a sense of solidarity with Aboriginal people, the author admits that he finds certain aspects of the "Aboriginal rights debate" troublesome because they "defy" the "notion of fair play, that sense we have that everything must always be equal for everyone." Much like in dominant discourse, the exercise of Aboriginal rights is seen as incompatible with the principle of equality, usually defined as identical treatment. In dominant discourse, this normative violation is constructed as so fundamental as to discredit any argument in support of Aboriginal rights and self-government. However, while acknowledging his misgivings about treating Aboriginal people differently, the author also points out the hypocrisy inherent in contemporary non-Aboriginal society's obsession with "equality": "Of course, we haven't always worried about equality so much as we do now, when the smaller shoe is being squeezed on my foot."
This suggests that the call for the rigid application of the identical treatment principle to Aboriginal people may be motivated more by a desire to preserve the status quo than out of concern for the "fair treatment" of the people. It is also a tacit acknowledgement that debates about treaties and other Aboriginal issues need to take into account the historical context of the relations of Aboriginal relations with other Canadians.

The presence of these secondary news frames in the press offers hope to proponents of fair and balanced reporting about Aboriginal people and issues. While dominant discourses about Aboriginal issues tend to limit the diversity of interpretative choices available to audiences, minority discourses offer audiences the opportunity to consider contemporary Aboriginal issues in more meaningful contexts. Generally, these news texts provide more balanced coverage of key issues, such as treaties and child welfare, which incorporate a range of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sources. Relevant details left out of other news reports are included. For example, some news stories about the Nisga'a Treaty juxtapose the magnitude of the Nisga'a land settlement with the much larger size of traditional Nisga'a territory. Also, issues are sometimes set in the context of historical processes and events, such as the unwillingness of colonial governments and successive provincial governments, to negotiate treaties with Aboriginal people in British Columbia.

As well, some news stories and op/ed pieces invoke different definitions of key concepts than in dominant discourse. For example, in coverage of the Nisga'a Treaty and the BC Treaty Referendum, a definition of democracy as synonymous with identical treatment is rejected in favour of one that accepts the need for some differential treatment
in order to ensure the protection of "minority" rights. Finally, some challenge the implicit assumptions in dominant discourse. While many news reports assume an oppositional relationship between Aboriginal people and other Canadians, minority discourses hint at the possibility that the two groups may share substantial common interests.

These secondary news frames provide openings for the creation of radical new discourses about the relationship between colonialism and racism, in both their historical and modern forms, and the contemporary situations of Aboriginal peoples. These truly alternative discourses, not surprisingly, find their fullest expression in the Aboriginal press, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

While the Aboriginal people as a threat frame was uncontested in discourse about both child welfare cases, news coverage of the BC Treaty Referendum, and to a lesser degree the Nisga'a Treaty, afforded space for secondary discourse – this has been the focus of this chapter. Evidence of two alternative frames was found in news coverage of the Nisga'a treaty and the BC Treaty Referendum:

1. Aboriginal issues as valid topics for public debate frame, and

The first frame, reflected in a number of Globe & Mail articles on the Nisga'a Treaty, is that issues such as treaties are Valid topics for public debate, with rational and convincing arguments to be made by both sides. The other frame focuses on Minority rights and is reflected primarily in news coverage of the Treaty Referendum in the Kamloops Daily News and the Globe and Mail, and, to a much lesser extent, in the
Vancouver Sun and National Post. This frame embodies the liberal-pluralist vision of a "democratic free society" that depends on the vigorous protection and defence of the rights of minority groups.

While the mainstream press afforded some space for secondary discourse, it was only in the Aboriginal press that a truly alternative news frame emerged. The following chapter explores this *emancipatory* frame and differentiates news coverage in the Aboriginal press from reportage in the mainstream media along a number of parameters.
CHAPTER 8:
FRAMING IN ABORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

Introduction

The primary news frame that emerges out of news texts in Aboriginal publications\(^8\) emphasizes the Necessity of Aboriginal people defending their rights and contesting the status quo. Implicit in this frame is an assumption that the survival of First Nations rests on their ability to challenge the unequal state of relations that exists between them and non-Aboriginal Canadians and to gain control over all aspects of their lives. Contemporary struggles of Aboriginal people are framed in the context of the need to protect culture, language and traditional ways of living. Aboriginal people are portrayed as acutely aware of their historical relations with the newcomers and determined to ensure that their legal rights are respected. Throughout all news coverage in Aboriginal media, there is strong emphasis on the positive self-representation of Aboriginal people. Even when engaged in struggle with non-Aboriginal interests (e.g., the treaty referendum), Aboriginal people are not depicted as "antagonistic" or "militant" but as righteously defending the rights and interests of their brothers and sisters.

\(^8\) First Perspective, Kahtou, Windspeaker and Raven's Eye are included on the comprehensive list compiled in a 2002 report on Aboriginal publications prepared by Gordon Big Canoe and Bob Rupert for the Department of Canadian Heritage. These publications met the authors' definition of Aboriginal publication: "[one that] is owned, controlled and produced mainly by Aboriginal people with content specifically for and about Aboriginal people. It is free of undue external influence or control and is published quarterly or more frequently" (p.5)
Textual Analysis of Aboriginal Publications

A detailed textual analysis was conducted on news coverage of the four case studies in the Aboriginal press. The research sample consisted of 34 news stories from *Windspeaker, Kahtou, Raven’s Eye* and *First Perspective*. See Table 23 for a summary of the data under study.

Table 23: Number of News Items Analysed in Chapter 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>ISSUE #1</th>
<th>ISSUE #2</th>
<th>ISSUE #3</th>
<th>ISSUE #4</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nisga’a Treaty</td>
<td>BC Treaty Referendum</td>
<td>Death of a Child</td>
<td>Repatriation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windspeaker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahtou</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raven’s Eye</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Perspective</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the four Aboriginal publications are published only once a month, two or three months of coverage (two or three issues of each paper) following the target events was analyzed. The limited frequency of publication of Aboriginal newspapers may be related to the financial woes of the Aboriginal press which were exacerbated in the early 1990s when the federal government eliminated a program designed to subsidize some of their costs. Many of the scaled-down Aboriginal publications that survived these cutbacks are confined to "areas where Aboriginal people are populous enough to form a viable consumer audience that can be sold to advertisers" (Big Canoe & Rupert, 2002, p. 15).

All four Aboriginal tabloids targeted in this research are based in Manitoba, Alberta or British Columbia – provinces that have sizable Aboriginal communities. *First Perspective*, which has the largest circulation (10,000), is based in Manitoba.
Windspeaker originates in Alberta, while Kahtou and Raven's Eye are both located in British Columbia. Table 24 shows the date range of the news texts surveyed in this study.

Table 24: Date Range(s) of Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue #1: Nisga'a Treaty</th>
<th>Issue #2: BC Treaty Referendum</th>
<th>Issue #3: Death of a Child</th>
<th>Issue #4: Repatriation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sep - Nov, 2003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rhetorical Arguments

The Emancipation frame is supported by a number of rhetorical arguments in op-ed pieces (Table 25).

Table 25: Rhetorical Arguments Supporting the Emancipation Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RHETORICAL ARGUMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Everyone should remember history and understand how it connects to the present state of affairs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aboriginal people are at an historic juncture in their relationship with non-Aboriginal people, one where they are beginning to (re)assume full responsibility for their institutions and governance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. While Aboriginal people are diverse and hold a wide range of views on important matters, they are in solidarity on basic issues, such as the need to gain more control over their lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Commercial interests exert a major influence on non-Aboriginal governments' actions towards Aboriginal people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Public education and the mainstream media do not equip non-Aboriginal people with sufficient information to fully understand complex Aboriginal issues that have long historical antecedents. Two prescriptions are offered:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Basic public education about Aboriginal issues is required since non-Aboriginal people are not acquiring the necessary information about important issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Mainstream media reports that distort the reality of contemporary Aboriginal life and isolate Aboriginal issues from their historical context must be challenged.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mainstream Discourse Compared with Discourse in Aboriginal Media

Dominant discourse in the mainstream media is compared with discourse in Aboriginal publications along a number of parameters as summarized in Table 26.

Table 26: Aboriginal and Mainstream News Discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DISCOURSES IN ABORIGINAL MEDIA</th>
<th>DOMINANT DISCOURSES IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Context**          | • main topics are connected to broader issues rarely mentioned in mainstream media reports  
                     • always grounded in history  
                     • often set in the context of international experiences of indigenous people                                                                                                                       | • main topics are typically discussed in isolation of historical context  
                     • issues are connected to highly selective context                                                                                                                                         |
| **Personal Experiences in Op/Eds** | • personal experiences of reporters are often connected to larger issues                                                                                                                                                  | • generally not connected to larger issues                                                                                                                                                    |
| **Sources**          | • news reports access many sources, both individuals and institutions, not given voice in mainstream media  
                     • sources able to speak to broader issues and historical aspects of topics                                                                                                                                 | • heavy reliance on limited range of sources, usually non-Aboriginal ones, recycled over and over (e.g., CTF)  
                     • sources narrowly focused on specific issues                                                                                                                                                    |
| **Quotations**       | • longer than in mainstream media, sources given opportunity to make connections to other issues                                                                                                                                 | • brief, often used to buttress a single point made in the news item                                                                                                                                         |
| **Portrayal of Aboriginal People** | • emphasis on the diversity of Aboriginal people, cultures and perspectives  
                     • absence of stereotypes of Aboriginal people, but references to stereotypes in the dominant discourse                                                                 | • diverse Aboriginal identities are routinely conflated  
                     • frequent stereotyping                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| **Racism and Colonialism** | • references to historical racism and colonialism  
                     • acts of racism and neo-colonialism are consistently challenged, including the application of the identical treatment formula to Aboriginal people in the absence of any consideration of the historical causes of current inequality | • historical racism & colonialism either ignored or their impact on Aboriginal people and/or culpability of Euro-Canadians is minimized  
                     • denial that there is a problem of racism, except for policies of "reverse" racism that favour Aboriginal people and other minorities                                                                 |
| **Education of Canadian Public** | • emphasis on need for public education about the history and context of issues  
                     • conviction that the public will support Aboriginal aspirations if it has basic information and historical knowledge                                                                 | • the need for education is either not mentioned or denied  
                     • calls for education are dismissed as attacks on the "intelligence" of "the people"                                                                                                                                       |
| **References to the Other's media** | • critical awareness of treatments of Aboriginal people in mainstream media  
                     • conscious effort to challenge these representations                                                                                                                                         | • no mention made of Aboriginal media                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| **Value Differences between Abor. & non-Abor. people** | • acknowledgement that the values of Aboriginal people may vary from those of non-Aboriginal people  
                     • therefore, Aboriginal people need to govern their own affairs and institutions                                                                                                           | • the values of Aboriginal people deviate from those of non-Aboriginal people  
                     • therefore, non-Aboriginal people must guard against those Aboriginal values that threaten their interests                                                                 |

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**Context**

In dominant discourse, the main topics of news items are routinely isolated from contextual factors, such as historical events and larger issues. Alternatively, those factors are minimized in news stories. By contrast, in Aboriginal media, news texts are usually anchored in history. Furthermore, main topics are typically connected to broader issues, aspects of context overlooked by the mainstream media, and international experiences of indigenous peoples such as the New Zealand Maori.

For example, in one article on the treaty referendum, the issue of a vote on treaty negotiation is placed in the context of the provincial government's role in facilitating commercial access to Crown Land:

"Most Aboriginal observers see the referendum as a way for the Campbell government to validate and accelerate the open access to Crown lands for big business – land that is often the centre of ongoing Aboriginal title disputes…"

(337)

In mainstream discourse, no mention is made of possible connections between the government's decision to hold a referendum and the fast tracking of applications for Crown land tenure.

Similarly, many mainstream media news texts make no reference to the historical Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationship. Other news texts minimize or deny the impact of Canada's history of colonialism and racism on the situation of contemporary Aboriginal people. Still others selectively invoke historical analogies that either discredit Aboriginal claims or minimize the culpability of Euro-Canadians for historical injustices against Aboriginal people. In Aboriginal media, however, the provision of an historical context is the norm in news reporting. In an opinion piece in *Kahtou*, the referendum is described as
the continuation of a very narrow approach to treaties that has existed since the creation of the province:

[the treaty process is] part of an historical pattern that has prevented the negotiation of treaties in BC since 1871 despite the fact that all other provinces have been able to negotiate treaties. In the late 1870s BC opposed the standard reserve formula of 160 acres per First Nations family and proposed 20 acres each. At the same time, the Province allowed non-Aboriginals to pre-empt 320 acres each. (350)

Thus, the referendum is established as a continuation of the provincial government's tradition of obstructionist treaty policies. The contemporary context of the treaty negotiation is further developed by furnishing details about historical injustices in reserve allocation and "homesteading" policy. The high priority that many First Nations assign to land claims, and their frustration with the slow pace of the treaty-making process, may be easier to understand in light of these historical factors.

In addition to providing an historical background for contemporary Canadian issues, Aboriginal news texts frequently reference the experiences of indigenous peoples in other jurisdictions. An opinion piece about the Nisga'a treaty refutes claims made in the mainstream media about the dangers of Aboriginal self-government by citing international examples of indigenous peoples exercising considerable powers of self-government:

The Treaty of Waitangi recognizes that the Maori have title to nearly 3 million acres of land in NZ. The NZ courts have also ruled that the Maori also have treaty rights to 60 per cent of all fisheries...Closer to home, there are 552 tribes in the United States, each recognized as a 'domestic dependent nation.' They have extensive self-government rights and vast land holdings. All the reserves in Canada would fit into the Navajo reservation. The Navajo also have their own government, court system, police, schools and corporations" (333)
The author cites international precedent to support his argument that Aboriginal self-government and nation-states can and do co-exist in a mutually beneficial relationship. References to the experiences of indigenous people outside Canada are absent from the mainstream media.

**Personal Experiences of Journalists in Op/Ed pieces**

In dominant discourse, the personal experiences of op/ed. writers are generally left out. While these writers make no secret of the fact that they are expressing their opinions, op/ed texts on Aboriginal matters typically make little or no reference to journalists' personal experiences. The views of these non-Aboriginal writers are presented as arms length, principled "common sense" assessments of issues that do not directly affect them.\(^{82}\) If they are mentioned, they are rarely connected directly to the issues being discussed.

On the other hand, in Aboriginal op/ed pieces, main topics are often related to the personal experiences of their writers. This is not surprising given that there are few Aboriginal people whose lives are not (or have not been) directly touched by land claims, treaties (or the lack of), and "special" Aboriginal child welfare policies. Thus, the lived experiences of Aboriginal people – with poverty, racism, loss of identity – naturally and logically provide a personal frame of reference for interpreting stories related to self-governance and child welfare. In an opinion piece about the repatriation case involving two Stó:lō girls, the author connects the experiences of his family with child welfare policy:

\(^{82}\) Many of the op/ed pieces examined in this study *speculate* about how such issues as the implementation of treaties and repatriation policies might affect them – non-Aboriginal people – *in the future.*
I can speak from personal experience about Indian children being taken from their families and communities. A number of my nieces and nephews were "adopted out." They went to white families. Some had good experiences, others did not. One of my nephews had been bounced from foster home to foster home. He told me he hated the places because he had to work all the time even at outside jobs for which his foster parents were paid money which he never saw....I tried to adopt him myself but I was not White and did not belong to the pool of adopted homes that made a living out of taking in our children. (353).

The writer's personal story provides a very different backdrop against which to interpret the issue of contemporary cross-cultural adoptions. In the mainstream press, a familiar script is that of loving, kind-hearted white foster or adoptive parents adopting forsaken and abused Aboriginal children. This op/ed provides readers with a basis for questioning the veracity of dominant framing of repatriation and points to an alternative discourse about the role of racism and opportunism in cross-cultural adoption.

**Sources**

Aboriginal news texts reference a wide range of sources not given voice in the mainstream media. In coverage of the treaty referendum, some of the most vocal Aboriginal opponents of the referendum such as BC Union of Indian Chiefs leader Stewart Phillip and Hucacasath First Nation Chief Councillor Judith Sayers, garner considerable attention in the mainstream media. However, the voices of a wide variety of other prominent Aboriginal sources featured in news texts in Aboriginal publications. Personalities such as Stó:lō leader and BC Provincial Court judge Steven Point, Squamish Chief Joe Mathias, Ed John and Kathryn Teneese of the First Nations Summit, Interior Alliance Chief Arthur Manuel and AFN BC Vice Chief Herb George garner little attention in mainstream discourse.
In reporting on Aboriginal issues, mainstream media rely heavily on "official" sources, such as government officials, politicians, business leaders and a short list of high profile Aboriginal leaders, for information and opinions narrowly focused on the issue at hand. In news coverage of the treaty referendum, the views of certain elite sources, with dubious credibility as experts on Aboriginal issues, are recycled numerous times in both Vancouver newspapers. Representatives of the Canadian Taxpayer's Federation are constructed as expert sources in a number of news stories and op/ed pieces in the Vancouver Sun and the Province. In addition, the Centre is the author of three opinion pieces in the Province and the director of its "Centre for Aboriginal Policy" is featured as one of two "experts" on the treaty referendum in a lengthy news feature in the same paper.

Sources in Aboriginal publications often access sources that are completely outside mainstream media coverage. Not surprisingly, the use of alternative sources tends to generate discourses not found in mainstream media treatments of Aboriginal issues. For example, many news texts about the treaty referendum cast the issue quite narrowly as a domestic issue in BC, either as one of democratic rights – or in simple polarized terms – as the conflict between race-based minority rights and the right of "the people" to equal treatment. Even though coverage of the referendum in the four Aboriginal publications is far less extensive than in the seven mainstream publications surveyed, their news texts reference a number of high-profile sources that connect the referendum to larger issues such as racism. For example, in a story in Kahtou, Lincoln Alexander, the Chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, describes the referendum as having "racist underpinnings." (347). It is also, he argues, "an attempt to circumvent judgments
and rulings of courts of law, including the Supreme Court of Canada." The notion that the referendum represents an "end-run" around the Supreme Court is generally not picked up in the mainstream press, even outside the dominant discourse, where criticisms tend to focus on the design of the referendum or the principle of subjecting the rights of minority populations to the vote of a majority.

Portrayal of Aboriginal People

The mainstream media, in relying on a limited range of Aboriginal sources in reporting on issues on which there is widely divergent Aboriginal thinking, conflate diverse Aboriginal identities and cultures into a single homogenized imaginary Indian perspective. Aboriginal media emphasize the diversity of Aboriginal communities, cultures and perspectives, often reporting on a wide range of differences of opinion within Aboriginal communities. In a news report about the Nisga'a treaty, the treaty is hailed by Nisga'a leader Joe Gosnell as a pragmatic compromise and denounced by another Aboriginal leader as "state-assisted suicide." (328). In an opinion piece in the same paper, at least three distinct Aboriginal positions on treaty-making are demarcated. The writer does not claim to know which position is best, but does suggest that the debate is beneficial for Aboriginal people because it delineates a variety of choices:

I guess the only thing I'm sure of right now is that it's a good thing that there are choices for leaders when they attempt to settle the land question in the best interests of their communities. Whether it's a special deal, a seat at the treaty process table or the hard line of the UBCIC, each individual community can act as it sees fit to find its own answer. (330)

While the mainstream media does report on some Aboriginal opposition to the Nisga'a treaty, the focus is primarily on internal Nisga'a opposition. In fact, some of the strongest Aboriginal critiques of the treaty come from external Aboriginal groups such as
the Union of BC Indian chiefs that express concern that the treaty could be used as a template for other agreements.

The frequent use of stereotypes also contributes to the conflation of Aboriginal identity in the mainstream press. Media coverage of the four cases is replete with old and emerging stereotypes of Aboriginal people (see Table 27).

Table 27: Old and Emerging Stereotypes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEREOTYPES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal people as alcoholics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal people as victims</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reserves as bastions of corruption, incompetence and cronyism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aboriginal people as “dependent” and/or incapable of self-governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal people as tax evaders</td>
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</table>

As one might expect, there is little stereotyping of Aboriginal people in Aboriginal publications. However, in Aboriginal news texts, there is evidence of an awareness of stereotyping in the mainstream press and news stories often reference those applied to Aboriginal people. One that figures prominently in mainstream press coverage of the treaty referendum and the Nisga’a treaty is that Aboriginal people do not pay taxes. An opinion piece in Kahtou addresses this misconception pointing out that the "tax exemption is not nearly as broad as some people imagine because it only applies to property, and goods and income on-Reserve and First Nation citizens on Reserves do not generally earn enough income to reach taxable levels" (350). There is recognition in the Aboriginal press that popular stereotypes are harmful to the interests of Aboriginal people and that they must be challenged.
Racism and Colonialism

In dominant discourse, Aboriginal issues are often viewed in an historical vacuum. Canada's legacy of colonialism and racism, if mentioned at all, is frequently represented as an historic artefact, unconnected to present circumstances. Those few news texts that do reference "tragic" historical events involving Aboriginal people typically ignore or downplay their impact on the lives of contemporary Aboriginal people and minimize the culpability of Euro-Canadians for those events. In the mainstream media, ahistorical representations of Aboriginal issues go hand-in-hand with a denial of any systematic problems with racism – other than "reverse racism" – in present day society. A major theme in dominant discourse is that special "treatment" constitutes a form of racism that benefits Aboriginal people at the expense of "the people."

In Aboriginal discourse, contemporary issues are routinely placed in the context of Canada's history of colonialism. Modern acts of racism and neo-colonialism are consistently challenged. For example, opinion pieces on the Nisga'a Treaty challenge the notion that the treaty will create race-based enclaves: "To now suggest that this is somehow a racially based government distorts the historical reality of how this country was taken from the Indians" (334). This sentence makes the argument that the charge of reverse racism against the Nisga'a people ought to be considered in light of the history of land issues. Furthermore, the suggestion is made that proponents of the reverse racism thesis have conveniently de-contextualized the issue:

This form of rhetoric is in itself racist because it tries to re-write history by conveniently omitting to mention that First Nations were already here when European governments arrived. What a travesty of justice to suggest that the original peoples of this country are somehow being racist for having been in this country before everyone else. The Nisga'a treaty continues to recognize the
simple fact that wherever Britain has gone in the past, if the land was occupied by people with their own government, then that would not be ignored.

Thus, any fair resolution of the land issue requires that historical events are taken into account and that settler culture be held accountable to British protocol for dealing with indigenous peoples.

**Education of the Canadian public**

News texts in Aboriginal publications often advocate for enhanced public education about Aboriginal issues. This stands in sharp relief to mainstream news texts in which the need for public education is either denied or ignored altogether. Calls for increased public education on Aboriginal matters, when mentioned at all, are dismissed as attacks on the "intelligence" of the "common man."

Aboriginal newspapers argue that much of the tension in the contemporary relationship between Aboriginal people and other Canadians is directly attributable to the latter's misunderstanding of Aboriginal issues. For example, an opinion piece on the Nisga'a treaty suggests that one public "misconception" is about the Canadian Constitution and where First Nations fit and do not fit within it. First Nations already have a rightful place within the Constitution. Self-government is already part of the Canadian Constitution (333)

An opinion piece on the same issue in *Kahtou* goes further, attributing "much of the opposition to the treaty process" to "ignorance" (325). The author poses a rhetorical question: "where best to counteract ignorance but in the schools?" Thus, the argument is made that the public is ill-equipped to make informed decisions about issues that are critical to Aboriginal people.
The prescription offered in the Aboriginal press is to revamp publicly funded education about the history of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relations:

"There is also a dire need for a better education process, said John [FN summit member Ed John]. "The post secondary system, the secondary system needs to understand the history of the relationship between Indian, our people and the non-native people," he said (329)

The purpose of education about history is not to change everything back to how it was prior to contact, but to ensure that the lives of contemporary Aboriginal people are improved: "John said that although we cannot turn back the clock, 'we can better understand what's happened in the past, so we can have a better future for our people.'"

This article establishes the desire of Aboriginal people for improvements in their lives and in their "relationship" with non-Aboriginal people. This can only be accomplished by undertaking a full public accounting of historical relations between the two sides. These sentiments underlie a rhetorical argument that anchors much op/ed writing in Aboriginal publications: It is important for everyone to remember history and understand how it connects to the present state of affairs.

In news coverage of the BC Treaty Referendum, the role of public education is also emphasized. An opinion piece in Kahtou argues that public education is the only way to improve race relations since the mainstream media have effectively disqualified themselves as credible reporters capable of presenting with neutrality competing arguments in a broad public debate over the role to be afforded Aboriginal title in the future of nation building and province building in Canada (342)

Since informed public debate is not facilitated in the mainstream news media, the onus is on non-Aboriginal governments to be proactive in providing the population with basic information. The provincial government is singled out for its failure to do so:
The Campbell referendum makes no provision for some sort of equitable access to public resources to undertake the necessary initiatives in public education that would enable a well-informed citizenry to make democratic choices between viable alternatives.

The withholding of education about important issues from the public is particularly problematic when voters are asked specific questions about those same issues in a binding referendum:

the BC electorate are being asked to give their opinion about what they would like the law to say without being given ample opportunity to become reasonably well-informed about what the existing law of Aboriginal and treaty rights now says. In order to appreciate how the present law came into being it is necessary to understand something of the genesis of the Aboriginal title question throughout the course of Canadian and North American history (342)

The appeal for enhanced public education underscores the inherent faith that Aboriginal people, as represented in the Aboriginal press, have in the Canadian public's commitment to fair play and social justice. One of the most prominent features of news coverage in Aboriginal media found in this study is the strong emphasis placed on the positive self-representation of Aboriginal people. This finding is supported by emerging research that suggests that they engage in "positive and active self-representation" in the Aboriginal press using argumentative structures and the "foregrounding of positive characteristics" (Ratzlaff, 2005). At the same time, in spite of numerous contentious issues in the Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal relationship, non-Aboriginal people are also represented in a positive light. The implication is that public education will result in greater support for Aboriginal aspirations if Canadians are equipped with basic information and historical knowledge of the issues.
References to the "other's" Media

In the Aboriginal media, the issue of public education is explicitly connected to a critique of mainstream media representations of Aboriginal people. The combination of inadequate public education about important issues and misrepresentation in the media make it difficult for Aboriginal people to get a fair hearing in the court of public opinion. This may partially account for the Aboriginal media's preoccupation with mainstream press treatments of Aboriginal issues. By comparison, the mainstream media demonstrates little awareness of the Aboriginal news media. No Aboriginal media outlet — newspaper, internet source, or TV station — is mentioned in any of the 188 mainstream news texts under analysis.

In the Aboriginal press, journalists frequently refer to coverage of Aboriginal issues in Canadian newspapers and challenge those representations. An opinion piece about the Nisga'a treaty argues that the land issue in British Columbia has never received "fair" coverage in the press, citing media treatment of the Gustafsen Lake\(^{83}\) incident as an example:

The position taken by the Gustafsen protesters, however, has never to this day received fair and unbiased coverage in the BC, national or international media. Instead the dispute over the land question in British Columbia remains shrouded in the same dense fog of government smear and disinformation that has consistently been delivered to the Canadian public by a biased media (350)

The influence of the mainstream media on public opinion is also examined by the Aboriginal media with respect to the repatriation issue. In an opinion piece in

\(^{83}\) The Gustafsen Lake standoff occurred in 1995 when a number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal protestors occupied a ranch that they believed was unceded Aboriginal territory in the northern interior of British Columbia. Over 400 RCMP officers were called in, resulting in a number of violent incidents and arrests. The incident became a major media event. For a detailed account of news reporting of the standoff, see Lambertus (2004).
Windspeaker, the *Globe and Mail* is taken to task for its criticisms of AFN Grand Chief Phil Fontaine's letter to the judge in the Squamish repatriation case:

It points to the example of Jean Charest, in 1991 a federal cabinet minister and now premier of Québec. Charest resigned his post after calling a judge about a case affecting his department. Poor example. Lousy analogy. Two reasons why. Fontaine has nowhere near the influence of even a junior cabinet minister. Hell, many chiefs at the AFN don't heed what Fontaine says. What makes the Globe and Mail think a provincial judge will? Judges don't leave hermetically sealed lives cut off from society. Like everyone else, they are shaped by their upbringing, education and community's attitudes. (354)

The judge's ideas, like those of other Canadians, are shaped by myriad influences, particularly those of a variety of media sources: "They [judges] watch TV, listen to radio, scan the Internet. They read newspapers, such as the Globe and Mail, which bills itself 'Canada's National Newspaper' with more than 'a million readers across the country daily."

The views of the AFN Grand Chief are but one of a range of perspectives to which the judge is likely to be exposed. The impact of Fontaine's letter on the judge's decision is equated to that of a single *Globe and Mail* editorial on the subject: "Seriously, does anyone really believe anything Phil Fontaine writes will influence a provincial court judge any more than an editorial in the Globe and Mail?"

The suggestion here is that the impact on the judicial process of one such letter pales in comparison to the influence exerted by scores of mainstream reports in newspapers and on TV, radio and the internet. Thus, this journalist is contesting the mainstream media's construction of Fontaine's actions as exerting considerable influence on the course of justice in the Squamish case. Other aspects of the *Globe and Mail*'s

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84 Phil Fontaine's letter was the subject of numerous op/ed pieces and news reports, published during the time period under analysis.
account of the Squamish repatriation case are also challenged, including the notion that
the Squamish band chose not to avail itself of an opportunity to intervene earlier in the
"process."

Mainstream media portrayals of the other repatriation case are challenged in
another opinion piece:

The Stó:lō people want their children home or at least to be informed of their
culture and their community. The Province and the Sun newspapers accuse the
Stó:lō of trying to break up happy homes. This "race" card trick is disgusting.
(353)

The author constructs the repatriation efforts of the Stó:lō as part of larger campaign by
Aboriginal people to liberate themselves from anachronistic colonial institutions: "The
media coverage of the two Stó:lō teenagers reflects a common approach in covering
Aboriginal efforts to free themselves from the Department of Indian Affairs and the other
white assumptions placed upon us."

Mainstream media treatments of such Aboriginal initiatives emphasize the
necessity of providing identical treatment for each person:

You hear the mantra of the Alliance Party "One Law for All" in nearly all media
reporting on Aboriginal issues. Somehow we are supposed to believe that our
people who have for over a century been subjected to racism are themselves racist
(353).

The author argues that the mainstream media have bought into a political agenda that
may be acceptable for political parties, but is "not appropriate for general media
reporting." The identical treatment formula prescribed in the media is characterized as
mythical: "There has never ever been "One Law for All" and there is not today especially
when it comes to Aboriginal people. There certainly has never been equality of treatment
for our people."
The suggestion is that the "One Law for All" argument is simply a rhetorical strategy designed to maintain Aboriginal people in their subordinate position in Canadian society:

Where were these right-wing nitwits who now profess to be in favour of equality, when our people were refused the vote, denied land grants, incarcerated in residential schools, placed in white homes, denied their culture through the application of the Potlach laws and discriminated against in all aspects of their lives unless they chose to "act White." The born anew, egalitarian hypocrites or their ancestors were, of course, leading the fight against Aboriginal people. Now that we, as Aboriginal people, are trying to retake control over our lives they brand us as racists (353).

The author is not only contesting media coverage of the repatriation case or Aboriginal issues in general; he is challenging the meta-narrative that prescribes individualism and identical treatment while eschewing any analysis of the socio-political context of contemporary Aboriginal life and the impact of Canada's long history of colonialism on Aboriginal people.

**Value Differences between Aboriginal People and Other Canadians**

The dominant news frame in mainstream news discourse situates Aboriginal people as a threat to the values and interests of non-Aboriginal people. The values of Aboriginal people are constructed as deviating from those of other Canadians. In much mainstream news discourse, Euro-Canadians are portrayed in a defensive mode, where they must guard against Aboriginal values and initiatives that threaten their interests.

News discourse in the Aboriginal press also acknowledges that certain Aboriginal values may vary from those of some non-Aboriginal people. In most news texts, these normative differences are not equated with cultural superiority or inferiority. They are simply presented as part of the alternative social reality that Aboriginal people experience
on a daily basis. An implicit assumption is that in order for Aboriginal people to be able
to live in harmony and prosperity with other Canadians, both sides must accept this social
fact. The corollary to this is that the only way that Aboriginal people can live in a way
consistent with their values is by gaining full control over their own affairs.

News coverage of the two treaty issues in the Aboriginal press highlights two
competing approaches to the balance between individual and collective rights. The
identical treatment for everyone approach, referred to by one Aboriginal columnist as
"One Law for All" (353), assumes that the individual rights of each person must be
identical and ought to take precedence over group rights. In an opinion piece in Kahtou,
this approach is described as undermining Aboriginal identity: "The most lethal attacks
on the continuing viability of Indian Country, however, are made in the name of a
particular approach to individual equality that would deny the collective legal personality
of Aboriginal groups" (342). The opinion piece characterizes the identical treatment
formula as a ploy designed to facilitate one of the most venerable objectives of North
American settlers: "These appeals to the equality of individuals have been used to
disguise the USA's Indians termination policy in the 1950s and the Trudeau-Chrétien
White Paper on Indian policy in 1969."

While much attention is paid to the normative taxonomy of Aboriginal and other
Canadians in the mainstream media, the notion that the application of the identical
treatment formula to Aboriginal groups is a means to facilitate Aboriginal assimilation is
absent from news discourse.
Value differences are also cited in coverage of the two child welfare case studies.

In one opinion piece, the author argues against the individual nuclear family model favoured by many non-Aboriginal people in favour of a more communal approach:

I do believe that 'A whole community raises a child.'...It is the external environment of teachers, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends, clubs and sports teams, that have such a significant influence on the choices that people make. This emphasizes the responsibility of the entire community in raising children...not just their own. (352)

Provincial child welfare legislation is identified as a major obstacle to the realization of Aboriginal family values because it does "not address the responsibility of the community." In spite of the shortcomings of provincial child welfare legislation, Aboriginal people themselves have been proactive in taking measures to enhance the role of community in children's lives: "Several First Nations communities have responded by developing initiatives to supply food and health care to low income families, coordinating trips and activities for the kids, providing opportunities where they would not otherwise exist."

Communities have a role to play in providing both social and material support for their children. The problem, for Aboriginal people, is that the values of the dominant culture are being imposed by the judiciary as well as through legislation:

The parenting, guidance and management of children has become a contentious issue influenced by values, ethics, cultures and changing times earning a place in the Supreme Court of Canada and high courts of other countries to determine how a child should be treated, legally imposing the court's values on a culture (352).

In Aboriginal news discourse, there is no suggestion that there is anything "wrong" or "deviant" with the values of other Canadians. The problem lies in the imposition of those values on Aboriginal people. The prescription offered in the Aboriginal press is that
cultural value systems deserve protection in law and Aboriginal people should have authority to manage their own affairs.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter offers a summary of news frames present in the Aboriginal press, based on an analysis of 34 news texts published in three Aboriginal newspapers and one Aboriginal on-line news publication (*First Perspective*). Not surprisingly, evidence of an entirely different news frame was found – one emphasizing the *Necessity of Aboriginal People Defending their Rights and Contesting the Status Quo*. News discourse about Aboriginal issues was found to diverge sharply from the mainstream press along a variety of parameters.

The next chapter explores the "effectivity" of mainstream news texts through informal conversations with four people who hold leadership roles in Aboriginal communities. Themes explored in these conversations include the impact of the news on Aboriginal people, influences on the representation of Aboriginal people in the press, and transformation and renewal of mainstream news coverage.
CHAPTER 9: EFFECTIVITY OF NEWS TEXTS

Introduction

The researcher explored the issue of how news texts about Aboriginal issues are decoded by Aboriginal audiences through informal conversations with four people whose work directly involves them in the two issues that are the focus of this dissertation – treaties and child welfare:

1. Judge Steven Point, BC Provincial Court judge and Chief Commissioner of the BC Treaty Commission;
2. Mr. Dan Ludeman, former Executive Director of a fully delegated Aboriginal child welfare agency and currently Associate Community Services Manager of the Abbotsford Aboriginal Regional Office of the Ministry of Child and Family Development;
3. Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, director of the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria; and
4. Mr. Ernie Crey, a former Aboriginal child protection social worker and author of "Stolen from our embrace," a book on Aboriginal child welfare.

The general topic of these conversations was the "effectivity" of news texts about Aboriginal issues. The main themes included the factors shaping the representation of Aboriginal people in the news; impacts of news discourse on Aboriginal people generally and on the ability of Aboriginal leaders to effect positive changes for their communities; and ways that dominant representations of Aboriginal people may be challenged or changed. Since participants had read a summary of the main findings of this dissertation prior to these consultations, they were able to furnish some preliminary commentary, albeit unscientific, on the findings of this research.
"Indians Matter": Why Reportage of Aboriginal Issues is Problematic

One of the findings of Chapter 3 was that, in contrast to representations of Aboriginal people in the historical era, the voices of Aboriginal people are now routinely included in news discourse. Mr. Crey's wry assessment of this new "inclusive" media was "Indians matter." The implication is that in today's press, while lip service may be paid to Aboriginal issues, there have not been substantive changes in how Aboriginal issues are reported. Judge Point noted some of the venerable assumptions about Aboriginal people that still underlie much news coverage including the notion that all Aboriginal people pay no taxes, are given free housing and receive other benefits denied "ordinary" Canadians. Though Aboriginal people are associated with such "special entitlements" in the popular imagination, there is also a perception in the general public – one that is reflected in the news media – that all Aboriginal people are poor and afflicted with social problems such as drug and alcohol addiction. As an illustration of the media's tendency to generalize from the situations of individuals from non-mainstream racial or ethnic groups to all members of those groups, Judge Point quoted an adage about the racial situation in the Southern United States: "When one black man falls off a barstool, all black men fall off bar stools." This resonates with one of the findings of this research, namely, the strong association of Aboriginal people with certain types of behaviours – such as violence, emotionality, and irrationality.

These assumptions may furnish audiences with common sense "evidence" that seems to support popular stereotypes about Aboriginal people, something that all four participants noted. Mr. Ludeman observed that one stereotype running through much media coverage of Aboriginal issues is that Aboriginal people aren't as good as non-
Aboriginal people. He suggested that this stereotype and its corollary – that Aboriginal people can't do as good a job as non-Aboriginal people – have been used to justify a critique, in the news media, of the provincial government's commitment to devolving services to Aboriginal child welfare agencies.

Dr. Alfred believes that the most prevalent stereotype of Aboriginal people in today's news media is that of "the Good Indian." These are Aboriginal people who endeavour to change, adapt, and put their "Indianness" behind them, while embracing Canadian society and the Protestant work ethic. The stereotypical assimilated Indians to which Dr. Alfred refers are demonstrating adaptation, a "well-known ideological value" that is present in many forms of racist discourse (van Dijk, 1992, p. 251). In examining news coverage pertaining to Britain's black immigrant communities in the early 1990s, van Dijk found that many news stories were framed as "object lessons" about the harm that occurs to mainstream society when immigrants do not adapt. These stories typically concluded with a warning to immigrants: "either adapt and submit themselves [sic] or endure fascism and marginalization" (p. 255). In Dr. Alfred's example, it is not immigrants, but the original inhabitants of North America who are being pressured to adapt. He pointed out that, while these assimilated Indians are held up in the press as positive role models for Aboriginal people, those who stand up for themselves and their traditional values are routinely demonized.

When news coverage about a certain topic or group of people is dominated by facile assumptions and old stereotypes, the danger is that stories about the topic or group will become routinized into ready-made storylines. These scripts can be useful to overworked reporters who can sidestep some of the time-consuming activities associated
with investigative journalism such as seeking out alternative points of view and furnishing meaningful contexts for complex issues. Instead, reporters may opt to hang their stories on tried and trusted narrative structures and formulae. Two participants observed that, in their experience, reporters seemed uninterested in their views because they had already decided what the stories were. Mr. Ludeman believes that when reporting on Aboriginal issues, most journalists are simply looking for someone to confirm their stories because the "story is already in the can." He described how his attempts to contextualize the death of an Aboriginal child under the care of his agency were "edited out" in a documentary about Aboriginal child welfare:

I was standing [while being filmed by the CBC] talking about this child's death and I had said, "In this business, one of the tragedies is that children will die and that many times, there's nothing we can do about that. Really, all we can do is rebuild and look at these situations in a careful, learning environment to see if there's anything we can do differently." All they included [in the finished product] was, "In this business, children will die."

After this interview, the reporter, when asked if he wanted any more information, replied, "No, I have a story to tell."

Mr. Ludeman's description of how Aboriginal issues are reported resonates with a standard convention of news "gathering" practices generally – the ritualized news story format:

The correspondent identifies the problem; there is a rising curve of narrative which establishes the situation, identifies protagonists, and sets them against one another; whatever complication emerges from this conflict then dissolves as the correspondent wraps up the package as neatly as possible (Gitlin, 1980, p. 264)

This formulaic approach to reporting the news is particularly problematic when the antagonists and protagonists become entrenched in a one dimensional narrative structure that is saturated with stereotypes about members of a particular ethnic group, who are
typically situated as "antagonists" in news stories. In this case, the storyline is that
services and agencies managed by Aboriginal people are "inadequate." Mr. Ludeman
pointed out that nowhere in the CBC documentary is any attempt made to compare the
data on the number of deaths of children that have occurred under the care of Aboriginal
agencies as opposed to mainstream child welfare authorities. He commented that "child
deaths occur regularly" within the provincial child welfare ministry (MCFD), and
occasionally one or two come under the media "spotlight," but the media attention is
nothing compared to that which follows the death of a child under the care of an
Aboriginal service provider.

Dr. Alfred also remarked on the tendency of journalists covering Aboriginal issues
to simply "pick from a preset menu of stereotypes, myths and fantasies." As a result,
many news stories have a "narrow historical scope" and are based on partial information.
He believes that reporters adhere to lower standards for stories about Aboriginal issues
than they do for other issues: "Reporters don't feel they have the need or responsibility to
research their stories on Natives in the same way that they dig up facts and provide
context for other stories."

Dr. Alfred believes that reporters are socialized into a normative environment – of
the commercial media – that is consistently conservative and hostile to the "agenda of
survival for indigenous people." Because journalists "uncritically accept their
socialization into a racist, colonized mindset," the nature of news stories about Aboriginal
issues, such as self-governance or the devolution of responsibility to Aboriginal people, is
"pre-determined."
Dr. Alfred noted another factor implicated in the marginalization of Aboriginal voices – the bias of mainstream media outlets in favour of dealing with "established" formal institutions: "If you're not a [First Nation] government or institution, reporters don't really want to talk to you. So First Nation institutions and governments sometimes get a voice, even if they're illegal, but no other Aboriginal people." Some Aboriginal people regard certain "Aboriginal" organizations, particularly those dependent on Federal government funding, such as band councils and the AFN, as based on a western model of governance that has been "imposed" on Aboriginal people. These people may not regard such organizations as representing a full range of Aboriginal voices. As an example of the media's preference for including "co-opted" Aboriginal voices in news reports, he cited coverage of non-Aboriginal commercial development on traditional Aboriginal territory: "So the institutions of the First Nations, whether they are legitimate or not, they [reporters] defer to that all the time, so if the First Nation governments are onside with the developments, there's nothing to talk about."

As with the use of ritualized news story format, the preference for dealing with established organizations is a standard feature of news gathering regardless of the issue. However, in a context where Aboriginal people are increasingly challenging non-traditional forms of governance imposed by colonial governments, negotiating new forms of government-to-government relations (e.g., the BC treaty process), and contesting Canadian government authority through social action and the court system, these news practices have the effect of silencing the voices of large Aboriginal constituencies and obscuring the range of debate about issues that are critically important to the daily lives of all Aboriginal people.
(In)Effectivity of News Texts

In his classic *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding* (1980), David Morley observed that "effects" was an inadequate way to identify the "point where audiences differentially read and make sense of messages which have been transmitted, and act on those meanings within the context of their situation and experience" (p. 11). The word "effect" suggests an oversimplified view of how news is encoded and decoded. One connotation of the term is that encoding is a mechanical process, a mere "conveyor-belt for a pre-given message or meaning" (Morley, 1992, p. 120), that yields transparent and unambiguous results. Morley uses the term "effectivity" in an effort to capture the complexity of the processes involved in coding and decoding news messages. An audience's interpretation of the meanings of a given news story is influenced by myriad factors and the degree of effectivity of a news text can never be taken for granted.

Mr. Ludeman believes that news stories about Aboriginal people have little effectivity for Aboriginal audiences since the mainstream media has become irrelevant to their lives in the sense that they fail to represent Aboriginal people or provide access to them. As a result, Aboriginal people are cynical about the mainstream media and tend to distrust reporters. In turn, journalists feel unwelcome by Aboriginal people, which further exacerbates what the RCAP (1996b) has described as the communication gulf between Aboriginal people and other Canadians. Mr. Ludeman also noted the tendency of the media to pay attention to Aboriginal people only in crisis situations and to ignore "positive" developments. When he was Executive Director of Xyolhemeylh, he recalls a time when the news media was running numerous stories suggesting that foster parents were unhappy with the agency. At that same time, Xyolhemeylh held a foster parent
appreciation gathering attended by about 300 people, an extraordinary number for that
type of event, that didn't get "any ink." The focus on "bad news" is a longstanding
convention of the news media that is often attributed to commercial imperatives. Herman
and Chomsky (1988) suggest that positive policy developments are not publicized in the
media simply because they are not marketable.

Mr. Ludeman's conclusion about the irrelevance of the mainstream media\textsuperscript{85} is
echoed by Dr. Alfred who opined that the media have "zero effect on the lives of the
average Native person." Furthermore, he has come to the conclusion that it is not possible
to advance a positive agenda for Aboriginal people in the media or even to win new
supporters on Aboriginal issues: "I can't think of one successful media engagement where
we gained a whole bunch of people on our side because of the portrayal of our cause."

Nonetheless, Dr. Alfred feels that Aboriginal leaders must attempt to engage with
the media if only to influence their own constituencies: "The best you can hope to do is to
engage with it [the media] and to communicate with your own people and to reinforce
messages and to kind of build solidarity that way with people who are predisposed [to
support Aboriginal causes]."

Judge Point agreed that getting the media to even pay attention to issues that
Aboriginal people identify as important is challenging: "For example, try to call a press
conference to talk about what we think about the forest companies coming in and raping
the land, no one cares about what the Indians say unless you set up a road block."

Both Judge Point and Mr. Ludeman noted that one of the effects of news stories
about First Nation communities is to create "disunity" among Aboriginal people. Mr.

\textsuperscript{85} Irrelevant in the sense that Aboriginal people have long since given up any hope of
seeing their views or interests reflected in mainstream media.
Crey had a slightly different take on the usefulness of the mainstream media for Aboriginal people, arguing that it can be a last resort for Aboriginal people to bring public attention to bear on internal problems in Aboriginal communities that are being ignored by local Aboriginal agencies or band councils. Even in these situations, however, Dr. Alfred believes that reporters are not interested in talking to people who are not associated with formal Aboriginal organizations or institutions.

While the mainstream media may be irrelevant to the lives of ordinary Aboriginal people, all participants agree that there is a cumulative effectivity of news texts on the *self-image of Aboriginal people and how they are seen by others*. In part, this is because many of the assumptions underpinning news discourse about Aboriginal people carry with them decidedly negative connotations. Mr. Ludeman feels that one of the consequences of the consistently negative tone of much news coverage of Aboriginal issues is that young people are discouraged from taking on leadership positions in Aboriginal communities: "Because Aboriginal leaders get so beaten up in the media, many talented young Aboriginal people would never venture into any kind of political arena and are reluctant to even take on a leadership role in the community." Furthermore, the nature of media coverage of Aboriginal child welfare issues makes an already stressful line of work even more so for managers and workers alike in Aboriginal child welfare agencies. In fact, Mr. Ludeman cited the personal attacks on him in the press as the determining factor in his decision to step down as executive director of Xyolhemeylh.
Going outside the Box: Challenging Dominant News Representations

For Judge Point, the key to transforming the way Aboriginal people are represented in the media is to change the assumptions people have about Aboriginal people. One of the ways this may be accomplished is through the public education system. Dr. Alfred believes that any educational initiatives must target those holding leadership positions in the media, particularly editors and journalists. He feels that this could be achieved through the use of traditional educational methods as well social action strategies to raise awareness about critical issues. Dr. Alfred cited the 1990 events at Oka, Québec as an example of Aboriginal activism that resulted in a couple of reporters "getting it," although he acknowledged that these particular individuals had developed good relationships with Aboriginal people before the stand-off occurred. While schools of journalism (see recommendations #1) and other educational venues may address the formal need for the education of media workers about the history and context of Aboriginal issues, developing relationships with Aboriginal people takes time and patience – resources that are in short supply in the fast-paced, competitive world of contemporary journalism.

 Perhaps the solution lies in the Aboriginal media. This research found that Aboriginal publications framed issues in fundamentally different ways than mainstream newspapers. However, these alternative themes were rarely, if ever, picked by the press. Dr. Alfred conceded that Aboriginal publications sometimes offer a different take on issues than the mainstream media, but also noted that the Aboriginal press seems to be assimilating the conservative values and market imperatives of the mainstream press.86

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86 Taiaiaike pointed out that, in fact, many media outlets commonly referred to as
I thought there would be more of it [challenging dominant representations of Aboriginal issues] now that we have more Native media but I've seen our Native media get more and more tame over time and mimic the bland corporate mentality of the mainstream media.

Dr. Alfred believes that some Aboriginal publications are so influenced by conservative ideology that the political views of some Aboriginal reporters are censored. He recounted an experience he had about 5 years ago when he was working as a columnist for *Windspeaker*. Shortly after 9/11, he wrote a column that was critical of the Canadian government's support of the Gulf War. After initially refusing to run it, *Windspeaker* eventually cut substantial segments from the story, changed the headline and placed it on page 9 instead of its usual location on the front page. He was subsequently "fired from *Windspeaker* because they wanted to support the war on terror."

Dr. Alfred feels that the best way to challenge these dominant representations is to directly and forcefully confront journalists and publications who advance these views in the public sphere. Since opportunities to do this are rare in the mainstream press and appear to be declining even in the Aboriginal press, he believes that Aboriginal people need to utilize the internet. Aboriginal people could develop websites where they could post columns that contest dominant representations. Once these views are widely circulated in cyberspace, he believes that they have the potential to influence mainstream news discourse. This strategy assumes that Aboriginal people not only have the requisite computer skills, but also a high level of writing ability:

These words, images and representations [about Aboriginal people] need to be challenged and this needs to be done in a very effective way which means that "Aboriginal" are actually not owned or controlled by Aboriginal people. He cited the *Aboriginal Multi-Media Society of Alberta* (AMMSA) and the *Aboriginal People's Television Network* (APTN) as examples of media organizations "focused on Aboriginal issues and communities but not necessarily controlled or staffed by Native people."
you have to be just as good a writer and as funny, or mean sometimes, as they [mainstream columnists] are.

Ultimately, Dr. Alfred feels that Aboriginal writers need to demonstrate the "intellectual courage" to say "what needs to be said and to be willing to defend themselves."

Judge Point observed that there has always been an appetite for Aboriginal perspectives on issues in First Nations and academic communities, yet Aboriginal voices are still marginalized in the press and tend to only come to the fore when Aboriginal people engage in civil disobedience or violent resistance. He identified the economically disadvantaged position of Aboriginal people (in comparison to other Canadians) as the primary obstacle to the improved representation of Aboriginal people in the news. Judge Point predicted that Aboriginal people will become a "major economic force in BC" when they sign treaties and exercise authority over resources. At that time, he believes that the portrayal of Aboriginal people in the media will change. Dr. Alfred himself expressed a similar sentiment in his latest book, *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Freedom and Action* (2005):

A movement simply cannot hope to seriously challenge power in this technology-based political and economic environment without the financial capacity to effect changes in perception and to convey critical messages on the Internet, radio and television. (p. 207)

Empowered individuals, communities and organizations will be able to increasingly engage with the media, and influence dominant discourse by elaborating alternative or counter discourses.
Chapter Summary

This chapter explored the effectivity of mainstream news texts on Aboriginal people through conversations with four people directly involved in Aboriginal self-governance issues. These key players affirmed some of the findings of this dissertation, especially those pertaining to the formulaic and stereotypical representation of Aboriginal people in the news. While the mainstream news media is not seen by many Aboriginal people as speaking to their lived experiences, all four discussants recognized the necessity of engaging with the press in order to defend their respective communities and constituencies. There is also a need for Aboriginal people and their allies to be proactive in their efforts to hold news media accountable for providing more balanced, culturally-sensitive coverage of Aboriginal issues. As Aboriginal people garner increasing economic and political capital through commercial enterprises and self-governance initiatives, their representation in the news will necessarily evolve and new discourses will emerge.

The next, and final, chapter summarizes the main findings of this research; offers some recommendations aimed at improving the representation of Aboriginal people in the news; and identifies a number of pathways that future research might follow.
CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

Introduction

My main object in this dissertation was to chart the semantic and discourse structures underlying dominant representations of Aboriginal people and issues in the mainstream press and to explore alternative and oppositional discourses in the mainstream press as well as in Aboriginal media. Historical continuities and discontinuities in the framing of Aboriginal issues in the news were also addressed. This dissertation challenged dominant representations of Aboriginal people and issues and articulated a vision for new definitions of issues and enhanced public debate.

Summary of Findings

In this dissertation, evidence of the following features of news discourse has been found.

1. The presence of old stereotypes of Aboriginal people in late 20th twentieth century and early 21st century news texts that have endured since at least the 19th century.

A 4-month pilot study of 90 news stories about Aboriginal issues published in the Vancouver Sun, Province and Globe and Mail found that two of the three historical stereotypes identified by the RCAP were still very much present in 2002. The Aboriginal-
as-Pathetic-Victim stereotype appeared in 44% of the articles analysed, while the Aboriginal-as-Angry-Warrior stereotype was present in 31% of news texts.

2. The emergence of newer stereotypes that call into question the ability of Aboriginal people to manage their own affairs.

In the study referred to above, more than 40% of the total number of identified stereotypical images are outside the RCAP's typology. The most prominent of these emerging stereotypes and themes was that of Aboriginal people as incompetent or corrupt financial managers. Emerging stereotypes were also identified in informal conversations with key actors in Chapter 9. Mr. Ludeman believes that one of the most prevalent stereotypes in the news media is that Aboriginal people aren't as good as non-Aboriginal people. He also observed the presence of a related stereotype – that Aboriginal people can't do as good a job as non-Aboriginal people – in a number of news stories that critiqued the management of Aboriginal child welfare agencies.

The flip side of the image of Aboriginal people as "incompetent" may be the Good Indian – the Aboriginal person who embraces mainstream values, works hard, pays taxes and adapts successfully to modern Euro-Canadian society. In Chapter 9, Dr. Alfred opined that this stereotype of assimilated Aboriginal people is held up in the media as a "positive" role model for Aboriginal people. Those Aboriginal people who refuse to embrace "modern" mainstream values or who participate in alternative Aboriginal institutions funded by Canadian taxpayers – such as Aboriginal child welfare agencies – are routinely denigrated in the press.
3. The framing of Aboriginal people as a threat to Euro-Canadian values in four case studies in the 1990s and 2000s.

More than 50% of 188 headlines of news texts published in two national newspapers, two big city dailies, and five community newspapers, referenced behaviour and actions of Aboriginal people that were "harmful" to the interests of others or themselves. One of the arguments offered in some op/eds for why Aboriginal people have become a threat is due to the "special" treatment they have received over the years. Like spoiled children, Aboriginal people "act out" when they do not get their way, or so the argument goes. In Chapter 9, Judge Point observed that the only way for a First Nation to receive any media attention is by engaging in high-profile acts of violent protest or civil disobedience. Similarly, Mr. Ludeman pointed out the only time the press affords Aboriginal child welfare issues any coverage is when there is a tragic event such as the death of a child.

4. The existence of space for secondary discourse in the mainstream media.

While the Aboriginal people as a threat frame was largely uncontested in discourse about both child welfare cases, news coverage of the BC Treaty Referendum, and to a lesser degree the Nisga'a Treaty, afforded space for two secondary news frames: 1) Aboriginal Issues as valid topics for public debate frame, and 2) Minority rights frame.

5. A number of continuities and discontinuities in news discourse from the 1860s and 1990s.

While Aboriginal sources were not included in 19th century news texts, they are now routinely incorporated into the news although their impact is diluted through semantic techniques of deflection, decontextualization, misrepresentation and
In Chapter 9, Mr. Ludeman explains how his attempts to provide a meaningful context for an incident involving the death of a child was edited out of a CBC documentary. The reporter already had his story – the tragic death of a child under the care of an incompetent Aboriginal child welfare agency – and was not interested in providing any background details that may have assisted the audience to understand, for example, the precarious nature of child protection work generally and the unique challenges facing Aboriginal child welfare organizations. The situation described by Mr. Ludeman underscores the need for changes to how journalists are held accountable for ensuring that news stories about Aboriginal people incorporate background information necessary for audiences to understand basic issues.

In coverage of issues that directly or indirectly involve substantial economic resources in the early 1990s, the news media utilized a news frame, *The Triumph of Reason over Emotion*, that minimized or dismissed Aboriginal voices, while privileging Euro-Canadian values and definitions of issues. This is an extension of 19th century news frames that cast Aboriginal people as inferior to White settlers and in need of saving by them.

The prescription to the "Indian problem" offered in the 1860s press was that the state should *treat Aboriginal people differently than Europeans*. While the government's treatment of Aboriginal people was sometimes criticized in the nineteenth century press

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87 Dyck (1991) describes the "Indian problem" as an idea that is deeply embedded in the public idiom of the Canadian people: "The belief [that there is an Indian problem] is so widespread that discussions of the Indian 'problem' may proceed even without having to state the question explicitly" and rests on the assumption that Indians are the "cause of their own misfortune because they have not assimilated themselves into Canadian society" (pp. 1-2). The author's own definition of the problem focuses on the consequences of the state's ongoing "coercive tutelage" of Aboriginal people.
as unfair or immoral, the solutions that were proposed involved assigning Aboriginal people less rights than settlers, forcing them onto tiny reserves, and legislating the mandatory attendance of their children at residential schools designed to remake them after a European image. By contrast, the prescription offered by the 1990s press was to treat everyone the same. The solution to the "Aboriginal" situation was to treat them like other Canadians; according to this view, the very root of the problem was the years of "special" treatment accorded Aboriginal people. The Canadian legal system embodies this view of Western egalitarian society. In news discourse about the Delgamuukw vs. The Queen case, the BC Supreme Court was constructed as the final arbiter of the "truth" about Aboriginal claims. Since everyone is "equal" before the law, this system could not be racist since it recognizes no differences among the individuals who stand before it. This prescription is consistent with a meta-narrative of equality that underpins much contemporary discourse in the Western press that justifies the rigid application of identical treatment to minorities by invoking liberal notions of democracy, meritocracy and rugged individualism.

6. The existence of alternative and oppositional framing in the Aboriginal press.

One oppositional news frame emphasizes the necessity of Aboriginal people defending their rights and contesting the status quo. Implicit in this frame is an assumption that the survival of First Nations rests on their ability to challenge their position of structural inequality and gain control over all aspects of their lives. As well, discourse in the Aboriginal press was found to differ from that of the mainstream media along a number of parameters, including the sorts of rhetorical arguments employed in op/ed pieces.
Watching the "Watchdog"

Elsewhere in this dissertation, attention has been paid to the discursive, cognitive and social influences that shape people's understanding about Aboriginal people and issues. An individual's knowledge about any subject is socially constructed and influenced by an almost infinite variety of cognitive, social and environmental factors, including a number of powerful institutions including the news media. I have identified one of the themes of discourse in Aboriginal publications as the need for the public education system to play a significant role in giving non-Aboriginal people the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of historical factors and contemporary contexts for Aboriginal issues. van Dijk (1998) writes that while schools and universities are geared to reproduce society's dominant ideologies, they are also "among the few institutions where enough freedom (from state intervention, from the market, etc.) exists for 'dissidents' to voice their opposed ideologies" (p. 187). In addition to the education system, people's knowledge about Aboriginal people and issues may be shaped by attitudes present in their families, religious institutions, political parties, workplaces, and countless other formal and informal social settings.

Why, then, the emphasis on the news media? Some media scholars take the position that the media "determine our very consciousness" and have imbued the "public with simplistic and idealistic liberal-pluralist notions about their role in society" (Winter, 1997, p. 139). However, even if many members of the public do embrace a liberal-pluralist conception of the role of the media, there is much evidence to suggest that audiences have at least some degree of autonomy to ignore, select, resist or reinterpret dominant definitions of issues in the news. There is also little doubt that the media alone
do not determine our consciousness. van Dijk writes that "media is the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes and ideologies" but that this is done in "joint production with the other elites, primarily politicians, professionals and academics" (p. 36). This situates the media's influence in the context of other "primary definers," to use Hall's term, but does not account for a variety of environmental and social influences on public thinking.

Foucault (1984) describes the news media as being at the centre of a "political, economic, institutional regime" engaged in "the production of truth" (p. 74). Since no single objective truth exists, according to Foucault, what emerges in the media is inevitably a social construction based on influences exerted by a variety of actors, production processes and other influences. In this dissertation it was found that, within the Canadian news media, truth about Aboriginal matters is often constructed in ways that constrain the aspirations of Aboriginal people while bolstering the status quo.

The political, economic and institutional regime described by Foucault excludes Aboriginal people altogether. In fact, in news media representations, Aboriginal people are largely left out of the imagined community of Canada altogether. From an historical perspective, Benedict Anderson has written about the pivotal role played by "print capitalism" in forging the "imagined community" of the nation-state (Gillespie, 2000. p. 166). Not only are Aboriginal people omitted from this imagined community, they are also excluded from the standard of living enjoyed by other Canadians. Hackett and Zhao (1998) observe that "Aboriginal people experience rates of poverty, unemployment, death, illness, accidents, and incarceration far higher than the national average" (p. 168). This economic disparity has been well-documented. In one study, conducted by the
Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the United Nation's Human Development Index was applied to Aboriginal people. The United Nations annually ranks Canada at or near the top of the list of countries that it surveys. This study found that Aboriginal people, when viewed separately from other Canadians, rank well down the list. In 1998, a year in which Canada was ranked first on this list, if Aboriginal people had been ranked by the same criteria used in the United Nations evaluation, "off-reserve natives" would have ranked 34th, just ahead of Trinidad and Tobago, and "on-reserve natives" 63rd, between the United Arab Emirates and Brazil (Anderssen, 1998).

This imbalance in social and economic capital was as true in 1998 as it was a century earlier. In spite of the third world living conditions experienced by many Aboriginal people, polling has shown that a plurality of Canadians believe that Aboriginal communities are much better off than they actually are:

In 1996, an Insight Canada poll found that nearly half of Canadians believed that the standard of living on reserves was as good as or better than the Canadian average. In the same poll, 83% of Canadians interviewed believed that conditions for Aboriginal people were either improving or staying the same. (Beavon & Cooke, 2003, p. 202).

The sharp contrast between public opinion and the actual situation of Aboriginal people raises a number of questions. Do news media play proactive or passive roles (or both) in perpetuating this disconnect between the everyday realities of Aboriginal people and the perceptions of the Canadian public? What impact do these misperceptions have on the receptivity of other Canadians to costly initiatives designed to improve the autonomy or quality of life of Aboriginal people? Clearly, these questions are well beyond the pale of this dissertation, but they do point to the significance of the media as a key site of contestation in the production of meaning about Aboriginal people and issues. The
importance of news media as sites for the contestation of meaning about Aboriginal issues is heightened in the context of what some would describe as the abdication of the public education system of its responsibility to inform Canadians about the history and context of Aboriginal issues.

Nesbitt-Larking (2001) observes that one of the "greatest powers of ideology is its ability to prevent or limit certain questions from being asked and to render certain visions or hopes unimaginable or unspeakable" (p. 9). As a primary ideological institution, the news media plays a critical role in the production and reproduction of ideology. In the news media, representations of Aboriginal people place them outside the mainstream vision of "our" community, and quality of life indicators show that they are not enjoying the same benefits and lifestyle as other Canadians. The news media are implicated in this exclusion of Aboriginal people from the imagined community, an exclusion that has very real consequences for Aboriginal people.

**News Coverage of Aboriginal Issues Compared with Other Issues**

Decontextualized, unfair and unbalanced news coverage is certainly not confined to Aboriginal issues. For example, news coverage afforded the labour scene in Canada displays a number of similar characteristics. In the case of a strike or contract negotiation, as with Aboriginal issues involving conflicts over resources, the trade union is routinely represented as the "active party" and is pressed by reporters to "explain why it is so upset, what its 'demands' are, and what disruptive actions it might take in the future" (Hackett, 1983, p. 44-5). In addition, in a study conducted by NewsWatch Canada, a media monitoring group, labour issues were identified as one of the major "blind spots" of the
Canadian news media. Hackett et al. (2000) found that, through its selection of sources, the press disproportionately emphasizes the interests of business to the extent that it produces a "one-dimensional perspective on the world of work" (p. 196).

This dissertation found that Aboriginal sources were selectively incorporated in news discourse and that Aboriginal actors were more likely to be accorded agency when they were causing harm to themselves or others. In reportage of the 1991 BC Supreme Court decision in the "Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en" case, Aboriginal sources were accorded less credibility than non-Aboriginal sources. In fact, discourse about this case was described earlier in this dissertation as dominant society's intra-group discourse about a minority group in that it was directed to Euro-Canadian audiences but had relations with Aboriginal people as its subject. This is reminiscent of NewsWatch Canada's findings about the prominence of business sources in "labour" stories. While business sources were usually cited in stories about labour issues, and were sometimes even allowed to define the issues, labour sources were largely absent from "business" stories (Hackett et al., 2000).

News coverage of the Nisga'a treaty, like much coverage of labour issues, portrayed the Nisga'a people as actively harming others. Through their pursuit of a treaty they threatened non-Aboriginal interests, disrupted the economy and imposed race-based policies on non-Aboriginal people. A rhetorical argument present in many op/ed pieces about the treaty was that race based policies such as the Nisga'a Treaty will gravely undermine democracy and destabilize "our" economy. Aboriginal people, ably abetted by their non-Aboriginal "do-gooder" allies, were portrayed as endangering the economic fabric of BC through their treaty initiatives. Numerous other studies of news coverage of
situations involving disputes over land or other resources – whether played out through civil disobedience or the legal process such as Oka, the Delgamuukw case, Gustafsen Lake and Burnt Church, have come to similar conclusions about the portrayal of Aboriginal people (see Winter, 1992, Skea, 1993-94, Roth et al 1995, Culhane, 1998, Henry & Tator, 2002, Lambertus, 2004).

What do these stories have in common with stories about trade unions or labour disputes? Both involve the potential redistribution of resources and capital through higher corporate tax (i.e., to finance "costly" treaty settlements or "lucrative" public sector contracts), the ceding of land or other natural resources to Aboriginal people that could otherwise be exploited (e.g., through mining or forestry), or through higher wages and better benefits for workers. Perhaps more importantly, by pursuing self-governance and promoting the interests of workers, Aboriginal people and trade unions pose challenges to the legitimacy of elites.

The generalizations about news discourse in this dissertation are confined to news stories about Aboriginal issues where the significant transfer of resources and/or power is at stake. Clearly, stories about other Aboriginal issues may be framed quite differently. For example, stories about traditional Aboriginal culture that reflect enduring romantic notions about Aboriginal people often receive "favourable," if somewhat paternalistic, coverage in the mainstream press. Similarly stories that portray individual Aboriginal people overcoming obstacles to achieve success in business or public life are usually framed sympathetically (in Chapter 9, Dr. Alfred describes these stories as reflecting the "Good Indian" stereotype).
News stories that affirm the system is "working" play into a familiar script: no matter your ethnicity or race and regardless of your socio-economic status, you can succeed through hard work and dedication. Hackett et al. (2000) suggest that reporters may have more latitude to express progressive views on "safe" social issues that don't challenge the status quo or involve significant economic stakes:

Journalists are often "permitted" to express liberal views on social or moral questions so long as they do not fundamentally or repeatedly challenge the core political and economic interests of media owners and the rest of the corporate elite (p. 225).

Perhaps the closest parallel to how Aboriginal people are treated in the press is the portrayal of immigrants in western societies. van Dijk's (2000) analysis of representation of immigrants in the news media suggests that there is an overall pattern of "positive self-representation [of news outlets] and negative-other representation":

1. Immigrants are stereotypically represented as breaking the norms and the law, that is, as being different, deviant and a threat to us.
2. We as a group or nation are represented as victims, or as taking vigorous action (by immigration officials or the police) against such deviance.
3. Such representation may be enhanced by hyperboles or metaphors.
4. Credibility and facticity of reports is rhetorically enhanced by the frequent use of numbers and statistics. (p. 48)

All of these characteristics were prominent features of news discourse about Aboriginal people studied in this dissertation.

The Seeds of Resistance

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault wrote that "discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it" (*quoted in* Spurr, pp. 184-185). The discourse and semantic
structures of dominant news frames throw into relief, much like the negative of a photograph, that which is minimized or relegated to the background. Thus, the limited, decontextualized and ahistorical definitions of Aboriginal issues that emerge in the mainstream media stimulate and initiate critical responses that attempt to address problematic aspects of those representations. The very act of unmasking a dominant discourse and its discursive structures has been described as a first step toward developing alternative discourses since it requires that we have an insider's understanding of dominant discourse because we decode it from within: "The logical operations we perform in such a critical project – for example, those of classification, analysis, objectification – are those we have learned from the same critical tradition that produces the discourse of colonialism" (Spurr, 1993, p. 192).

In writing about news coverage of the peace movement in Canada, Hackett (1991) observes that it is these alternative "insider" discourses, rather than truly oppositional ones, that stand the best chance of receiving "respectful attention" (p. 226). However, in order to be taken seriously in the mainstream press, these discourses need to meet certain criteria. These alternative perspectives must

1. Be able to speak from within the 'we-group' implicitly addressed in the news,
2. Be consistent with mainstream values and understandings of the world,
3. Be able to mobilize authoritative discourses, and
4. Focus on particular state actions or policies rather than the system as a whole.

(adapted from Hackett, 1991, p. 226)

The two secondary news frames that were present in news coverage of the Nisga'a Treaty and the BC Treaty Referendum fit this profile. The Valid Topic For Public Debate Frame, reflected in some Globe & Mail coverage of the Nisga'a Treaty, suggests that there are rational and convincing arguments to be made by both sides in the treaty debate.
Much like Hackett and Zhao's Legitimate Controversy Frame, this frame builds on core journalistic principles such as balance, neutrality and detachment. As such, this discourse is founded on values and practices of the we-group and therefore does not represent an attack on the system as a whole. This frame simply advances the principle of offering the public an open forum where a wide range of positions may be presented and debated. This is consistent with traditional journalistic principles and liberal conceptions of democracy and the public sphere that maintain that open and vigorous public debate on all issues is vital to healthy and efficient functioning of society.

The Minority rights frame, reflected primarily in news coverage of the BC Treaty Referendum, represents a liberal-pluralist vision of a "democratic free society" that vigorously defends the rights of minority groups. The argument was made that the referendum represented an attack on the rights of a minority group. This frame does not carry with it any suggestion that Canadian society as a whole does not protect or respect minority rights in general. To the contrary, implicit in this news frame is the idea that the protection of minority rights is something that Canada does particularly well, which is all the more reason to rally to the cause of opposing the referendum. Since the implementation of the treaty referendum is seen as an aberration, this frame effectively affirms the nature of our democratic and multicultural society. In this case, the exception proves the rule.

On the other hand, discourse in Aboriginal publications, while not necessary oppositional in nature, is outside the normative range of Canadian society and is clearly not directed at the we-group, except possibly in the sense that it sometimes engages with ideas generated in the news media of the other. The primary news frame that emerged out
of the Aboriginal media emphasizes the *necessity of Aboriginal people defending their rights and contesting the status quo* in the context of the history of colonization. Implicit in this frame is an assumption that the survival of First Nations rests on their ability to overcome inequality and assume full control over their lives. This is a truly oppositional discourse in that it calls into question the system as a whole and seeks a significant redistribution of power and resources. It does not address the "we-group" that is the target of the mainstream press since it references a different system of values, some of which were constructed, in the mainstream media, as a threat to the normative basis of Canadian society.

This would seem to suggest that the prospect of this news frame extending its influence beyond the largely Aboriginal audiences of a network of generally small, limited circulation Aboriginal publications is somewhat bleak. The findings of this dissertation indicate that Aboriginal media attempt to engage the mainstream press in a "conversation" by making frequently references to news stories in national and big city newspapers and by taking issue with viewpoints presented in those publications. On the other hand, the mainstream press is largely self-contained. It is mostly owned and operated by Euro-Canadians and its products are directed at Euro-Canadian audiences. In the 188 news stories about Aboriginal issues that form the basis for Chapters 5, 6 and 7, not one reference was made to news coverage in Aboriginal publications. While news discourse in Aboriginal publications may have the potential to transform public thinking about Aboriginal issues and alter the nature of race relations, this would only be possible
if the mainstream news media create a forum for a meaningful conversation between Aboriginal people and other Canadians, where there is a genuine exchange of ideas.\textsuperscript{88}

**Recommendations**

Though it is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I would like to offer some preliminary thoughts on the kinds of initiatives and changes that might lead to improved more inclusive representations of Aboriginal people in the news.

I have great faith in the Canadian public's sense of fair play and ability to make sense of complicated issues. The public is not, as Lippman once suggested, too naïve and passive, to participate in modern government and play a role in public affairs. It is important, however, for Canadians to be more (pro)active and informed about Aboriginal people and issues; audiences have the potential to not only reject or reuse messages, but also to seek out entirely new understandings of critical issues. The following recommendations represent a preliminary attempt to address a key strategic issue – how to best provide the Canadian public with the tools necessary to achieve cultural awareness.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{88} During the Oka Crisis, Aboriginal discourse about the negotiations between the government and the Mohawk was never on the radar screen of the Canadian news media. One of the consequences of the press remaining "entirely ignorant of the Aboriginal discourse" is that it was rendered incapable of characterizing traditional Aboriginal negotiating practices, such as having large negotiating teams and appointing female lead negotiators, "as anything other than irrational" (Nesbitt-Larking, 2001, p. 273).

\textsuperscript{89} Aboriginal people and organizations such as the Assembly of First Nations have been cognizant of representation problems in the press for many years and have themselves put forward a number of suggestions about how to improve reporting of Aboriginal issues. As well, the RCAP made a series of far-reaching recommendations concerning
1. Curricula changes in schools of journalism

Curricula could be redesigned to ensure that prospective journalists learn about the context of Aboriginal issues and historical problems of representation of Aboriginal people in the media. While news is seen by some as the opposite of history (Tuchman, 1978, Hartley & McKee, 2000), if journalists themselves had a better understanding of Canada's colonial past and its historical and contemporary relations with Aboriginal people, they might be more likely to include this as part of the context of news stories or at least factor it into their selection and construction of stories about Aboriginal people.

In covering the events at Oka in 1990, it is apparent that many journalists lacked a sufficient understanding of the historical context of the dispute as well as the cross-cultural communication skills needed to elicit the Mohawk's side of the story:

To cover the Mohawk/Oka dispute fairly would have required sensitive cross-cultural understanding and relational skills, trustworthy contacts within the Mohawk communities, and a formal recognition of the complexity of the issues leading up to the armed conflict. These conditions were not met by most journalists. (Roth et al., 1995, p.75)

In Chapter 9, both Dr. Alfred and Mr. Ludeman commented on the tendency of reporters to rely on stereotyping and the ritualized news story format when covering Aboriginal matters. The impression that mainstream journalists create for many Aboriginal people is that they are not interested in sketching in the historical context of these issues because they have already decided what the story is.

In addition to addressing the need for better cross-cultural communication skills and a better grasp of Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal history, journalism schools could include Aboriginal access to the media, the training of journalists, and the representation of Aboriginal people in Volume 3 of their Report, Gathering Strength.
a specific unit of study that focuses on the treatment of Aboriginal people by the news media. Courses of this nature have been offered as electives in journalism schools in other countries. For example, at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, students have the option of taking a course entitled, "Aboriginal People and the Media" that is designed to help students

[develop] a critical awareness of racism in the Australian mass media, to develop knowledge of Australian indigenous interventions and mass media alternatives and to develop research skills necessary to enable [them] to identify and evaluate strategies for intervening in the mass communication field to challenge racism and to promote intercultural understanding and tolerance (Hartley & McKee, 2000, p. 331)

Changing curricula in journalism school is not a solution to problems of representation, but it may bring about incremental changes in how journalists approach stories about Aboriginal topics.

I have seen a similar evolution of curricula have an impact in the social work academy. In the 1980s, despite the fact that a disproportionately high number of social work clients were of Aboriginal origin, little or no curriculum content was devoted to working with this population in Canadian schools of social work. Over the years, this has slowly changed, starting with the introduction of one specialized course devoted to Aboriginal social work. Today, some schools dedicate several required courses to Aboriginal social work, while others have developed Aboriginal Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) programmes, and almost all courses have had at least some Aboriginal content "infused" into them. While the social work academy has much further to go in this regard, there is no question that BSW graduates today have far greater knowledge of, and sensitivity to, Aboriginal issues than before the curricula changes and a better practical grasp of working with Aboriginal individuals, families and communities.
2. The adoption of journalistic standards of practice with respect to reporting on Aboriginal people and issues

"...the presence of a code will at least reduce the number of people who, when challenged about an ethical infringement, can say, "But I didn't know."

The impact of changes in curricula for journalism students might be enhanced if when those students begin working professionally, they were held accountable for their reporting on Aboriginal issues *by their profession*. The profession of journalism has the ability to regulate itself through such measures as codes of ethics or standards of practice.

Of course, there are already a number of codes of ethics and statements of principle with regard to the profession of journalism in general. For example, the Canadian Association of Journalists released both a "Statement of Principles" and a set of ethics guidelines in 2002. Both of these documents would seem to have some application to the representation of Aboriginal people, particularly, in the former document's principle of "Diversity" and in the ethic guidelines' section on "Discrimination." As well, the Canadian Newspaper Association's "Statement of Principles" contains a section on "Community Responsibility" in which newspapers are urged to "paint a representative picture of its diverse communities, [and] to encourage the expression of disparate views and to be accessible and accountable to the readers it serves, whether rich or poor, weak or powerful, minority or majority" (1995).

While these may be laudable objectives, they lack specificity, and fail to identify race or ethnicity as an area in need of special attention – in fact, nowhere in this document, does the word "race" appear. Research conducted on over 30 codes used in Canadian newsrooms found that one of the topics that was often missing was that of "racial stereotypes" (Russell, 2006, p. 242).
Perhaps the profession of journalism could set specific standards of practice relating to how Aboriginal people and issues ought to be covered. Similar suggestions have been offered with respect to the need for standards that govern political reporting (Cross, 2006). Such codes could emphasize not only how journalists could avoid casting stories in racial stereotypes, but could also encourage reporters to be more proactive in challenging racism and the unfair treatment of Aboriginal people. A good example of a proactive code is the International Journalists' Federation Code of Ethics, which goes well beyond other journalistic guidelines in that it encourages journalists to step outside their traditional role of "impartial observer" and "be actively concerned with combating racism" (Hartley & McKee, 2000, p. 312).

It would be naïve to overestimate the potential impact that changes in, or additions to, ethical guidelines might have on how Aboriginal people are represented in the Canadian news media. For one thing, the professional associations that issue these documents do not have the authority, unlike their counterparts in other fields such as law or medicine, to prevent members from practicing their profession due to ethical transgressions. In fact, codes of ethics for journalists have alternately been portrayed as "toothless," "bland," "ineffective" and "unenforceable" (Russell, 2006). Hartley and McKee (2000) describe them as little more than "mental check lists for individual journalists to follow or not as their conscience dictates" (p. 308). However, the presence of a code of ethics or practice that specifically identifies principles or guidelines journalists should follow in reporting on Aboriginal issues or stories, may at least enhance reporters' awareness about Aboriginal issues generally and create a sense that theirs peers expect certain standards to be upheld when it comes to Aboriginal stories.
3. More Proactive action by Canada's regional press councils

Canada's regional press councils could become more proactive in taking action against member newspapers that offer unfair or biased news stories about Aboriginal people and issues. Instead of simply investigating selected complaints from private citizens, AFN Grand Chief Phil Fontaine suggests that "press councils could be investigating ways to be a deterrent against unfair practices" (AFN, 1998, July 23). While press councils have been described as "toothless," they nonetheless offer a "safety valve for complaints" about news reporting and also elaborate "useful principles with significant input from laypersons outside the news industry" (Russell, 2006, p.231). This would not solve all problems relating to Aboriginal representation in the press; however, it might set a tone where newspapers at least need to be mindful of the Aboriginal presence generally and capable of responding to egregious news stories to avoid censure by press councils.

4. The involvement of individual members of the public in challenging unfair media representations

In their Media Handbook (1998), the AFN encourages everyone to get involved in challenging unfair media representations of Aboriginal people. One of the strategies they suggest is writing letters-to-the-editor. Hackett (1991) describes this news format as offering "relatively good opportunities for the elaboration of dissent [because letters-to-the-editor] can be used to shift the terms of the debate, challenge the language in dominant use, and extend the range of perspectives that otherwise would have been available" (p. 279).
One of the limitations of writing letters-to-the-editor is that larger circulation newspapers often receive many more letters than they are able to publish. For example, the *Globe and Mail* receives about "two hundred letters a day, publishing between twelve and eighteen" (Russell, 2006, p. 215). Depending on who is doing the selecting, there is no guarantee that critical views about a newspaper's coverage of an Aboriginal issue will even make the letter-to-the-editor page. In addition, with the expansion of the internet and the advent of email, it appears that there is a bias against "conventional" mail. This would seem to further marginalize the views of those older or low-income Aboriginal people who do not use or have access to the internet.

Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that letters-to-the-editor by prominent Aboriginal people and their supporters may be an effective way to put forward views on Aboriginal issues that are left out of the news. For example, in a column appearing in the August 3, 2006 edition of the *Globe & Mail* entitled, "A bleak choice for young Indians," efforts to improve educational outcomes for on-reserve children are described as a "complete waste of time and money" (Ibbotson, p. A4). The columnist advised Aboriginal people to evacuate reserves and seek their fortune in one of Canada's big cities. Because reserves, in spite of "their administrative peculiarities and socio-economic deficiencies ...have become both a symbol [for Aboriginal people] and one of the main bulwarks of Indianness" (Dyck, 1991, p. 145), it was not surprising that this column evoked a strong reaction from Aboriginal people. The following week, the same columnist referred to a number of Aboriginal readers who wrote letters to the newspaper to complain. He also quoted the views of three Aboriginal people who had written to the newspaper to offer

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90 Russell (2006) cites data compiled by Edward Greenspon in "From Chagrined in Chilliwack" (Globe & Mail, March 2003, A2).
their comments. AFN Chief Phil Fontaine's chief of staff criticized the columnist for being ill-informed. While the columnist did not appear to change his basic position on the issue, he did include a range of Aboriginal views not only on his previous week's column, but also on government policy towards Aboriginal people in general. Thus, Aboriginal letter-writers, albeit in a reactive way, were able to influence the "priming" process.

Increasingly, the internet is becoming a vehicle for challenging unfair or misleading representations of Aboriginal people in the mainstream media. In Chapter 9, Dr. Alfred suggested that developing the necessary skills to utilize the internet to challenge dominant representations of issues is a matter of self-defence for Aboriginal people.

5. Influencing domestic discourse on Aboriginal issues through the international media

"The gulf between Aboriginal people and other Canadians is increasingly visible outside Canada's borders"
– Renee Dupuis, Justice for Canada's Aboriginal People, 2002

Aboriginal people, organizations and their supporters can systematically pressure the international media to draw attention to those actions by Canadian governments, media corporations or other actors that are detrimental to Canadian Aboriginal people and that receive limited or unsympathetic news coverage in the country's domestic media. By appealing to international media corporations, that don't necessarily have the same stake in issues as Canadian corporate media interests, Aboriginal people may be able to tap into international sympathy for the situation of indigenous people. Hackett (1991) describes the trans-national media as one of the "openings" for dissent within the culture of journalism, one that offers a global forum of public opinion "which has restrained various
governments from repressing their own people - at least when the television cameras are on" (p. 280).

The globalization of the media offers Aboriginal people and others new avenues of influence and has effectively changed the rules of the game governing the way that governments deal with minority and indigenous populations:

International public opinion and international institutions have increasing influence within states - this is a new phenomenon that will probably continue to grow. The time when governments could regard questions relating to the protection of fundamental rights as questions of internal governance alone has passed. The position of minorities, whether indigenous or not, has become a matter of international concern, expressed through international institutions, public and private humanitarian organizations and the media. (Dupuis, 2002, pp. 144-145)

Indigenous people and marginalized groups around the world have successfully engaged the attention of the international press in a number of situations. Earlier in this dissertation, I described the success achieved by a coalition of civil society organizations and social movements in "catalyzing" significant changes in Brazilian public policy with respect to street children. By exerting concerted pressure, this coalition of NGOs, the Catholic Church, child advocacy groups, opposition politicians with the participation of the children themselves, was able to attract the considerable interest of the international media. The author of this case study concluded that "peripheral groups" could influence the way issues are defined and debated in the media and dealt with through government policy by accessing the "international public sphere" (Serra, 2000, p. 169).

As well, in the late 1990s, Zapatista leader Sub-Commandante Marcos succeeded in bringing his campaign for social justice for the indigenous people of Mexico's Chiapas state to the attention of the international media. His astute appeals to the global media, particularly through his use of the internet, forced the Mexican government to make an
effort to deal with critical issues and limited the potential for violent repercussions against his constituency and the leadership of the Zapatista movement.

Similarly, intense international media scrutiny of the events at Oka in 1990 may have constrained the actions of the Canadian government and influenced domestic media coverage of the situation. In particular, two community radio stations located on Mohawk territory became "pivotal sources of information during the confrontation" and were contacted by Canadian media outlets as well as international media for "their side of the story" (Roth et al., 1995, p. 51). However, one of the risks inherent in indigenous people courting the interest of the international media is that important issues and events may be subjected to tried and trusted marketing formulae that emphasize "indigenous artefacts" and are based on stereotypical assumptions about the intrinsic "character" of indigenous people. In the case of the events at Oka, ultimately, the international media "neglected researching and publicizing the critical issues that underpinned the conflict's origin" and commodified the "stereotypical image of the Mohawk Warrior in full camouflage costume, including bandana and mask" (ibid., p. 77). The commodification of indigenous issues had the effect of distracting the public from the serious questions that might unmask the "unworkable assumptions presently clouding discourse on serious political problems and relationships among Canadian/Québec/Aboriginal societies" (Roth, 1992, p.159).

**Contribution to the Literature**

This dissertation offers the first systematic analysis of news coverage of Aboriginal self-governance issues in modern British Columbia. The relationship between
Aboriginal people and other British Columbians is at a critical juncture. First Nations, by negotiating tripartite treaty agreements with federal and provincial government and re-taking authority over child welfare, education and other sectors, are moving away from the relationship of dependency on the federal government codified in the *Indian Act* (1876) and implemented through a variety of state policies. Through the framing of issues and setting agenda, the news media may play a crucial role in equipping all British Colombians with a basic literacy about Aboriginal issues.

While this research confirms some of the main findings of other studies about the formulaic and limiting nature of news coverage of Aboriginal issues, it also offers some groundbreaking work on 1) new discourse schemata, such as emerging stereotypes, and 2) the resurgence of venerable framing patterns, such as the tendency to construct Aboriginal people as a threat to the interests of other Canadians.

Not only does this study furnish the first comprehensive assessment of the applicability of the 1996 RCAP’s findings on media representations of Aboriginal people to early 21st Century news discourse about Aboriginal people, it also charts continuities in news discourse that span colonial and modern Canadian history as well as discontinuities between the two.

While other researchers have also explored how Aboriginal issues are framed in the news media, (e.g. Furniss, 2001, Lambertus, 2004), this study addresses a significant gap in the literature by providing a comparative analysis of news discourse in Aboriginal and mainstream presses. In addition to distinguishing significant variations in narrative structures, this study also identified features of discourse in the Aboriginal press not present in mainstream news coverage.
These findings point to a number of pathways for future study. First, research on the Aboriginal media needs to be conducted on a larger scale since the findings here are based on a limited data set. Large-scale content analysis studies, supplemented by qualitative methods of analysis such as discourse analysis, on news coverage in the Aboriginal press may lead to a more comprehensive answer to a key question - What other news frames are possible? My research gives a preliminary indication that the Aboriginal press includes a greater variety of voices in news stories and offers a broader range of possible definitions of Aboriginal issues than the mainstream press. Possible topics for future comparative analyses of Aboriginal versus mainstream media include: contextualization of issues, source use, references to racism and colonization, and normative differences between Aboriginal people and other Canadians.

Studies could also be designed to assess if or how mainstream news coverage of specific issues varies when the principle actors involved are Aboriginal Canadians. Using a “paired example” approach, communications researchers could assess similarities and differences in the ways that news media treat Aboriginal institutions as compared to their mainstream counterparts. This approach has been used by a number of media researchers, including Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman (1988) who found significant variations in American media treatments of foreign policy issues involving official “allies” and official “enemies” of the United States. It is a methodology that is well suited to examining media representations of highly polarized situations involving parties with divergent interests.

Researchers could use this methodology to assess news media treatments of Aboriginal child welfare agencies and mainstream child welfare authorities. In particular,
comparative analyses could be conducted on news coverage of 1) critical incidents in the field of child welfare (deaths of, or injuries to, children under care) or 2) issues of financial management of these services. In Chapter 9, Mr. Ludeman commented that, during his tenure as executive director of Xyothemeylh, the Sto:lo child welfare agency, he was often struck by the disproportion in the amount of news coverage accorded deaths of children cared for by Aboriginal agencies as opposed to that afforded deaths of kids under MCFD's care.

While the deaths of Aboriginal children under the care of Aboriginal authorities are relatively rare, every year, numerous children under the care of non-Aboriginal child welfare authorities, such as the MCFD, die or suffer grievous injuries. In Chapter 9: Effectivity of News Texts, Mr. Ludeman points to a disproportion in terms of the amount of news coverage devoted to deaths of children under Aboriginal care as compared to those under provincial government care.

Chapter 2 identified an emergent stereotype of Aboriginal people — *Aboriginal people as incompetent or corrupt financial managers*, along with a contingent theme — *Aboriginal people as unable to meet modern standards of governance*. Researchers could conduct content analyses on news coverage of two situations involving allegations of financial mismanagement, one case involving an Aboriginal Child Welfare Agency and another where allegations are directed at a government agency such as MCFD.

Content analyses could be used to gauge the comparative volume and frequency of news coverage of these paired cases, while discourse analysis could assess narrative structure, argumentative strategies and tonal qualities of news coverage. This line of inquiry has the potential to expose some of the contradictions, blind spots and
inconsistencies inherent in news coverage of the management and delivery of social services, which is, for Aboriginal people, an increasingly important issue.
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Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1996e). *People to people, Nation to nation: Highlights from the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.


APPENDIX A - DATA AND METHODOLOGY

I Overview of Data

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2: The Media, Aboriginal People and Common Sense, techniques of content analysis are applied to 90 news stories about Aboriginal issues that appeared in three Canadian newspapers – the Vancouver Sun, the Province and the Globe and Mail – published between June 1 and September 30, 2002. The unit of analysis was each individual news story. Any article containing one or more of the following key words was considered: Aboriginal, Native, Inuit, First Nations, Métis and Indian (if used to refer to North American Aboriginal people). News content from the following newspaper sections was included:

The Globe and Mail – front section (A)

The Vancouver Sun – front section (A) and Lower Mainland Section (B)

The Province – front portion (excluding Business, Entertainment and Sports)

The research sample consisted of a census of the entire content targeted by the researcher – all 90 articles that referenced one or more of the identified keywords in the specified newspaper sections during the research period. Thirty-four articles appeared in The Vancouver Sun, 33 were published in The Globe and Mail and 23 appeared in The Province.

Hard copies of all relevant articles were clipped from newspapers and mounted in oversized artist's sketchbooks. This labour intensive process, while feasible for small-scale research, might not be practical for larger projects. By accessing data directly from newspapers as opposed to on-line news databases – such as Canadian Newsstand or Lexis...
Nexis – the researcher was able to assess important features of the data that were not accessible on-line. Thus, articles could be situated within their context on the news page and in the newspaper itself. For example, a researcher dependent on a news database would be unaware that an article on a Supreme Court decision on Aboriginal rights is stranded in a narrow column alongside a full-page advertisement for used cars. By getting a spatial sense of the article's location on the news page and by having access to other details of the article's original presentation (such as font size of headlines, accompanying material such as photos or maps, other headlines on the news page, types and sizes of advertisements), the researcher is better able to assess the story's relative prominence in the newspaper.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3: Historical Representations of Aboriginal People, methods of critical discourse analysis and frame analysis are applied to 43 news texts about four flashpoints in Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal history. Three articles from The British Columbian relating to the opening of the province's first "residential" school in Mission in 1863 are analyzed. The issue of land garnered considerably more attention in the 1860s BC press than did residential schools. Four articles from The British Columbian and one article from The British Colonist relating to the land pre-emption law are analyzed. In addition, 11 articles that focus on issues indirectly related to the "Indian land question," as it was frequently described, are also considered.91

91 One of these articles extolled the virtues of the "American military solution" to the Indian "problem," while a majority of the others focused on Aboriginal people's supposed innate propensity for violence and lawlessness.
The other issue related to control over land – the 1991 BC Supreme Court decision in the "Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en" case – also attracted intense media scrutiny. Nineteen articles appeared in the *Vancouver Sun, Province* and *Times-Colonist* newspapers on the day of the decision and during the three days that followed. A number of these texts were quite lengthy, the longest weighing in at over 1600 words. By contrast, in the days following the release of a 1992 Aboriginal child welfare report, only four articles appeared in BC's three major daily newspapers. These news stories were relatively short, averaging about 440 words.

News stories from the 1860s editions of *The British Columbian* and *The British Colonist* were retrieved from microfilm collections held at the Chilliwack campus of the University College of the Fraser Valley and the New Westminster Public Library. The writer performed a manual search of every issue of both newspapers published during the selected years.

News stories from 1991 and 1992 editions of the *Vancouver Sun* and *Province* newspapers were accessed through Canadian NewsStand, an on-line full-text database. Since this database's *Times-Colonist* archive does not go back before January 1, 1993, it was necessary to do a headline search for *Times-Colonist* stories about the "Gitxsan-Wet'suwet'en" decision and the community panel's report on Aboriginal child welfare.

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92 This on-line database contains the full text of stories published in major Canadian and small market BC newspapers, with a 2-7 day publication lag. Canadian Newsstand permits the use of a variety of search parameters such as date, author, headline as well as by key words that appear anywhere in headlines or text. Searches generate full-text versions of articles, although not in their original format. In addition, a summary and word count of each article are included.
through the BC Newspaper and BC Periodical Index. Photocopies of relevant articles were obtained from the provincial government archives in Victoria.

Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8

Chapters 5 through 8 are based on a comprehensive analysis of news coverage, between 1998 and 2003, of four high-profile Aboriginal-related issues:

- Nisga'a Treaty (1998)
- Death of a Child under Aboriginal Care (2003)

Chapter 5: Headline Analysis features an analysis of the headlines for 188 news items in two BC dailies, both national newspapers and several community newspapers. In Chapters 6 and 7, techniques of critical discourse analysis are applied to the news texts accompanying the headlines analysed in the previous chapter, 63 of which are op/ed pieces. Chapter 8, which is based on discourse analysis of 34 articles published in Aboriginal newspapers, offers some preliminary comparisons between framing in the mainstream press and Aboriginal media. Table 28 provides an overview of the distribution of news items by issue and publication.
Table 28: Number of News Items Analysed in Chapters 5-8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NEWSPAPER</th>
<th>ISSUE #1</th>
<th>ISSUE #2</th>
<th>ISSUE #3</th>
<th>ISSUE #4</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nisga’a Treaty</td>
<td>BC Treaty Referendum</td>
<td>Death of a Child</td>
<td>Repatriation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globe &amp; Mail</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Post</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Daily</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Sun</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Province</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbotsford Times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilliwack Times</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission City Record</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamloops Daily News</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Northern Sentinel</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>NI</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windspeaker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahtou</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raven’s Eye</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Perspective</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NI = News items from this newspaper are not included in this case study.

Except for the Kamloops Daily News, which is published every day but Sunday, the community newspapers under study are published once or twice per week. The two national newspapers and two major dailies, which are published six times weekly, generally furnish considerably more news coverage than their community counterparts. In order to generate comparable quantities of data, a longer period of reportage was surveyed from community newspapers than for daily and national newspapers. Finally, since the four Aboriginal publications are published only once a month, two or three months of coverage (two or three issues of each paper) following the target events was analyzed. Table 29 shows the date range of the news texts surveyed in this study.
Table 29: Date Range of News Coverage Surveyed by Issue & Publication Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Newspapers</td>
<td>Major Daily Newspapers</td>
<td>Community Newspapers</td>
<td>Aboriginal Publications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov 8-21</td>
<td>Nov 8-21</td>
<td>Nov 4-Dec 18</td>
<td>Nov to Jan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr 2-15</td>
<td>Apr 2-15</td>
<td>Apr 1-May 18</td>
<td>April to June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug 14-Nov 19</td>
<td>Aug 14-Nov 19</td>
<td>Aug 14-Nov 19</td>
<td>Sept to Nov</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All articles published during the above date ranges that referenced the specific issue were included in this study.

News texts considered in these four case studies were accessed from a variety of sources. Stories from the *National Post, Vancouver Sun, Province* and *Kamloops Daily News* were retrieved using Canadian Newsstand. All stories from *First Perspective* and some of the news texts appearing in the *Globe & Mail* were obtained through the Canadian Periodical Index ("CPI.Q"), a full-text electronic resource available through Simon Fraser University (SFU) Library's Internet Access Services. The remainder of the *Globe & Mail* articles were procured through an electronic resource, the *Globe & Mail CD-ROM*, located at the University College of the Fraser Valley library in Abbotsford. News stories from *Windspeaker* were retrieved from the Canadian Business and Current Affairs (CBCA) Reference, a full-text electronic resource available through SFU Library's Internet Access Services. Content from *Kahtou* and *Raven's Eye* was obtained from an archive of hard copies maintained in the Periodical section of the main branch of the Vancouver Public Library, while news stories from *The Northern Sentinel* were ordered from an on-site archive maintained by the Kitimat Public Library. Articles from
1998 issues of the *Abbotsford Times* and 2002 issues of the *Mission City Record* were retrieved through a manual search of on-site archives maintained by both newspapers. Articles from 1998 issues of the *Chilliwack Times* were accessed through an archive housed at the Chilliwack Museum. All other news texts from the *Abbotsford Times* and its Chilliwack counterpart were obtained through full-text on-line archives maintained by each newspaper.

II Methodological Issues

*Content Analysis*

*Why this methodology*

Content analysis was selected as the best form of textual analysis to begin the process of exploring broad patterns of news coverage about Aboriginal issues (Chapter 2). In its application to media studies, content analysis has traditionally been employed to appraise features of news content and to trace their implications "about realities which lie outside the media content" such as "assessing the image of particular groups in society" (Bailey & Hackett, 1997, pp. 3-4). In Chapter 2, techniques of content analysis were used to construct a profile of the prototypical Aboriginal news story, including a variety of publication details – such as story location and genre – as well as the sorts of topics that tend to garner attention in the news media. These features of the news correspond to *manifest* content or elements that are physically present and countable. In addition, the researcher employed content analysis to furnish an interpretive reading of the *latent*
content of the news – that is, the symbolism underlying the physical data, particularly as it relates to stereotyping and the construction of "common sense" in news stories.  

Coding

In Chapter 2, the researcher filled in single-case Coding Forms (see Appendix D) for each of the 90 news stories. Reading an article and filling in a coding form by hand took coders between 10 and 15 minutes, depending on the length and complexity of the news item being coded. The Coding Protocol (see Appendix C) sets out the coding guidelines, definitions of terms used and a selection of choices available for each category (e.g., for "Stereotypes," the following four choices are available: Pathetic Victim, Angry Warrior, Noble Environmentalist and Other). The coding form is divided into five sections:

A. Publication Details: headline, date of coding, story location, page number, month and day of month, genre, name of author, Aboriginal descent of author (if applicable);

B. Aboriginal Topics Present: 25 Aboriginal topics are listed; provision is also made for writing in topics not included on the list;

C. Actors and Roles: up to 6 actors may be named; 6 role options for each actor: none, victim, hero, villain, survivor and other (which could be written in);

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93 In differentiating manifest content from latent content, there is a danger of creating a false dichotomy since this distinction may not always be so clear-cut. Since language is a sign system that is actively used in a variety of contexts of human interaction, signs and symbols invariably change over time and there may also be significant local variations in meaning. Riffe, Lacy & Fico (2005) give the following example: "A manifest meaning of a word in 2005 may not have been manifest a hundred years before. The word cool, applied to a film, for example, means to many people that it was a good film, which would make it manifest. The meaning, which can be found in dictionaries, was certainly not manifest in 1850" (p. 37).
D. Aboriginal Identity of Aboriginal Actors: First Nations; Métis; Inuit; Canadian Aboriginal person(s) identified as being in one of above three categories; Pan-Indian; Native American(s); Other indigenous person – write in; Unknown; Does not fit;

E. Other Attributes of the Article, including stereotypes, main themes, whether or not articles are sympathetic or unsympathetic to Aboriginal issues, and how the relationship between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal Society/Institutions is characterized.

Reliability Tests

In Chapter 2, the researcher initially coded all 90 news texts. Forty-five news texts – every second news story – were re-coded by two trained research assistants (Coder #2 coded 22 news texts and Coder #3 coded 23) and subjected to inter-coder reliability tests. In addition, the three coders re-coded 13.3% of the 135 news texts they had already originally coded (18 news texts) again so that intra-coder reliability tests could be done. The results of these reliability tests are summarized in Tables 30 and 31.
Table 30: Inter-Coder Reliability Tests (n=45)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>AGREEMENT</th>
<th>SCOTT'S PI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Topics Present – Primary Topic</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>.878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes of Aboriginal People Present</td>
<td>93.3%</td>
<td>.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Specific Stereotypes</td>
<td>79.8%</td>
<td>.719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic/Unsympathetic to Aboriginal Interests and Issues</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal People's Orientation to non-Aboriginal Society/Institutions</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Actors – Identity</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal Actors – Identity</td>
<td>81.9%</td>
<td>.766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of Aboriginal Actors</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>.761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of Non-Aboriginal Actors</td>
<td>82.5%</td>
<td>.717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 31: Intra-Coder Reliability Tests (n=18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>AGREEMENT</th>
<th>SCOTT'S PI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Topics Present – Primary Topic</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>.875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes of Aboriginal People Present</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification of Specific Stereotypes</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic/Unsympathetic to Aboriginal Interests and Issues</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal People's Orientation to non-Aboriginal Society/Institutions</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
<td>.839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Actors - Identity</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>.959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal Actors - Identity</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
<td>.759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of Aboriginal Actors</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>.776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roles of Non-Aboriginal Actors</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>.859</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this research, all reliability tests are expressed as both a simple percentage and as Scott's Pi index. Simple percentage reliability tests measure the level of agreement among two or more coders. The minimum acceptable percentage of agreement among coders is 80% (Riffe et al., 2005, p. 147). However, basic percentage calculations of coder agreement do not take into account the number of coding options (i.e., values) in a
given category and the potential for random agreement, especially in variables where the
distribution is highly skewed. Table 32 illustrates the mathematical expression of Scott's
Pi, an index of reliability designed to address the limitations of the simple percentage
reliability measure.

Table 32: Scott's Pi

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pi</td>
<td>[ \frac{\text{% Observed Agreement} - \text{% Expected Agreement}}{1 - \text{% Expected Agreement}} ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The observed agreement is the simple percentage calculation of agreement. The
expected agreement looks at the number of times coders select each value in the category.
The number of times each value is coded is then divided by the total number of choices
made by coders in that category. The expected agreement is the sum of the squared
percentages for all values in a given category. Most published content analyses require a
minimum score of .75 on Scott's Pi Index of reliability (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983, p.
156).

In order to illustrate how Scott's Pi is calculated, consider the category of
"Absence or Presence of Stereotypes." Of the 45 news texts that were coded twice, 42
were coded the same way for this category by both coders. This yields a simple
percentage agreement of 93.3%. However, in order to calculate Pi, the total number of
coding decisions must also be considered. Since, for this category, there are two values –
Stereotypes Absent ("00") and Stereotypes Present ("01") – 90 coding decisions were
made. 76.6% of the time (69 times) coders selected "01" and 23.3% of the time (21
times) "00" was chosen. The squares of these percentages (.586 and .054 respectively) are
added together to yield an expected agreement of .640. Therefore, Scott's Pi is calculated as follows:

\[
\pi = \frac{.933 (OA) - .640 (EA)}{1 - .640 (EA)} = .814
\]

*Strengths and Weaknesses of Content Analysis*

One advantage of applying traditional content analysis to news texts is that it allows researchers to make comparisons with other content studies and to produce findings that may be tested by other researchers using the same methodology. For instance, in Chapter 2, one of the hypotheses tested was that the three stereotypes identified by the RCAP in its 1996 report were still prominent in 2002 news media coverage of Aboriginal issues. It turns out that, while the continued prominence of two stereotypes was confirmed by the findings, the third – that of Aboriginal people as noble environmentalists – was found not to have a significant presence in 2002 news texts. In addition to raising questions about the initial hypothesis, this study generated a preliminary statistical profile of the types of Aboriginal topics likely to attract attention in the press, the sorts of roles assigned actors in news stories, and some of the dimensions of Aboriginal identity ascribed to Aboriginal actors.

One of the perceived shortcomings of content analysis is that it may easily be subverted to the ideological agenda of researchers. Some critics charge that studies relying solely on techniques of content analysis may be structured so as to yield findings that support pre-conceived ideas and political positions of the individuals and/or organizations conducting and/or supporting the research. For example, analyses of news content have been used to support disparate, even contradictory, conclusions about a variety of social and economic issues, such as trade unionism and public health care,
depending on whether the research was conducted by progressive media "watchdogs" such as NewsWatch Canada or by conservative "think-tanks" like the Fraser Institute. Yet content analysis is often promoted as a "neutral" and "objective" tool of scientific inquiry, a relatively mechanical process that involves simply "putting numbers to words." Critics who question the objectivity of this methodology tend to focus more on the development of coding tools, particularly on how coding categories are constructed, than on the coding process itself.

Another inherent limitation of content analysis is that, due to its focus on the frequency with which certain features occur, findings tend to replicate blind spots and under-reported issues that are intrinsic to mainstream news. While content analysis is very good at rendering a picture of what is well covered in the news, it is not as effective at giving an indication of what is absent. However, this methodological weakness can be mitigated by supplementing content analysis with other research techniques. In fact, in *The Missing News: Filters and Blind Spots in Canada's Press*, Hackett et al. (2000) used content analysis, in concert with surveys of media relations personnel and interviews with journalists, to identify some of Canada's most under-reported stories in 1993, 1994, and 1995.

*Category Construction*

In Chapter 2, some categories were constructed based on a survey of a variety of other studies of news content. For example, the "Actors and Roles" category was adapted from the coding protocol of a NewsWatch Canada study on "Health in the Media" that
was conducted in 2002. The four main options for this category – victim, hero, villain and survivor – are well suited to the study of the representation of Aboriginal people in the news and resonate with a number of the main themes of the RCAP's report on Communication (1996b). As well, this category furnishes a crude comparison of the degree of "structure" versus "agency" assigned to Aboriginal actors as opposed to non-Aboriginal actors in news stories. Structure is defined as "constraints on human actions," while agency is "intentional and undetermined human action" (Williams, 2003, p. 161).

These concepts assist the researcher in addressing a key research question: to what degree are Aboriginal people portrayed as capable of free will and independent action or as constrained by forces/events beyond their control. While this category has the potential to yield valuable insights into important elements of Aboriginal representation in the mainstream press, this part of the coding tool would benefit from further elaboration. For example, in some news stories, certain actors appeared to be playing more than one role at the same time – for example, victim and villain – possibly due to the journalist's attempt to provide balanced coverage of the issue. How do coders determine which value to select? While coders were instructed to indicate the main role played by actors, there were some news stories where this was difficult to assess. Perhaps another option could have been added such as "More than one role."

While the lack of exhaustivity for this category does not invalidate the findings of this pilot study altogether, it does limit the degree to which they can be generalized to news representations of Aboriginal people. It also points to a more general problem with

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94 This study was aided ably by the students of CMNS 431-4 taught by Donald Gutstein and Bob Hackett of the School of Communication at Simon Fraser University in the Fall of 2002.
content analysis – once the categories are finalized, the coding tool has a limited ability to respond to unanticipated features of the data. In this study, the impact of this methodological limitation was partially mitigated through the use of pre-tests – that is, "test runs" of the data. This enabled the researcher to adjust and refine categories in advance of coding. Furthermore, the very existence of problems with this category was discovered through the coding process itself – that is, coders noted these issues as they arose in the general comments section of the coding form.

Inter-coder reliability tests indicated simple percentage agreements slightly above 80% for the assignment of roles to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Actors (81.8% and 82.5%). Intra-coder reliability test percentages were 83.3% and 91.2%. Finally, reliability scores for roles on Scott's Pi index were above the minimum of .75 except for inter-coder reliability tests on roles of non-Aboriginal actors, which was .717. These results underscore the need for caution in interpreting this study's findings about role assignment, particularly with respect to non-Aboriginal actors.

The list of choices for the category of "Aboriginal Topics Present" was generated through the use of both inductive and deductive processes. First, the researcher produced a list of topical themes and subjects based on his professional experience in working with Aboriginal people and issues. This list was then tested and refined as a result of several preliminary readings of the corpus of the data (see Appendix C: Coding Protocol for the list of Aboriginal topics and definitions). Finally, the Aboriginal Topics Present category also included an option entitled, "Other Aboriginal Topic," that allowed the coder to write in topics not on the list. This indicated that several significant topic areas were left off the original list, including topics related to regulation of the fisheries and
constitutional rights (six and five appearances respectively as "primary topics" or "topics mentioned"). Perhaps the list of available values for this category was not as exhaustive as it could have been – this may partially account for why reliability tests did not indicate even higher levels of inter- and intra-coder agreement (as might be predicted for coder agreement on selection of primary topic). Both inter- and intra-coder tests indicated 88.9% agreement (.878 and .875 on Scott's Pi Index, respectively).

The interpretive choices of the researcher are most clearly visible in the construction of categories designed to capture patterns of latent content, such as stereotypes, the presence of sympathy or antipathy for Aboriginal people and issues, and the orientation of Aboriginal people to non-Aboriginal society. It must be acknowledged that efforts to chart latent qualities or symbolic content of data are largely exploratory and are the least generalizeable part of this research.

Stereotypes

Each category that was designed to code latent content reflects key research questions. For example, the category of stereotyping not only reflects a key hypothesis underlying Chapter 2, but also a number of related questions such as are stereotypical images of Aboriginal people present in these news stories that are outside the RCAP's paradigm? The construction of the stereotype category was based on "benchmark" research conducted by the RCAP in the years 1991 to 1996 that identified three stereotypes that pervaded media treatments of Aboriginal people and issues. In the Coding Protocol, "stereotype" is defined as a representation that is "misleading, incomplete or negative of a group of people in society" (Williams, 2003, p. 123). As well,
coders were also provided with specific definitions of the three stereotypes of Aboriginal people elaborated by the 1996 RCAP.

The *Pathetic Victim* stereotype manifests itself in portrayals of Aboriginal people as passive recipients of the negative consequences of the actions of others or events beyond their control. The myth of Aboriginal people's inability to exercise control over their lives has informed social policy towards them since early colonial times and is reflected in legislation such as the *Indian Act* (1876) which defines Aboriginal people as "wards" of the state. In the news, stereotypes of Aboriginal people as victims abound, particularly in stories about reserve life, Aboriginal child welfare and residential schools.

The RCAP points out that the *Angry Warrior* stereotype has been re-invigorated recently, especially in news stories that report on Aboriginal people engaged in confrontations with non-Aboriginal authorities over land and rights issues. Typically, these news stories focus on the supposedly inherent "violence," "volatility" and/or "emotionality" of Aboriginal people. Warrior stereotypes are not confined to news stories about disputes over land or rights, but can be found in reportage about any number of topics that reference the inherent potential of Aboriginal people for violence or "getting out of control."

Finally, the *Noble Environmentalist* stereotype is a contemporary manifestation of the venerable image of Aboriginal people as "Noble Savages," or as the RCAP (1996b) puts it, "the noble Red Man roaming free in the forest." As with the Angry Warrior stereotype, there is a suggestion that Aboriginal people have an inherent disposition towards certain behaviours and/or sensibilities – in this case, that they have a "natural" affinity with nature. Aboriginal people are seen as frozen in time, living in harmony with
the land and thus expected to perform the function of defending the environment and all things "natural."

The first stage of coding was to assess whether or not stereotypes were present in news texts. Coders had the option of checking a box indicating that no stereotype was present in the news text. Inter-coder reliability tests for this category showed coder agreement of 93.3% (Scott's Pi of .814), while intra-coder tests revealed complete internal consistency of coders (100%).

If coders determined that a stereotype was present, they could select one of four options: Victim, Warrior, Environmentalist or Other. Under "Other," coders could write in a stereotypical image that was outside the RCAP's typology. In this way, the research yielded emerging stereotypical imagery that was later organized into six broad categories: miscellaneous stereotypical images, Aboriginal people as incompetent or corrupt financial managers, as taking advantage of the system, as incapable of self-governance, as working within the system, as living outside non-Aboriginal law and social norms (see Table 2 for a complete list of associated images).

Reliability tests were conducted on those news texts where coders were in agreement that stereotypes were present. Out of 18 news texts that coders re-coded, two news texts contained no stereotypes. Intra-coder reliability tests conducted on the remaining 16 texts showed a percentage agreement of 84.4% and a Scott's Pi score of .779. Out of 45 news texts that were double-coded, both coders agreed that in eight news texts, there were no stereotypes present and in four news texts, coders were not in agreement about the presence or absence of stereotypes. The results of the inter-coder reliability tests conducted on 33 news texts indicated a simple percentage agreement of
79.8% and a Scott's Pi score of .719 – a rate of coder agreement that falls just short of acceptable levels.

One factor that may partially explain these relatively low levels of inter-coder reliability is variability among coders in identifying multiple stereotypes in a news story. For example, in coding some news stories, two coders might agree that there is evidence of the Aboriginal as warrior stereotype, but only one may utilize the open-ended "other stereotype" value, writing in an additional stereotype that may, arguably, be a variant of the first one, such as Aboriginal people as unable to get along. This problem may have been addressed by insisting that coders select only one stereotype – that which predominates in a given news text. While this would probably have boosted scores on reliability tests, this may have predisposed coders to eschew use of the "Other" category, which would have resulted in a missed opportunity to garner valuable information about emerging stereotypes.

*Aboriginal People's Orientation to Non-Aboriginal Society/Institutions*

This category was constructed in an effort to assess how relationships between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal society are portrayed in the press. Much has been written about the contemporary representation of Aboriginal people as "problem people" in conflict with the prevailing social order. The researcher wished to assess what other sorts of relationships Aboriginal people have with non-Aboriginal society (including relationships that have potentially "positive" connotations), according to the press. In addition to the "conflict" option, four coding options were added after pre-testing the data: "negotiation," "collaboration," "participation in the system" and "does not apply." There were a number of instances where the relationship characterized in the news text
was outside the four main options and therefore coded as "does not apply" by default. The addition of an "Other" option with a write-in would have been helpful. This limitation notwithstanding, reliability tests indicated an inter-coder score of 88.9% (Scott's Pi of .822) and an intra-coder score of 88.9% (Scott's Pi of .839).

Though coders were not provided with an "Other" option, they did utilize the "general comments" section of the coding form to maintain a record of those relationship choices that fell outside the original menu options in the general comments section of the coding form. Examples of these alternative relationships include taking advantage of the system, excluded from the system, inability to participate appropriately due to lack of skills (e.g., financial expertise), and able to participate under the supervision of non-Aboriginal people (e.g., DIA officials).

*Sympathetic/Unsympathetic to Aboriginal Interests and Issues*

The final latent characteristic of the data that was measured was whether or not individual news stories were judged to be sympathetic or unsympathetic to Aboriginal issues and interests. It is challenging, to say the least, to elaborate objective criteria by which this quality may be reliably assessed. Numerous studies of news content have sought to measure similar concepts such as "sides favoured and sides presented" (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1991), where media outlets rank on an "Indian Sympathy Index" (Ponting and Gibbons, 1980) and whether news stories reflect "anti-Native" or "pro-Native" themes (Skea, 1993-94). More recently, in her content analysis of news coverage of BC elections, Cross (2006) attempted to determine whether source quotes' evinced either a positive or negative tone towards particular political parties (p. 314).
Ultimately, Cross chose to disregard the findings on tone due to a "problem with overall methodology of coding for tone" in her study (p. 304).

In order to operationalize the concept of presence or absence of sympathy, first, the researcher had to decide which components of a news story – headlines, photos or graphics, the body of the news text itself – to consider in making this assessment. In any given news story, these components did not necessarily convey a consistent message. For example, sometimes the text of a news item contained no stereotypes and presented a take on a particular issue that was deemed to be "sympathetic" or "neutral" to the interests of Aboriginal people, but was preceded by a headline that derogated them or accompanied by a stock photo that suggested a blatantly stereotypical image. Should this article be coded as sympathetic or unsympathetic? In this case, the coding protocol dictated that coders base their decisions on the content of the news text itself by assessing the answers to a series of questions. Rather than provide coders with a simple binary tool – sympathetic versus unsympathetic, two additional coding options were provided: "neutral" and "does not fit." The intention of providing coders with two other choices was to ensure that they would only select one of the two main options – "sympathetic" or "unsympathetic" if they felt there was a strong case to be made. The guidelines for coding this category are shown in Table 33.

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95 Coding results indicated that coders did avail themselves of this option as these two choices were selected in 15.6% of the news texts that were double-coded, 10% and 5.6% for "neutral" and "does not fit" respectively.
### Table 33: Guide for Coding Sympathetic/Unsympathetic

| Answers to the following questions will serve as a guide for the coder. |
| 1. Is a stereotype(s) of Aboriginal people invoked? |
| 2. Does the article have an "anti-Aboriginal" slant? The answer to this question is "yes" if the answers to both the following questions are "no". |
| a) Are the context and/or history of the issue presented? |
| b) In news items that present the views of non-Aboriginal people, are the views of Aboriginal people also presented? |

If the answer to either question #1 or #2 is "yes," then the article is coded as 02 – unsympathetic. If the answers to questions #1 and #2 are both "no," then the coder needs to decide whether the news items is sympathetic, neutral or "does not fit."

Given the challenging nature of operationalizing the concepts of sympathetic and unsympathetic and the potential for coder bias, it is not surprising that reliability tests indicated levels of coder reliability that barely met the minimum standard for content studies (Inter- and Intra-Coder Reliability of 80% and 83.3%, respectively). However, once the number of categories and the possibility of random agreement was factored in using Scott's Pi index, inter- and inter coder reliability fell below the acceptable threshold (.677 and .700 respectively). While this category represents the least reliable aspect of the methodology, it was nonetheless useful for furnishing a preliminary indication of the tone of news coverage of Aboriginal issues, a dimension that is worth exploring in future research.

**Critical Discourse Analysis**

In chapters 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8, news stories were subjected to a detailed textual analysis based primarily on approaches to *critical discourse analysis* developed by van Dijk (1988) and Fairclough (1985). In general, critical discourse analysis is concerned with the relationship between how language is used, social relations and structures of power. Nesbitt-Larking (2001) conceives of discourse analysis as an "extended interrogation of the text, the intentions of the author, and the response of its readers" (p. 342).
The focus of van Dijk's work goes well beyond discourse structures of the news. In fact, while van Dijk (1988) describes his approach to discourse analysis as *interdisciplinary*, it is heavily reliant on contemporary cognitive psychology in its concern with the "social cognition" of news production and audience interpretation (p. 181).

Because it allows for a "finer-grained analysis [than traditional content analysis] of the subtle manipulation of images and the variations in meanings that result," this methodology is particularly well suited to studying the treatment of people of color and other minority populations in the press (Furniss, 2001, p. 33). A number of recent studies of news media coverage of Aboriginal issues have used discourse analysis to draw attention to ethnocentric elements of mainstream news texts (see Lambertus, 2004, Henry & Tator, 2002, & Furniss, 2001). The focus in these studies is on how meaning about Aboriginal people and issues is constructed in the news through *relevance structuring* or "fronting" – that is, the practice of putting the most "important" information in headlines and lead paragraphs – lexical choice, argumentative/rhetorical strategies and *news frames* (Gitlin, 1980, Fairclough, 1989).

One of the limitations of discourse analysis is the degree to which researchers can make claims about the motivations about the producers of specific news stories or the impact of those texts on social relations generally or on specific individuals and groups. It has been argued that discourse analysis enables researchers to "surmise" but not "demonstrate" (Deacon et al, 1999). A criticism of the work of van Dijk, in particular, is that it attempts to construct an *idealized or average readership* and then speculate about how that imaginary audience would interpret particular news texts:
This leads van Dijk into speculation about what the reader is likely to make of various texts. It is van Dijk who declares "which structures of news discourse have particular social, political, or ideological implications"...[But] We simply do not know in advance how audiences will decode news texts, even though we may agree that certain texts strongly suggest and insinuate a set pattern of responses. (Nesbitt-Larking, p. 259)

The problem is that each individual audience member interprets media messages based on a unique combination of personal, social, environmental, educational and other discursive factors. While audience members may share general characteristics such as age, income or class, it is impossible to know how a particular audience will interpret a given news text due to the sheer number and diversity of factors involved. This researcher does not take the position that one's social class or social positioning determines how one understands the news. However, it is worthwhile reflecting on, in general terms, how some audiences might respond to certain types of news stories. Any inferences made about how audiences might read specific texts ought to be grounded in a thorough understanding of the public idiom – that is the language that newspapers adopt that reflects what Stuart Hall describes as the "underlying common stock of knowledge which it assumes its audience shares" (quoted in Furniss, 2001, p. 5). At the very least, such theorizing provides a direction for additional or complementary research into audience reception.

While discourse analysis provides researchers with a useful tool to assemble well-reasoned arguments/hypotheses about the production of meaning, audience reception and impact on social relations, it cannot furnish, in and of itself, conclusive or definitive evidence about any of these processes. At its best, the methodology may be used to support "informed and substantiated inferences backwards to encoding or forwards to decoding" (Nesbit-Larking, p. 274).
There are, however, a number of ways that interpretations and hypotheses generated through discourse analysis may be supported or strengthened. These include sampling techniques, complementary methodologies, comparisons with "benchmarks" and exploring "effectivity" with key actors.

**Sampling**

Since discourse analysis requires an intensive interpreting reading of the text that is quite time-consuming, studies based on this methodology typically focus on a finite number of news texts at a specific point in time. The tendency is to produce findings that are *synchronic* and detached from the context of the evolution of specific discourses. In discourse analysis, the context of a particular study may be other articles published in the same section or in the same newspaper on a given day. In this research, an attempt has been made to compare pairs of case studies of news texts from different historical eras (Chapter 3) and to conduct case studies of similar issues in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Chapters 5, 6, 7 & 8). In each case, the researcher attempted to examine *all* of the news texts published on the topic in a set of newspapers in a specific period, ranging from two weeks to three months. For example, in a case study about the BC treaty referendum, the researcher examined 69 news texts published in both national newspapers, both Vancouver dailies and three community newspapers. An added dimension of context was furnished by including an examination of an additional 15 news texts on the topic published in the Aboriginal press over a three-month period. In each case, an attempt was made to examine every news text published on an issue in a specific period. Analysing a relatively large number of news texts about specific issues in major daily newspapers, community newspapers and Aboriginal publications over two-week, six-week and three-
month periods of time respectively, better equipped the researcher to look at the
diachronic dimensions of particular discourses and make generalizations about broad
patterns.

**Complementary Quantitative research**

Another way that the findings of discourse analysis may be strengthened is
through the use of traditional content analysis. This enables the researcher to correlate
observations based on interpretive readings of specific news texts with data about the
frequency with which certain features of the news recur. This enables the researcher to
situate the "relations of news texts across time" which helps provide an empirical basis
for "analysing its 'common sense' ideological significance" (Deacon et al, 1999, p. 183).
For example, some of the evidence generated by methods of traditional content analysis
(Chapter 3) about emerging stereotypes provided support for later inferences about the
ideological construction of news schemata about Aboriginal people and issues.

**Comparisons with benchmark research**

The RCAP's 1996 comprehensive report on the communication sector enabled the
researcher to place the analysis of discourse about Aboriginal topics in the context of
historical features of media coverage of Aboriginal issues such as stereotyping. The
Commission's work, which was carried out from 1991 to 1996, also provided broad
benchmarks against which later case studies could be compared. For example, one of the
rhetorical strategies employed in news discourse about the 1991 Delgamuukw decision
was an equation that associated Aboriginal people with criminality and violence. This is
consistent with the RCAP's conclusion that this juxtaposition is an historical feature of
the representation of Aboriginal people that goes back to the days of "the bloodthirsty
savage attacking the colony or the wagon train, a feature that was still present in 1990s
news coverage (RCAP, 1996b). By interpreting the news in the context of such
benchmark research, the research was better able to draw inferences about discourses in
the late 1990s and early 2000s.

*Exploring "effectivity" with key actors*

One of the functions of discourse analysis has been described as making
inferences about how messages may be decoded by audiences. The researcher explored
the issue of *decoding* the news in informal conversations with four Aboriginal actors
whose work directly involves them in the two issues that are the focus of this dissertation
– treaties and child welfare:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 34: Key Actors Consulted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Chief Commissioner of the BC Treaty Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) former Executive Director of a fully delegated Aboriginal child welfare agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Director of an indigenous governance program at a major university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) former Aboriginal child protection social worker and author of a book on Aboriginal child welfare</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content of these conversations is not treated as data; but rather as an
exploration of the "effectivity" (Morley, 1980) of news texts with four people who are
directly affected by news media coverage of these issues. Themes explored in these
conversations include factors shaping the representation of Aboriginal people in the
news, the impact of news discourse on Aboriginal people generally on Aboriginal
leadership in particular, and ways that dominant representations of Aboriginal people
may be challenged or improved. The problematic nature of making inferences about
audience reception of news texts has already been noted; however, it is worth exploring
the *effectivity* of news coverage of Aboriginal issues with Aboriginal leaders who are

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attempting to bring positive changes to their communities. These conversations provide some preliminary, albeit unscientific, commentary on the findings of this research as well as pointing out new directions for research.
APPENDIX B – LIST OF NEWS TEXTS

The primary data for this dissertation consists of 350 news texts from 17 newspapers spanning 141 years, including 1862-3, 1865-7, 1991-2, 1998, and 2002-3. While 354 news texts are listed here, this is because four news stories included in the pilot study in Chapter 2 are also part of the data set for the case study on the death of a child that unfolds in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

News texts are numbered sequentially on a chapter by chapter basis. Citations of these news texts in the body of the dissertation will refer to these numbers as illustrated by the following example:

The first editorial appearing on the repatriation issue in the Globe and Mail sets the tone for much of the coverage to follow: "race politics should not be a deciding factor in determining the best interest of a child" (141).

Chapter 2: the Media, Aboriginal People and Common Sense

Vancouver Sun


3. June 8, 2002, Native band finds way to do business (Column). Bramham, D.

4. June 10, 2002. First Nations stake claim on 2010 Olympics: If the games are held in Vancouver and Whistler, Mount Carrie and Squamish natives want a fair share of the economic benefits (Column). Bramham, D.


8. June 18, 2002. Indian Act is an outdated waste of tax dollars (Column). Campbell, M.

9. June 19, 2002. Nisga'a dissidents challenge treaty: Some natives opposed to the historic land-claims settlement say it is unconstitutional as it creates a third level of government, an allegation that is backed by an appeal court (Column). Mulgrew, I.


17. August 13, 2002. Why Ottawa was silent about BC referendum: Government feared its participation 'would provide the referendum legacy...it is not our campaign to win or lose' (News). O'Neil, P.

19. August 17, 2002. *Political baggage lost amid warmth of powwow: It's not all drums and feathers; it's also talent and welcome and family* (Column). McMartin, P.

20. August 17, 2002. *Hereditary chief continues fight against Nisga'a treaty: Self-government benefits the few at the expense of the many, argues Chief Mountain* (Column). Mulgrew, I.


26. September 10, 2002. *BC has failed in dealings with Aboriginal children, premier says: Province, native groups will work together to change system* (News). Culbert, L.

27. September 11, 2002. *Indian Arm route would face opposition: Anmore residents, natives, environmentalists and avalanches pose major roadblocks* (News). Bohn, G.


31. September 18, 2002. *Forgive debt, native leaders demand: Some of the Aboriginal bands have incurred more debt in the treaty process than they'll get from land claims* (Column). Mulgrew, I.


34. September 28, 2002. *Child suffered injuries 2 months before death: Sto:lo leaders call for review into native child welfare agency* (News). Bolan, K., & Kines, L.

**Province**


37. June 20, 2002. *Outgoing summit spokesman says he was ousted* (News). Fournier, S.

38. June 20, 2002. *Amendments to native law good, but not good enough* (Opinion). Fiss, T.


40. June 27, 2002. *Natives go to Europe to block Olympic bid: While backers of Vancouver's bid for the 2010 Winter Games have worked with Aboriginal leaders, native groups that clashed with police over ski resorts near Kamloops and Lillooet have mounted a public protest with the International Olympic Committee in Switzerland* (News). Inwood, D.

41. June 28, 2002. *Native fishermen say they have deal for protection on Fraser* (News). Middleton, G.


49. August 2, 2002. *Fishermen say they're at the end of their ropes* (News). Fraser, K., & Anderson, C.


56. September 26, 2002. *Why did 2-year-old Chastity have to die?: The sordid misery of the baby neighbours called 'a beautiful little child' was an open secret on the Lakahahmen native reserve near Mission, a Province investigation has found. Was enough done to save her?* Fournier, S. & Grindlay, L.

57. September 27, 2002. *'They failed our little girl': Anguished mom and granddad of a two-year-old girl whose body was found near Mission Saturday say they raised the alarm weeks ago, but police did nothing* (News). Fournier, S.

**Globe and Mail**


63. June 22, 2002. *Native veterans could soon get cheques: But offer of $20,000 each to 1800 former soldiers or spouses far less than sought* (News). Lunman, K.

65. June 24, 2002. *Yukon lawyer has a hand in the future of a nation: James Harper, the negotiator for many First Nations, is captivated by the people* (News). Belford, T.


67. July 4, 2002. *Native groups threatening to walk away from talks: Right to self-government already secured and is not negotiable, leaders warn Premier* (News). Matas, R.


70. July 8, 2002. *How BC burned its boats: Last week's treaty referendum has set native relations back years, says former Yukon premier* (Opinion). Penikett, T.


Chapter 4: Historical Representations of Aboriginal People

1. 1863 opening of BC's first "residential" school in Mission

The British Columbian


92. June 20, 1863. Our Relations with the Indians. (Editorial).

2. Colonial Amendment Denying Aboriginal people land pre-emption rights

_The British Columbian_


98. November 14, 1863. *We Need a Military or Naval Force*. (Editorial).


_The British Colonist_


_Colonist & Chronicle_


3. 1991 BC Supreme Court decision in Delgamuukw vs. The Queen

*The Vancouver Sun*


*The Province*


126. March 11, 1991. *Appeal may bypass highest BC court; Appeal fast-track sought to bypass BC Court.* (News). Fraser, K.
Times-Colonist


Times-Colonist


The Province


The Vancouver Sun


Chapter 5: Headline Analysis, Chapter 6: Dominant Frames in the Mainstream Press, and Chapter 7: Secondary Frames

1. Repatriation of Aboriginal Children

National Post


138. September 25, 2003. 'She was pretty clear she didn't want to go' (News). Agrell, S.
139. October 23, 2003. BC Native girls to ask Judge to let them stay with foster parents: Return to court today (News). Fournier, S.


Globe and Mail


143. September 11, 2003. AFN sends hot potato to judge (Column). Blachford, C.


145. September 13, 2003. In Whose Best Interests (Column). Wente, M.


Vancouver Sun


150. October 25, 2003. "Last minute deal with Sto:lo lets sisters stay in the foster home" (News). Mulgrew, I.


The Province


159. October 31, 2003. *Hundreds of native kids in line to suffer same fate* (Column) Thompson, J.

**Chilliwack Times**


2. Nisga'a Referendum on Nisga'a Treaty

**National Post**


166. November 17, 1998. *Too much happy talk: Why won't the politicians address Nisga'a problems?* (Opinion). Yaffe, B.


Globe and Mail


172. November 12, 2003. *Nisga'a show the way: If a referendum is right for them, why is it wrong for other British Columbians* (Editorial).

173. November 12, 1998. *British Columbians want vote on Nisga'a treaty, surveys say: But Premier Glen Clark has no intention of holding a referendum* (News). Mickleburgh, R.


Vancouver Sun

178. November 9, 1998. *Polls close, but results of vote on Nisga'a deal delayed: Officials offer no reason for the delay in giving results* (News). Rinehart, D.


181. November 10, 1998. *What you get from behind closed doors – a rotten deal: With native ratification, we become dangerously close to having a divisive, possibly illegal, treaty foisted on BC* (Column). Yaffe, B.

182. November 13, 1998. *The challenges of a treaty referendum: Having everyone vote on the Nisga'a Treaty isn't a simple matter of seeking a yes or no answer. We elect*
legislators to make decisions, but in this case they should await court rulings (Editorial).

183. November 12, 1998. Nisga'a deal worries BC forest Industry: Companies are concerned about "the security of investments" (News). Beatty, J.

184. November 12, 1998. Reform MP wonders at the need to sell treaty: Back-room dealers are criticized for following the same failed path as Charlottetown. (Opinion). Scott, M.

185. November 12, 1998. Nisga'a's treaty video won't go to schools: A more balanced, private-sector video will be seen by students, the NDP says (News). Beatty, J.


187. November 12, 1998. Close vote on Nisga'a deal 'disappointing': Premier Glen Clark and provincial Aboriginal Affairs Minister Dale Lovick stand united in lamenting early poll results reporting only 51-per-cent of eligible Nisga'a voters support BC's first modern-day treaty (News). Rinehart, D.

188. November 13, 1998. Campbell challenges 61% Nisga'a vote: The opposition leader says the number of registered voters eligible to cast ballots on the referendum was less than might be expected (News). Steffenhagen, J. & Culbert, L.

189. November 13, 1998. Let the people speak on the Nisga'a treaty: The affected Aboriginal citizens were given the right to vote on the treaty in a referendum – an option denied the rest of BC (Column). Coyne, A.

190. November 14, 1998. Resources cause for some treaty concern treaty: The future economic opportunity for the Nisga'a is largely based on natural resources. But non-Aboriginals have valid concerns about bureaucracy, forestry, fishing and land access (Editorial).

191. November 14, 1998. Liberal challenge to Nisga'a vote called cowardly: They say the referendum results are open to question. That is a groundless attack, the Aboriginal affairs minister says (News). Steffenhagen, J.

192. November 17, 1998. Pro-treaty forces disregard the will of the people (Column). Yaffe, B.

193. November 18, 1998. Victoria won't discuss treaty, forest firms say: They claim the B.C. government has rejected all attempts to clarify compensation concerns (News). Beatty, J.
194. November 19, 1998. Religious leaders join to back Nisga’a treaty: The agreement will be celebrated at Vancouver’s Christ Church Cathedral on Friday evening (News). Todd, D.

195. November 19, 1998. Once again, the premier confuses spin with reality: Clark’s ‘good news’ accord with the truck loggers’ association becomes a bit indefinite when some questions are asked (Column). Palmer, V.

196. November 20, 1998. B.C.’s religious leaders celebrate Nisga’a signing: The diverse group says ratification of the treaty is in the best interests of all people in the province (News). Todd, D.

197. November 21, 1998. $5 million in spin not enough to distract the voters: The New Democrats hoped their pricey TIP would make the Nisga’a treaty the top public issue this fall. It didn’t (Column). Palmer, V.

198. November 21, 1998. "It is an act of aggression": A Gitksan leader claims the Nisga’a Treaty is an illegal grab of lands belonging to other Aboriginal peoples and its ratification must be halted until the conflicting land claims are settled (News). Sterritt, N.

The Province


201. November 8, 1998. Mel Smith’s Guerrilla Notebook (Column). Murphy, D.


203. November 9, 1998. Nisga’a wait as each vote scrutinized: Council’s Gosnell to sell deal to Europe; welfare controversy shrugged off (News). Hauka, D.


206. November 10, 1998. 70 per cent say yes to deal: Next step is debate in the legislature -- and party leaders warn it could be a long one (News). Hauka, D. & Austin, I.


210. November 16, 1998. *Those who have to pay ought to have the say* (Editorial).


*Abbotsford Times*


*Chilliwack Times*


215. December 1, 1998. *A grit view of Nisga'a deal: Liberals release their take on treaty* (News). Bell, M.

*The Northern Sentinel*


218. November 4, 1998. *Nisga'a treaty: there must be a better way* (Opinion). Smith, M.


3. BC Referendum on Treaty Process

National Post


Globe and Mail


239. April 9, 2002. Top court should judge clarity of BC referendum, natives say (News). Matas, R.


Vancouver Sun


243. April 5, 2002. Treaty referendum raises a storm: Bishops call on Anglicans to vote no or reject ballots (News). Todd, D.


245. April 5, 2002. Treaty Referendum is no laughing matter (Opinion). Reid, A.

246. April 6, 2002. Send in your ballot, answered or not: Referendum a poor vehicle but the issues deserve our attention (Editorial).


248. April 9, 2002. Religious leaders are right to speak out on referendum (Editorial).

249. April 9, 2002. Liberals likened to dictatorship on treaty vote: Discounting 'no' votes reminds cleric of one-party state tactics (News). Bohn, G.


251. April 11, 2002. United Church opposes treaty referendum: B.C. members urged to protest by voiding their ballots (News). Todd, D.


254. April 12, 2002. *Referendum doesn't offer citizens a real say* (Column). Yaffe, B.

255. April 12, 2002. *Jewish, evangelical and civil liberties groups denounce 'referendum'*(News). Todd, D.


257. April 13, 2002. *Failed Unity hopeful plugs treaty 'yes' vote: Native response to the initiative is that the vote is already lost* (News). Sandler, J., McInnes, C. & Steffenhagen, J.


**The Province**

259. April 3, 2002. *Your guide to the BC referendum questions: As ballots begin arriving in the mail this week, we give experts on both sides a chance to express their views* (News). Fournier, S. & McClintock, B.


264. April 8, 2002. *Congregations told to say No to referendum: Anglicans praise bishops, even if they don't agree* (News). Luba, F.


267. April 11, 2002. *And now, Rafe's reasons for returning blank referendum...* (Column). Mair, R.


Abbotsford Times


272. April 9, 2002. It's time to call a bigot a bigot (Opinion). Cowan, C.


Chilliwack Times

276. April 5, 2002. It's up to the people now (News). Morry, L.


Kamloops Daily News


279. April 3, 2002. Liberals pushing for treaty shake-up: Referendum ballots in the mail but critics see a waste of money (News). Fortems, C.


281. April 5, 2002. Referendum has no easy answers (Editorial). Duncan, S.

282. April 8, 2002. Referendum will count even if few vote – AG. (News).


284. April 9, 2002. Majority has no right to oppress minority through a referendum (Column). Scott, L.


286. April 12, 2002. Fractured front undercuts protest (News). Duncan, S.


288. April 16, 2002. Jabs from two sides bode well, Plant says: 'Vote Yes or vote No. Vote so your voice is heard.' (News). Fortems, C.


295. May 14, 2002. *Aboriginals should be seen as allies in outdoors* (Column). Koopmans, R.


4. News Coverage of the death of a child under Aboriginal care

*National Post*


*Vancouver Sun*


302. September 27, 2002. Two-year old girl found dead had been with father since April (News).


305. October 1, 2002. Service set for girl, 2, on reserve near Mission: Chassidy Whitford's dad is charged with murder in her death (News). Culbert, L.

306. October 2, 2002. Tot's death sparks review of native child agency: Could more have been done to save her life (News). Culbert, L.

*The Province*


309. September 25, 2002. Did baby Chastity have to die?: 'She was a beautiful little girl, and if the people responsible for her could have done more to help her, she'd be alive today (News). Fournier, S. & Grindlay, L.

310. September 27, 2002. Police 'wouldn't listen': A grieving mother says she feared the worst when her baby disappeared, but couldn't persuade RCMP to act. Then, days after she learned a baby's body had been found, police came to her door to say her daughter was dead (News). Fournier, S.


312. October 1, 2002. Local band to hold tot's memorial (News). Fournier, S.

313. October 2, 2002. 'Always a smile on her face': Mourners recall 'happy little girl' as her father faces murder charge (News). Fournier, S.

*Abbotsford Times*

314. September 27, 2002. Girl dead 3 or 4 weeks: Father could be in court here today (News). Gillies, K.

315. October 1, 2002. Toddler remembered; Chief discourages blame (News). Gillies, K.

*Chilliwack Times*


*Mission City Record*


320. October 3, 2002. *External child agency review will be done: Lakahahmen FN Chief Susan McKamey assured review of Xyolhemeylh will be conducted* (News). Roessle, J.

**Chapter 8: Framing in Aboriginal Publications**

1. **Nisga'a Referendum on Nisga'a Treaty**

*First Perspective*


*Kahtou*


326. November, 1998. *We Owe the Nisga'a our support* (Opinion). O'Neil, B.


*Raven's Eye*


**Windspeaker**


**2. BC Treaty Referendum**

*First Perspective*


**Kahtou**


*Raven's Eye*


3. Death of a Child in Care

*Kahtou*


4. Repatriation of Aboriginal Children

*Kahtou*


*Windspeaker*

354. October, 2003. *"So Phil, what were you thinking?"* (Opinion). David, D.
APPENDIX C – CODING PROTOCOL

Coding Protocol

Aboriginal Issues in the News

  Vancouver Sun
  The Province
  Globe and Mail

June 1 to September 30, 2002

PART A: PUBLICATION DETAILS

1. HEADLINE
   The variable will be completed (not coded) with the full headline.

2. NEWSPAPER NUMBER
   Values:
     01. Vancouver Sun
     02. The Province
     03. Globe and Mail

3. CODER
   The variable will be completed (not coded) with the initials of the individual coding the article.

4. DATE OF CODING
   The variable will be completed (not coded) for the date the article was coded in the format "dd/mm/yy" (for example, 19/12/03 for December 19, 2003).

5. STORY LOCATION
   Front Page of newspaper = 01
   Other Location = 02

6. PAGE NUMBER
   The variable will be completed (not coded) for the section and/or first page number assigned to the article. For example, Section D, page 3 would be 'D3.'

7. DAY OF MONTH
   The variable will be coded for the value representing the day of the month of the article's publication.
   Values: 01 through 31
8. MONTH
The variable will be coded for the value representing the article's month of publication.
Values:

01. June
02. July
03. August
04. September

9. GENRE
The variable will be coded for the value representing the type of news item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01. Hard news</td>
<td>&quot;Breaking&quot; news story, usually written in a factual style, where the most important information is presented first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02. Soft news</td>
<td>News story that is not focused on breaking news events; frequently, these news stories are human interest stories or &quot;infotainment.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03. Editorial</td>
<td>A piece that reflect the views of the newspaper editors or managers (usually unsigned).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04. Named staff columnist</td>
<td>Opinion piece written by a regular columnist for a particular newspaper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05. Named guest opinion writer</td>
<td>Opinion piece written by an individual who is not a regular staff contributor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06. Syndicated columnist</td>
<td>Opinion piece written by a columnist whose work appears in a number of syndicated newspapers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07. Named writer but status unknown</td>
<td>News item that is attributed to a specific individual whose affiliation or status is unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08. Other -- write in</td>
<td>News item that is not consistent with one of the above descriptions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Genre descriptions adapted from *Newswatcher's guide to content analysis* (1997).

10. NAME(S) OF AUTHOR(S)
The variable will not be coded. The coder is to write in the name(s) of the writer(s) (up to three authors), where this information is available.
11. AUTHOR(S) – ABORIGINAL DESCENT
The coder is to code whether or not the author(s) is of Aboriginal descent, if known.
Values:
   1 = Aboriginal
   2 = Non-Aboriginal
   3 = Unknown

PART B: ABORIGINAL TOPICS PRESENT

Each topic value will be coded for whether it is absent (00), the primary topic discussed (01), or just mentioned (02) in the piece. The coder must take extra care to code the value 'mentioned' for any explicit mention of the Aboriginal topic (including topics that mention "Indian," "Native," "First Nation," "Métis," and/or "Inuit"). Only one primary topic may be coded for each news story, but multiple topics mentioned may be recorded for any given news story.

1. Self-Government
   Any story that references the practice (or right to) self-government of Aboriginal people.
   Values:
   00. Absent
   01. Primary
   02. Mentioned

2. Treaty Referendum
   Any story that references the province-wide referendum on treaties that was conducted by the BC government between May and June, 2002.
   Values:
   00. Absent
   01. Primary
   02. Mentioned

3. Treaty Negotiation/Implementation
   Any story that references a contemporary "treaty" (or "treaties") with respect to Aboriginal people.
   Values:
   00. Absent
   01. Primary
   02. Mentioned

   Any story that references Aboriginal people in which state child welfare authorities or delegated Aboriginal child welfare authorities are involved, however peripherally.
   Values:
   00. Absent
   01. Primary
   02. Mentioned
5. **Justice**
Any story that references Aboriginal people in the context of the traditional Canadian justice system or with reference to traditional Aboriginal forms of justice (e.g., restorative justice, justice "circles," etc.).
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

6. **Residential Schools**
Any story that references the "Indian" residential school system that endured from 1849 until the mid-1980s, including any story that references the survivors of these schools, their descendents and/or contemporary issues associated with this system or its consequences.
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

7. **Other Education Topic**
Any story that references education issues relating to Aboriginal people.
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

8. **Fishing and Hunting**
Any story that references fishing and hunting matters that involve Aboriginal people.
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

9. **Other Land and Water Issue**
Any story that references land and water issues other than those that pertain solely to hunting and fishing (for example, the pollution of lakes and rivers relied upon by Aboriginal people for drinking water).
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

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10. Indian Act
Any story that references the *Indian Act* (1876), which is the federal legislation that applies to Status Indians, both on and off reserve.
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

11. Other Federal Legislation
Any story that references any other federal legislation (or proposed legislation such as the *First Nations Governance Bill*) in relation to Aboriginal matters.
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

12. Reserves
Any story that references any reserve (or reserves) in Canada or the reserve system itself that was entrenched in Canada law with the passage of the *Indian Act* in 1876.
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

13. Taxation Issue
Any story that references Aboriginal people in relation to the issue of government revenue-generation through any form of taxation. Topics include the exemption of Status Indians from taxation under the *Indian Act* and the role government taxation plays in financing programs and services for Aboriginal people.
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned

14. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs
Any story that references the federal government department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).
Values:
- 00. Absent
- 01. Primary
- 02. Mentioned
15. Leadership
Any story that references Aboriginal political leadership, either the Indian Act-imposed band council leadership structure or traditional forms of Aboriginal leadership (e.g., traditional chiefs).
Values:
00. Absent
01. Primary
02. Mentioned

16. Financial Management
Any story that references financial management issues and Aboriginal affairs, including those financial matters involving INAC as well as matters relating to services managed directly by Aboriginal people (e.g., child welfare agencies).
Values:
00. Absent
01. Primary
02. Mentioned

17. Aboriginal Business Venture
Any story that references a business venture initiated by Aboriginal people.
Values:
00. Absent
01. Primary
02. Mentioned

18. BC's 2010 Winter Olympics Bid
Any story that references the involvement of Aboriginal people (whether as collaborators, participants, protestors or other role) in BC's bid to host the 2010 Olympics.
Values:
00. Absent
01. Primary
02. Mentioned

19. Other non-Aboriginal Business Issue
Any story that references a business issue (other than the Winter Olympics) that involves Aboriginal people, but is initiated by non-Aboriginal people.
Values:
00. Absent
01. Primary
02. Mentioned
20. Treatment of "Native" War Veterans
Any story that references the treatment of Aboriginal veterans of WWII (often referred to in the press as "Native" veterans) by the Canada's federal government.
Values:
  00. Absent
  01. Primary
  02. Mentioned

21. Sports – Professional
Any story that references a professional sports activity that involves an Aboriginal person, team, group or organization.
Values:
  00. Absent
  01. Primary
  02. Mentioned

22. Sports – Amateur
Any story that references an amateur sports activity that involves an Aboriginal person, team, group or organization.
Values:
  00. Absent
  01. Primary
  02. Mentioned

23. Entertainment
Any story that references an entertainment issue, event or activity (other than sports) that involves Aboriginal people. Examples include TV, film, theatre and literature.
Values:
  00. Absent
  01. Primary
  02. Mentioned

24. Métis Issue
Any story that references Métis people or issues.
Values:
  00. Absent
  01. Primary
  02. Mentioned

25. Inuit Issue
Any story that references Inuit people or issues.
Values:
  00. Absent
  01. Primary
  02. Mentioned
PART C: ACTORS AND ROLES

ABORIGINAL ACTOR AND ROLE

Note on Actors: The term "actor" includes "sources" (but is not synonymous with that term) since it refers to any person, group or organization referred to in the news, including those who are not "otherwise accessed" – i.e. they are not given a chance to speak for themselves in the form of interviews, quotes or paraphrases" (Bailey & Hackett, 1997, p. 31).

ABORIGINAL ACTOR(S)
The variable will be coded for the value representing the positions/roles held by up to three Aboriginal actors mentioned within the central Aboriginal topic of the article. An individual or any body of individuals, including community, First Nation, government, association and business, can hold the Aboriginal actor role. Coders select the most prominent Aboriginal actors in a given news story.

Values:
00. None (select this option for Actor #1 if there are no Aboriginal actors in the news story)
01. AFN (Assembly of First Nations) leader(s) or official(s)
02. Leader(s) or official(s) of specified Aboriginal organization
03. Aboriginal leader(s) or official(s) whose affiliation to a First Nation, community, agency or organization is not specified
04. First Nation, "Band," reserve, or Aboriginal community referred to as a whole
05. Aboriginal organization or agency referred to as a whole
06. Aboriginal fisher(s) or hunter(s)
07. Aboriginal business person(s)
08. Aboriginal actor(s) not included in the above categories

Specify: ______________________
ROLE OF ABORIGINAL ACTOR(S)
The variable will be coded for the value that represents the main role played by up to 
three actors directly involved in a past, existing or potential Aboriginal issue within the 
central Aboriginal topic. If "Other Role" (05), write in.

Values:
00. None
01. Victim(s) – Individual(s) caused physical, mental, economic, political or social 
harm with their involvement in an Aboriginal related issue.
02. Hero(es) – Individual(s) improving the physical, mental, economic, political, 
safety or social situation for other individuals with their involvement in an 
Aboriginal related issue.
03. Villain(s) – Individual(s) causing physical, mental, economic, political or social 
harm with their involvement in an Aboriginal related topic.
04. Survivor(s) – Individual(s) improving their own personal physical, mental, 
economic, political, safety or social situation during their involvement in an 
Aboriginal related issue.
05. Other Role – write in.

NON-ABORIGINAL ACTOR AND ROLE

NON-ABORIGINAL ACTOR(S)
The variable will be coded for the value representing the positions/roles held by up to 
three non-Aboriginal actors mentioned within the central Aboriginal topic of the article. 
An individual or any body of individuals, including community, government, government 
ministry or department, political party, association and business, can hold the non-
Aboriginal actor role. Coders select the most prominent non-Aboriginal actors in a given 
news story.

Values:
00. None (select this option for Actor #1 if there are no non-Aboriginal actors in the 
news story)
01. Non-Aboriginal politician(s)
02. Minister of Indian Affairs
03. Department of Indian Affairs official(s)
04. Department of Indian Affairs referred to as a whole
05. Non-Aboriginal organization or agency referred to as a whole
06. Non-Aboriginal fisher(s) or hunter(s) or organizations affiliated with, or 
representing, them
07. Corporation, business or organization representing business interests (e.g. 
Business Council or Chamber of Commerce) referred to as a whole
08. Non-Aboriginal business person(s)
09. Canadian Taxpayers’ Federation (CTF)
10. Non-Aboriginal police forces or their employees
11. Non-Aboriginal actor(s) not included in the above categories
   Specify: ____________________
ROLE OF NON-ABORIGINAL ACTOR(S)
The variable will be coded for the value that represents the main role played by up to three non-Aboriginal actors directly involved in a past, existing or potential Aboriginal issue within the central Aboriginal topic. If "Other Role" (05), write in.

Values:
00. None
01. Victim(s) – Individual(s) caused physical, mental, economic, political or social harm with their involvement in an Aboriginal related issue.
02. Hero(es) – Individual(s) improving the physical, mental, economic, political, safety or social situation for other individuals with their involvement in an Aboriginal related issue.
03. Villain(s) – Individual(s) causing physical, mental, economic, political or social harm with their involvement in an Aboriginal related issue.
04. Survivor(s) – Individual(s) improving their own personal physical, mental, economic, political, safety or social situation during their involvement in an Aboriginal related issue.
05. Other Role – write in.

PART D: ABORIGINAL IDENTITY OF ABORIGINAL ACTORS

The variable will be coded for the value that represents the best descriptor of the Aboriginal identity of the actor.

Values:
01. First Nations (status & non-status Indians, not incl. those identified as Métis)
02. Métis
03. Inuit
04. Canadian Aboriginal person(s) identified as being in one of above 3 categories
05. Pan-Indian (especially for organizations or movements that represent multiple categories of Aboriginal people)
06. Native American(s)
07. Other indigenous person(s) (e.g., transnational Aboriginal person) – write in
08. Unknown
09. Does not fit
**PART E: OTHER ATTRIBUTES OF ARTICLE**

**1. STEREOTYPES OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE PRESENT**

**General definition of stereotype**
"Representations that are misleading, incomplete or negative of a group of people in society" (Williams, 2003, p. 123).

**Stereotyping of Aboriginal People**
"Portrayals of Indians as noble and savage, victim and villain are threaded throughout the narratives of Canadian culture. But the images of Aboriginal people etched in Canadian cultural narratives are largely fictional. With confrontations from Oka to Ipperwash to Gustafson Lake, the events of recent history place new emphasis on improving understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians. They bring into focus the need for accurate information and realistic representations of Aboriginal peoples and create a new demand to recognize the central role of communications in building community cohesiveness within Aboriginal nations and fostering relationships between cultures."
- Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP), 1996, Vol. 3, Ch. 6

**Definitions of the three main stereotypes studied in this project**
The RCAP concluded that, in most mainstream media, Aboriginal people were portrayed as fitting into one of the following stereotypical categories.

**Pathetic Victim**
This stereotype manifests itself in portrayals of Aboriginal people as passive recipients of the negative consequences of the actions of others or events beyond their control. The myth of Aboriginal people's inability to exercise control over their lives has informed social policy towards them since early colonial times and is reflected in legislation such as the Indian Act, which defines Aboriginal people as "wards" of the state. In the news, stereotypes of Aboriginal people as victims abound, particularly in stories about reserve life, Aboriginal child welfare and residential schools.

**Angry Warrior**
The RCAP points out that the age-old stereotype of Aboriginal people as angry warrior has been re-invigorated recently, especially in news stories that report on Aboriginal people engaged in confrontations with non-Aboriginal authorities over land and rights issues. Typically, these news stories focus on the supposedly inherent "violence," "volatility" and/or "emotionality" of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal-as-Warrior stereotypes are not confined to news stories about disputes over land or rights, but can be found in reportage about any number of topics that reference the inherent potential of Aboriginal people for violence or "getting out of control."

**Noble Environmentalist**
This stereotype is a contemporary manifestation of the venerable image of Aboriginal people as "Noble Savages," or as the RCAP puts it, "the noble Red Man roaming free in the forest." As with the Angry Warrior stereotype, there is a suggestion that Aboriginal people have an inherent disposition towards certain behaviors and/or sensibilities – in this case, that they have a "natural" affinity with nature. Aboriginal people are seen as *frozen in time*, living off, and in harmony with, the land and thus are exalted as defenders of the environment and all things organic and "natural."
If stereotypes are not present, code 00 for none, if present, code 01. Each news item can have up to three stereotypes present (values 01 through 04).

01 Pathetic Victim
02 Angry Warrior
03 Noble Environmentalist* (RCAP definitions)
04 Other (write down)

2. MAIN THEME (IF NOT OPINION PIECE) OR PRESCRIPTION (IF OPINION PIECE)
The variable will be completed (not coded) for the coder's summary of the main theme of the article or of the prescription or advice offered by the editorialist/opinion writer to address the Aboriginal issue raised in the piece (20 words or less). The prescription is the solution or direction that the writer says should be taken to solve or resolve the problem or issue raised in the piece. If the piece offers no solution or prescription then the coder must write no position.

3. SYMPATHETIC/UNSYMPATHETIC TO ABORIGINAL INTERESTS AND ISSUES
The coder must choose one of the following four options:

01 = Sympathetic
02 = Unsympathetic
03 = Neutral or Balanced
04 = Does Not Fit

Answers to the following questions will serve as a guide for the coder.

1. Is a stereotype(s) of Aboriginal people invoked?
2. Does the article have an "anti-Aboriginal" slant? The answer to this question is "yes" if the answers to both the following questions are "no".
   c) Are the context and/or history of the issue presented?
   d) In news items that present the views of non-Aboriginal people, are the views of Aboriginal people also presented?

If the answer to either question #1 or #2 is "yes," then the article is coded as 02 – unsympathetic. If the answers to questions #1 and #2 are both "no," then the coder needs to decide whether the news items is sympathetic, neutral or "does not fit."
4. PORTRAYAL OF ORIENTATION OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE TO NON-ABORIGINAL SOCIETY/INSTITUTIONS
Choose (with a check mark) ONE of the following descriptors that best describes how the relationship between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal society or institutions is characterized in the news story. If more than one applies, select the one that is predominant in the article.

1. Conflict
2. Negotiation
3. Collaboration
4. Participation in system
5. Does not apply

5. PHOTOS ATTACHED TO ARTICLE
Is there a photo or photos attached to the article? Values are 00 for no photo and 01 for photo(s) attached. If there is a photo (s) describe in 15 words or less.

6. PRESENCE OF BUZZ WORDS/PHRASES IN ARTICLE
Buzz words and phrases are the actual words and phrases of the journalist that wrote the article (not the words/phrases of sources quoted in the piece) that
- contain hidden meanings
- are "loaded"
- are used sarcastically
- represent "editorializing" or injecting the writer's personal judgments and views into the article
- are subjective or take poetic license

7. COMMENTS
Provision is made for the coder to record up to 15 words of commentary on any aspect of the news story and/or the coding process itself.
APPENDIX D – CODING SHEET

Aboriginal Issues in the News
June 1 to September 30, 2002

Coding Sheet

A. Publication details

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Headline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Coder (Initials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Date of coding</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Story Location</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Page number</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Day of the month</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Month</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Genre</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Name(s) of Author(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author #1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Author #2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Author #3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Aboriginal Topics Present

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Self-Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Treaty Negotiation/Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Treaty Referendum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Residential Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Other Education Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Fishing &amp; Hunting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Other Land and Water Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Indian Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Other Federal Legislation (or proposed legislation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Taxation Issue</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Department of Indian and Northern Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Financial Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Aboriginal Business Venture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>BC’s 2010 Winter Olympics Bid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Other non-Aboriginal Business Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Treatment of “Native” War Veterans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Sports – professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Sports – amateur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Metis Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Inuit Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Other Aboriginal Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Non-Aboriginal Topic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Actors and Roles

i) Aboriginal Actors
1. Actor #1 ___________________________ 4. Role __ ___________________________
2. Actor #2 ___________________________ 5. Role __ ___________________________
3. Actor #3 ___________________________ 6. Role __ ___________________________

ii) Non-Aboriginal Actors
1. Actor #1 ___________________________ 4. Role __ ___________________________
2. Actor #2 ___________________________ 5. Role __ ___________________________
3. Actor #3 ___________________________ 6. Role __ ___________________________

D. Aboriginal Identity of Aboriginal Actors
1. Actor #1 ___________________________
2. Actor #2 ___________________________
3. Actor #3 ___________________________

E. Other Attributes of Article
1. Stereotypes of Aboriginal People Present __ (no = 00, yes = 01)
   i. Stereotype #1 __ ___________________________
   ii. Stereotype #2 __ ___________________________
   iii. Stereotype #3 __ ___________________________

2. Main Theme (if not Opinion Piece) or Prescription (if Opinion Piece)
   Summarize: _________________________________________________________________
   _________________________________________________________________

3. Sympathetic/unsympathetic to Aboriginal Interests and Issues __

4. Aboriginal People's orientation to non-Aboriginal Society/Institutions (Check one)
   i. Conflict __
   ii. Negotiation __
   iii. Collaboration __
   iv. Participation in system __
   v. Does not apply __

5. Photo(s) __ Description _____________________________________________________

6. Buzz words/phrases: 1) ___________________________ 2) ___________________________
   3) ___________________________

7. Comments: __________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX E – SAMPLE NEWS STORIES

The British Columbian, NW, Saturday, June 28, 1862
THE INDIAN LAND QUESTION AGAIN.

Don't start back, gentle reader, on seeing our caption. We are not going to ask you now to follow as through labyrinths of ulcerated and diseased humanity. The Indian land question is what we propose dealing with for a moment. We wrote the other day upon the propriety and justice of having ample and suitable reserves laid off, so that these unfortunate aborigines might have settled homes and lands they could call their own – thus tending to more fixed habits of industry, as well as facilitating the operations of the Christian Missionary – a legitimate consideration with the government of a British Colony, seeing Britain's greatness is founded upon the everlasting gospel.

The question now presents itself, can Indians avail themselves of our pre-Emption law? Are they eligible to pre-empt and hold land as British subjects? This inquiry is rendered all the more pertinent at the present time, from the fact that a number of Indians have actually pre-empted allotments. They have been induced to take this step from the consideration that Government shows no disposition to make a practical recognition of their claims, by laying out suitable and permanent reserves for their use. Now on to the abstract question of their legal right to pre-empt land under our present law, this is purely a question for the law officers. Yet, if we might be permitted to hazard an opinion, we must say that we do not see how it can be capable of a negative answer, in the total absence of a Colonial Indian law. We are however, decidedly of opinion that the Indians ought not to possess this right. A proper and sufficient amount of land should be inalienably secured to them by Government; and beyond that their right to hold land should not extend. To allow these people all the privileges of others in this respect would be to throw the whole
Colony into confusion. Just imagine our 80,000 Indians (according to the Governor's reckoning) being allowed to locate land wherever they please. Why, they would undoubtedly have the whole country to themselves, as they had before white men came amongst them. For assuredly no white colonists would be likely to settle with their families in a country where they would be liable to have Indians for neighbours on every side.

continued from page 1

The British Columbian, NW, Saturday, June 28, 1862
THE INDIAN LAND QUESTION AGAIN.

We fancy, however, there can hardly exist two opinions as to the necessity of having Indian reserves appropriated to the use of these people, and the folly of allowing them to hold land by the same tenure and under the same conditions as whites. It is probably simply a question of time; and as ever, Government is not noted for quick dispatch in such matters, it is quite possible that an Indian policy has occupied a share of their attention the last two of three years. If so we trust the shape the question is beginning to assume will have the effect of stimulating them to more energetic action. Upon the universally admitted maxim that prevention is better than cure, it is most desirable that the inducement which now exists for Indians to pre-empt land should be removed as speedily as may be as trouble will surely grow out of it unless something is done soon.
Natives need freedom from both government and band council:

Author(s): Susan Martinuk
Document types: Column
Column Name: Susan Martinuk
Section: Editorial
Source type: Newspaper
ProQuest document 283455611
ID: 
Text Word Count 543

Abstract (Document Summary)

They face an increased risk of substance abuse, AIDS and suicide. More than 40 per cent rely on welfare, while unemployment rates range from 66 to 90 per cent. Reserve housing is substandard; less than one-third of reserve natives will finish high school. Natives comprise a disproportionate number of prison inmates and birth rates are twice that of non-natives. Despair, poverty and hopelessness are the norm.

The first step is to acknowledge that Aboriginal poverty is rooted in the culture of dependence created by government handouts. Ottawa gives $7.5 billion dollars a year to bands that are home to about 800,000 natives. Despite this lavish spending, much of the money never reaches -- or helps -- individual natives. More than one-quarter of all bands live in squalor while nepotistic band councils make financial gains and newspapers are rife with accounts of their financial misdeeds.

Full Text (543 words)

(Copyright The Province 2003)

Canada's Aboriginals face a bleak future and we all know it.

They face an increased risk of substance abuse, AIDS and suicide. More than 40 per cent rely on welfare, while unemployment rates range from 66 to 90 per cent. Reserve housing is substandard; less than one-third of reserve natives will finish high school. Natives comprise a disproportionate number of prison inmates and birth rates are twice that of non-natives. Despair, poverty and hopelessness are the norm.

Considering this, it's imperative we pay attention to the 2001 Census numbers released last week. Despite the social and economic pathologies inherent to its culture, the native population is growing at a phenomenal rate -- six-times faster than the non-native population.

Aboriginal numbers have increased 22.2 per cent since the last census (1996), while the non-native population rose only 3.4 per cent. One-half of this increase is attributed to a higher birth rate among natives; the other half to a growing number now choosing to report their Aboriginal ancestry.

The numbers are staggering and, given the abject failure of our current native policies, are a sure recipe for social chaos. Especially since more than 50 per cent are under the age of 25.

Perhaps now is the time to admit that our native culture is broken and we should stop trying to fix it. It's time to get beyond theoretical discussions of "historic rights" and "self-government;" particularly when polls repeatedly show natives want to talk about the practical issues that are germane to the improved health and well-being of their culture.
I agree.

The first step is to acknowledge that Aboriginal poverty is rooted in the culture of dependence created by government handouts. Ottawa gives $7.5 billion dollars a year to bands that are home to about 800,000 natives. Despite this lavish spending, much of the money never reaches -- or helps -- individual natives. More than one- quarter of all bands live in squalor while nepotistic band councils make financial gains and newspapers are rife with accounts of their financial misdeeds.

The federal government recently introduced legislative changes to improve the financial accountability of band councils. But that isn't enough. It's time to bypass the councils and hand the money to individual natives who then have the freedom to make individual choices to improve their lives. They don't need to be taken care of - they need the freedom to live their lives as non-natives do. That means making personal choices about where to live, how to get ahead and how to develop job skills. Being responsible for yourself creates an incentive for being educated and employed.

First Nations leader Matthew Coon Come would likely term this 'assimilation' and cry that it will lead to the extinction of native culture. But native culture is a mess and the only way to change it is to accept economic assimilation in a globalized world.

Rejecting the opportunity to join Canada's social and economic culture because it's a 'white' culture only ensures that natives remain uneducated and unemployed in an unsustainable way of life, and unengaged in Canadian life.

That shouldn't be an option.

Growing numbers of natives will only survive if we shift our focus from supporting a miserable native culture to supporting individual natives.