

Abstract

The media narratives of Indigenous people in Canada have traditionally been based in the colonial policies of late nineteenth-century Canada, showing racist attitudes and echoing the assimilation policy of the federal government. Recent media narratives are less obvious in their racist portrayals, but long-held attitudes are still demonstrated in media framing and agenda-setting. This thesis uses narrative inquiry, archival research and interviews with professionals concerned with this issue to trace the roots of today's media narrative, assesses the factors that affect the current narrative, and assesses where we are on the path to an ethical space of engagement (Ermine, 2007). It concludes that the media narrative has changed significantly due to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but real change is most likely to come when Indigenous people find a way to influence the news agenda and set their own media frames in a peaceful and non-threatening manner.

Keywords: ethical space of engagement; Indigenous voice; media narratives of Indigenous people; narrative analysis; Peter Bryce; portrayals of Aboriginal people

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Introduction

In my thirty-year career first as a reporter and news manager, and then as a teacher of non-fiction narrative in video production, I became acutely aware of the impact of stereotypes and language on audience perceptions of news stories. This was especially true in my dealings with Indigenous people. Despite the images of confrontation and threatened violence that dominated coverage of issues such as the Oka crisis, my own experience with Indigenous people had been anything but confrontational and violent, which left me questioning the accuracy of the portrait of Indigenous people which I had seen and read.

My reflections on these questions took on a more personal tone just over three years ago, when I discovered that, as a senior civil servant, my great-grandfather Dr. Peter Bryce had played a key role in documenting health issues at residential schools as early as 1907. I also discovered that many in the First Nations community regarded my great-grandfather with high respect, and the First Nations Caring for Children Society had created an award in his name to recognize work done on improving health standards for First Nations' children (First Nations Caring for Children Society, n.d.). But outside of the First Nations sphere, Dr. Peter Bryce was largely unknown, and as someone who had worked as a journalist, this led me to question the role media played in reporting his activities. This further led me to ask how relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada are affected by media portrayals of Indigenous peoples, communities and concerns, and how those portrayals would have to change in order to create the foundation for what Cree ethicist and researcher Willie Ermine (2007) calls “the ethical space of engagement.”

Ermine (2007) describes this space as being at the intersection of “the physical and philosophical encounter of Indigenous and Western worlds” (p. 195). The two worlds reach this place after affirming human diversity and all of its philosophical and cultural differences, and disavowing any one human community’s claims to speak for the entirety of humankind (p. 202). Ermine conceives of the ethical space as a meeting place between cultures and is a place to begin co-existence. Ermine’s idea comes from the writings of Roger Poole (1972) who presents a critique of reductionist scientism that employs a pseudo-objectivity that fails to look at issues in their totality. Instead he proposes subjective reflection – a three part process that starts with analysis and then proceeds to a recognition of perspectival contradictions and incongruities before presenting those findings for discussion (p. 126) Ermine extends this concept to the relationship between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people of Canada, challenging the objectivity of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and arguing that the ethical space of engagement will change the “status quo of an asymmetrical social order to a partnership model between world communities” (p. 203).

This paper does not predict that the two cultures of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians will meet in this space. But the concept is useful in this discussion of Canada’s media and Indigenous people, which lies within the Critical tradition and asks questions about the power structure of a society. The ethical space of engagement is used to provide a snapshot of what the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada would look like, if those power structures are altered.

For the purpose of this thesis, I propose the ethical space of engagement as the destination in a journey which starts in a place of assimilation at a moment when the findings of an important report from a key member of the federal government bureaucracy are leaked to the

press. We look at the circumstance surrounding the story, and media reaction to it. We begin on November 15, 1907, the day “The Report on Indians Schools of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories” was leaked to the press.

Dr. Peter Bryce’s 1907 report was the result of three years of data gathering on the health of students, a study backed up by a tour of 35 residential schools in the spring of 1907. There, Bryce witnessed unhealthy and unhygienic conditions, overcrowded dormitories, inadequate heating and ventilation, poor nutrition, and inadequate medical care (Bryce, 1907). The report was widely distributed in the Department of the Interior and to all of the churches operating residential schools. Subsequently, this confidential document was leaked to the press on November 15, 1907 and generated news coverage and debate (“Schools Aid White Plague” 1907). It was not until 1913 that any of Bryce’s recommendations were instituted, but the effort was too little, too late. As Cindy Blackstock, the executive director of the First Nations Caring for Children Society, said in a letter to *The Ottawa Citizen*:

Despite Dr. Bryce’s articles and his continued advocacy for over 20 years, the federal government did little to improve the situation for First Nations children and the deaths continued. There is no doubt the federal government knew of the deaths – and the historical record says they did almost nothing to stop it. (Blackstock, 2008)

Historian Adam Green (2006) describes how Dr. Bryce’s quantitative, evidence-based approach clashed with government policies, which were based on layers of cultural bias including the notion that Indigenous people had high levels of nervous disorders and alcoholism. Dr. Bryce also observed that diseases that resulted from high incidences of unsanitary contact were especially prevalent among the Indigenous population (p. 214). At that time there was an underlying racist attitude in government that said the reason Indigenous people were dying was

because they were an inferior race, an attitude which this report contradicted. This is one of the first times that a senior member of the federal bureaucracy revealed through careful, objective study that government policies were resulting in unnecessary deaths (Sproule Jones, 1996, p. 218).

My experience in media led me to consider that media discourse around the 1907 report would reveal the prevalent attitudes to Indigenous people among the public at the time and point to how the media of 1907 participated in perpetuating those attitudes. I also suspected that some of the attitudes shown in that coverage continue to this day and I wanted to look at the media narrative in context of today's landscape where newspapers compete with radio, television, web publishing, and social media. I had questions about the impact of today's so-called "new media," such as social media and mobile content, on the dominant narratives in the traditional media of radio, television and print. Further, it was an appropriate time to examine media narrative because of the new salience of Indigenous relations arising from Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission; consequently, I was curious about its impact on the media narrative.

As we reach for the ethical space described by Ermine, this is an appropriate time for non-Indigenous media professionals to consider re-shaping the narrative of Indigenous people in a way that affirms diversity and equality, and takes us down the path to a partnership model between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous nations. I use media narrative analysis to show how media coverage of Bryce's report demonstrates the media narrative of Indigenous people at the height of the early twentieth century movement in favour of assimilation. Then, in a series of semi-structured interviews I ask both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who have expertise and experience in media to describe their experiences with the current 21st century narrative, some of which was evident in 1907, and to reflect on how to change that narrative in order to

reach an ethical space of engagement. Using narrative inquiry, I extract themes in the current media narrative and suggestions for going further down the path to the ethical space of engagement. I find that key racist narratives of the period of assimilation continue today in different forms, and conclude that, while media professionals and Indigenous people can work together to change the narrative, the media narrative will only change in a substantial manner when Indigenous people, communities and leaders can influence the agenda.

Literature Review

Introduction

In preparation for a series of interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who work either directly or indirectly in the field of media, I have researched three areas that provide a foundation for discussion. First I have reviewed and summarized examples of agenda-setting and framing of Indigenous issues by Canadian media. Then, in order to give context to the media portrayal that has dominated over the last 140 years, I provide an historical overview of the Indigenous legal relationship with Canada between 1763 and 1911. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 established a formal relationship between colonial Canada, Britain and Indigenous people of northeastern North America, and changes to the Indian Act of 1911 ceded limited control of Indian territory to the federal government; this is the formative period of the federal government's assimilative policy. It resulted in the creation of the residential school system, as well as a series of opportunistic treaties and legislative amendments that took away land from Indigenous people. I argue that this legal and policy framework is reflected in the framing and agenda-setting tendencies of the media that reinforce and support the social and economic hierarchy in Canada. Finally, to update the current narrative I have summarized legal and social events of the last 45 years that are reversing the assimilative policy established in the period of

1763 to 1911. To contrast the largely non-Indigenous voices that cover Indigenous issues, I highlight a selection of current Indigenous voices in the media to suggest that the Indigenous world view is gaining prominence in both traditional and social media circles, and that the traditional media narrative of Indigenous people is being challenged.

Agenda-setting and Framing of Indigenous People and Issues

Michael Meadows (2005), in his article “Journalism and Indigenous Public Spheres,” argues that journalism is part of the “broader process of making culture” and that it has played a central role in the representation of Indigenous people in the public sphere (p. 36). Journalists do this through the framing of Indigenous people and issues, and setting an agenda by choosing issues and stories. Writing in the *Encyclopedia of Journalism*, Wayne Wanta (2009) describes agenda-setting as determining the relative importance of issues with the highest ranked issues achieving more salience than the lower (p. 54). Agenda-setting theory says media don't influence what people think, as popular opinion on the nature of media as a means to change consciousness or impose ideology might presume, but rather what people think *about*. The theory was first proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their landmark work “The Agenda-setting Function of Mass Media,” which showed that the issues and events that are prominent in the news are, by a process known as the “transfer of salience,” consequently also made prominent within the mind of the public (p. 185).

Framing and agenda-setting are closely related. Where agenda-setting focused on the formal priority given to some stories relative to the many that are or could be reported, framing addressed the content of stories and the way in which certain elements of stories are shaped, given prominence, or de-emphasized (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 11). Eran Ben-Porath (2009) states that “framing is one of the most important sources for media-driven cognitive

effects, bearing individual and social effects” (2009 p. 622). The concept of framing was introduced by Erving Goffman in 1974. He used it to describe the subjective meaning given to an issue by individuals, and argued that people use frames to make sense of the world (Templeton, 2011, p. 262). Ben-Porath (2009) explains that the media effect of framing may be conditional on the pre-existing frames and cultural beliefs of individuals so that some frames may not register with the audience (p. 621).

The framing of Indigenous issues in much of the last 40 years shows a consistent pattern of supporting the cultural hegemony of the settler narrative, which maintains that Europeans came to settle this land and made it productive, and now own it. In “The ‘Bended Elbow’ News, Kenora 1974: How a Small-Town Newspaper Promoted Colonization” (2007), Anderson and Robertson describe the *Kenora Miner and News*’ coverage of a six-week occupation of a town park by a group of Ojibway warriors. Overall the paper framed the story as civilization versus barbarism, and failed to distinguish between the warriors in the stand-off and the rest of the Ojibway community (p. 410). Further the paper portrayed the Indigenous actors in the stories within one of three image streams: as savage, untrustworthy and violent; as hapless ungovernable drunkards; or as child-like people needing direction. Anderson and Robertson describe how underlying all of the coverage is the notion that Canada’s Indigenous peoples are a defeated, defanged race (p. 411). That the issue is over land is truly significant since the land is a central part of the Indigenous worldview. The framing of the issue as being about “civilization versus barbarism” is an example of how far this coverage is from the ethical space described by Willie Ermine (2007), where there is equality of nations and the notion of one race being superior over another is dissolved..

In “Nationalism and Media Coverage of Indigenous People’s Collective Action in Canada” (2010), Wilkes et al. echo the work of Anderson and Robertson by asserting that Indigenous collective actions such as land occupations and road blocks play an important role in shaping public opinion around Indigenous rights. The media frame comes from a process that has a particular narrative structure and reliance on officials as sources, which in the end marginalizes the actors and the issues (p. 41). The actors are framed as criminals, threats to peaceful race relations, and their action is seen as an unwelcome expense. This framing prevents the actors from being seen as citizens with legitimate issues and concerns (p. 54). The framing also diminishes the legitimacy of the Indigenous position. As well, Wilkes et al. argue that the non-Indigenous are being framed in ways that reflect and promote ideologies about citizenship and nationhood (p. 41). This form of nationalism occurs when contrasts are made between the non-Indigenous population, who represent the “real” members of society, and the Indigenous population that does not belong.

Coverage of less inflammatory events also indicates that non-Indigenous society lays claim to superiority in the human order. In his study of media coverage of Indigenous child welfare agencies, Robert Harding (2010) describes how coverage of provincial child welfare issues often points to systemic problems, program cuts and scarcity of resources--issues that individuals cannot control. Issues originating within Indigenous agencies are blamed on social workers and agency officials, and questions of competence are often brought up (p. 85). This frame produces a narrative that says that the people who work within the Indigenous system are inferior through incompetence. Harding adds that news coverage often focuses on conflict rather than stories about issues such as healing initiatives and preventative child welfare.

This review of material on the framing and agenda-setting of Indigenous issues spans a period from 1972 to 2008. In that period there has been remarkable consistency in the agenda-setting and framing practices of media towards Indigenous people. They have been portrayed consistently as an inferior race, echoing the comments of Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior starting in 1896, who over 100 years ago said “the Indian cannot go from a school, making his own way and compete with the White man as he has not the physical, mental, or moral get-up to enable him to compete” (Green, 2006. p. 215). It is clear that past frames and agendas have not helped us to reach a stage of ethical space, where diversity is assumed and celebrated, where notions of claims to a human order are dispensed with, and there is equality between nations. This leads back to the core of this study—to imagine narratives with different framings and agendas that lead to the ethical space described by Willie Ermine.

Agenda-Setting and Digital Media

In 2005, McCombs wrote a retrospective called “A Look at Agenda-Setting: Past, Present and Future.” In it, he argued that online news media were the newest field of study for agenda-setting. McCombs explained that, in 1972, there were nine outlets for news in Chapel Hill, North Carolina where the study was conducted, and, even so, the media agenda was remarkably homogeneous. McCombs challenges the theory that the internet is bringing an end to agenda-setting through its diversity and heterogeneity. He argues that the agenda is still relatively homogeneous because, in 2004, “the top five newspaper websites accounted for 41.4 percent of the total links found on the Internet to the top 100 newspapers” (McCombs, 2005, p. 545). The argument focused on newspaper websites that were simply print media translated into web format at that time. But, later in the article, McCombs addressed the impact of blogging, which

was just gaining momentum at the time. He described how blogs were being sought out by journalists, and that blogs were having some agenda-setting effect (p. 549).

Deva Woodly (2008) expands on this effect of blogs on the media agenda in her 2007 article “New competencies in democratic communication? Blogs, agenda-setting and political participation,” where she argues there is evidence that blogs in particular help to mobilize opinions and set the agenda for political elites such as journalists and politicians (p. 109). Woodly maintains that some mainstream journalists have begun to use blogs to find new stories, angles and approaches to stories. She argues that, because bloggers’ content is argument-based, and not yet heavily biased to the elite, it can sometimes open new possibilities for journalists and political elites (p. 122).

The Roots of Assimilation Policy and Its Impact on the Narrative of Indigenous People

Interior Minister Sifton was part of a new Liberal government formed in 1896, and he believed in increasing the number of immigrants to Canada so that the country could build an agricultural economy on the wide-open and unsettled prairie (Timlin, 1960, p. 518). Sifton had two major portfolios—Immigration and Indian Affairs. The way he dealt with those two portfolios summed up the government’s policy approach by the turn of the 20th century; spending on Indian Affairs grew by about 2% over the length of Sifton’s tenure, while spending on Immigration grew about 391% (Sproule-Jones, 1996. p. 212). Policies towards Indigenous people in the period between the Proclamation of 1763, and the beginning of Sifton’s term in 1896, changed from a laissez-faire hands off approach to aggressive assimilation. In response the nation’s newspaper industry supported the government’s policies, both openly and more subtly in terms of framing and agenda-setting, and as Anderson & Robertson (2011) argue, they continue to do so today (p. 3).

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 was a declaration of how the British government would manage their northeastern North American colonies. Historian Brian Titley (1986) describes how it established a boundary between the land of the Indians and the land of the white settlers in Upper and Lower Canada. It also said that Indian lands could only be surrendered to the Crown, and Indians would receive compensation for it. Titley argues that the wisdom of this policy led to the Indian nations remaining loyal to the British in the American Revolutionary War (p. 2).

John Milloy, in his article “A National Crime” (1999), describes how, in 1763, First Nations were recognized as self-governing entities. Responsibility for First Nations sat in London with the Foreign Office, which did not try to exercise any governance over Indigenous people (p. 12). But the influx of United Empire Loyalists and other colonists slowly resulted in a change in policy. By 1857, the government of Upper Canada had passed the “Act for the Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in Canada,” which encouraged Indian men to assimilate and gain voting and other citizenship rights (Titley, 1986. p. 4). This was the culmination of a series of reports that indicated that Indigenous people were starving and living in a “half-civilized” state, as a result of the loss of territory and game. The Bagot report of 1842 recommended the government “imbue Aboriginal people with the primary characteristics of civilization: industry and knowledge” (Milloy 1999, p.12). So while the relationship began with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities working independently and cooperatively, it had become authoritarian and colonial before Canada had been created.

In the British North America Act of 1867, responsibility to legislate for Indians and their property is laid out in Section 91:24. Canada’s Prime Minister John A. MacDonalld called it “the onerous duty of...their [the Indians’] guardianship as of persons underage, incapable of the management of their own affairs” (Milloy, 1999. p. 20). In subsequent legislation, the

government affirmed the 1857 provisions extending the voting franchise to Indigenous peoples, abolished self-government to put First Nations governance at the level of municipalities, and gave extensive control of reserves to the Indian Affairs department (Milloy, 1999, p. 21).

The most significant legislation of this era was the Indian Act of 1876, which Titley (1986) says made Indigenous people wards of the state and brought them together under one legislative umbrella, treating them as a homogenous group with a standard set of rules applied across the board. It also mandated that all Indians be identified as belonging to a band, and again encouraged assimilation by denying status to a woman who married a non-Indigenous man. In terms of territory, the Indian Act pledged to protect the integrity of reserve lands, which it described as being held in trust for the benefit of the Indians. There were provisions to sell land, but only under the agreement of a majority of Indian males, and Indians were always to be consulted on the disposition of their lands and resources. Revenue was to be held in trust by the government, and up to ten percent of a sale could be paid directly to Indians (p. 11). This provision would stay mostly intact until 1911 when the government passed bills that would allow them to take portions of reserves for roads and railways, or could remove a reserve if it was too close to a town of 8,000 people or more (p. 21). Milloy (1999) describes how this Act, along with the Indian Act of 1880 and the Indian Advancement Act of 1884, gave the government powers to mould unilaterally almost every aspect of Indigenous life. He argues the government used this power to create whatever infrastructure was necessary to achieve assimilation and the eventual disappearance of First Nations (p. 21).

Numbered treaties between Canada and the Cree and Blackfoot nations were signed between 1871 and 1877. These treaties covered land in the southern part of the Canadian prairie, and the Canadian Shield from the Manitoba border to Lake Superior. In terms of Canada's

nation-building movement, these treaties closed the last gap in the path of a transcontinental railway (Titley, 1986. p. 10). In the history of Canada, no one project or initiative has figured more strongly than the building of the railway. The railway narrative of this project is an example of how Canada is imagined as a community; a thriving, hard-working group of pioneers, taming the land and connected by the most modern of technology, the railway. It is a narrative that promotes increased size and prosperity for the country and is supported and helped by the newspaper industry (Anderson & Robertson, 2011. p. 4).

Anderson and Robertson, in their book *Seeing Red* (2011), argue that newspaper coverage of Indigenous issues starting in 1869 supported the elite and the status quo through their framing of Indigenous issues and the portrayal of Indigenous people. In doing so, the media articulated the differences and contrast between the settler and Indigenous nations, rather than the similarities.

The picture that emerges is of a never-ending triangle of government policy, media narrative, and cultural attitudes, creating a huge distance to the ethical space of engagement. Legislation and policy have created an infrastructure that seems a long way from respect for diversity and equality among nations. In turn, the negative cultural attitudes that emerged from this infrastructure through media coverage reinforced the notion that non-Indigenous people are somehow superior to Indigenous people.

Approaching the Ethical Space of Engagement

While this historical review paints a dark portrait, events of the last 45 years have changed the fortunes of Indigenous people in Canada and arguably are taking the country down the path to a space of ethical engagement. The most crucial development is the affirmation of First Nations' rights on issues of legislation, treaties, and political action. As well, identifiably

Indigenous voices are taking a greater role in both traditional and social media as reporters, commentators and personalities. Together these developments result in the emergence of a strong and influential Indigenous chorus. The brief review of Indigenous history that follows here is meant to chart the development of the Indigenous voice through legislation, protest and politics. It is by no means an exhaustive outline, but there are many excellent resources that go through these events in detail and many of them are cited here.

Between 1911 and 1969, there had been Indigenous activism, most notably involving the Associated Indian Tribes of British Columbia (AITBC), who opposed the recommendations of the 1913-16 Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, which resulted in the removal of arable land from reserves in B.C.. To stop the AITBC from appealing to the British Privy Council, the federal government passed *The Indian Amendment Act of 1927* which prevented anyone from accepting money to represent Indian Bands in court (Titley, 1986. p. 157).

But I begin with the Trudeau government's White Paper on Indian Policy (1969), which proposed the dismantling of the Indian Act and the Department of Indian Affairs, and assimilating all Indians into a multicultural state. Indigenous leadership objected strongly and in 1970, the Indian Association of Alberta, under the leadership of Harold Cardinal, condemned the White Paper in their document *Citizens Plus* (1970). The National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) used it as their position paper to Prime Minister Trudeau in 1970, presenting a unified voice in opposition. The NIB became the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) in 1982 and, according to its website, it currently represents 900,000 people in 634 First Nation communities in Canada. While the AFN does not speak for non-reserve Indigenous people, Metis or Inuit, it is the largest and most influential voice in the Indigenous relationship with the federal government. The

organization also serves as a counterpoint to the Indian Act, which deals with all Indigenous people as a homogeneous group.

The Canadian Constitution Act of 1982 (Government of Canada, 1982) was a landmark in the formal legal relationship with Indigenous people. In Section 35, the Constitution states that the Canadian government has a duty to consult with Indigenous people (p. 63). Ermine says in this section that the constitution “stipulate(s) that the Crown must act with honour and integrity and in the best interests of Aboriginal groups” (p. 201). This section of the Constitution lays the cornerstone of a legal relationship that gives greater recognition of Indigenous status. It is also the first in a series of domino events that affect today’s media narrative.

Then, the 1990 Oka crisis brought Indigenous discontent over land claims issues to the attention of the Canadian public. What began as a land dispute at a local golf course escalated into a national protest, with Mohawk warriors at blockades in Kahnasatake and on bridges to Montreal. The army was brought in to keep the peace, and other Indigenous groups from across Canada joined in the protest by blockading and protesting in various locations. This level of discontent gave Indigenous leaders an unprecedented platform to present their position on land claims and treaties to the Canadian public (Conradi, 2009), and by doing so took yet another step in establishing an Indigenous voice in the mainstream media.

In the years following Oka, many First Nations launched action over land claims and treaties. In response, the government created the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1992. In its 1996 report, this commission recommended, among other things, a new Royal Proclamation recognizing Aboriginal nations and governments, replacement of the Department of Indian Affairs, expansion of the Aboriginal land and resource base, and initiatives to address social, health and education needs.

Another important step in the relationship was the Delgamuukw decision in 1998. That decision forced the government of British Columbia to consider the Indigenous perspective in the land claims process (Supreme Court of Canada, 1998). Scholar Brian Thom argues that the decision was flawed because judges generally do not have the ability to understand Indigenous discourse; but, he added that “the consequences of this decision have clear implications for the continued relationship between Aboriginal people and the Canadian state” (Thom, 2001. p. 6). This recognition of the oral tradition was an important step toward respecting diversity and equality.

More recently, the federal government has started to address the issue of the harm done by residential schools. First, the Prime Minister issued an apology on behalf of the government of Canada to victims of residential schools (Harper, 2008). This was followed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, whose mandate is to provide a forum for victims to acknowledge experiences and impacts, educate the public, and make recommendations to the federal government (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2010). Among the conclusions in its interim report, the Commission calls for a change in the relationship between the federal government and First Nations:

The federal government, along with the provincial governments, historically has taken a social welfare approach to its dealings with Aboriginal people. This approach fails to recognize the unique legal status of Aboriginal peoples as the original peoples of this country. Without that recognition, we run the risk of continuing the assimilationist policies and the social harms that were integral to the residential schools. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2012. p. 31)

In the 45 years since the 1969 White Paper recommended the full assimilation of Indigenous people, the formal relationship between the federal government and Indigenous people has evolved dramatically. As former National Chief Shawn Atleo of the Assembly of First Nations pointed out in a recent webcast, the federal government is planning \$695 billion in resource extraction development in the coming years; in view of this, he said that the completion of every one of those projects will require negotiation with a First Nation (Vancouver Island University, 2014). This economic reality, added to the legislative rights gained since 1969, have put First Nations on a more equitable footing with the government of Canada, and serves as a prerequisite in creating an ethical space of engagement between the two communities. The prosperity of Canadian companies, governments and individuals is now tied to the need to engage with what had so long been the muted Indigenous voice.

While the Indigenous voice is being heard in legal and legislative spheres, only now are distinct erudite Indigenous voices becoming more common in mainstream media. In his 2005 article “Journalism and Indigenous Public Spheres,” Michael Meadows shows that the Indigenous voice is largely absent in Australian, Canadian and American media, claiming that only one-fifth to one-third of stories about Indigenous issues actually feature an Indigenous person (p. 36). Clearly, if there is to be a new narrative about the Indigenous in Canadian media, then Indigenous peoples need voices that are distinct and are a part of the non-Indigenous media culture. While there have been Indigenous media in Canada for many years, they have often operated within the confines of the Indigenous world. A more significant impact is the emergence of Indigenous voices in mainstream Canadian media.

For example, Pam Palmater is a MicMaq lawyer and commentator who blogs regularly about First Nations issues on *rabble.ca*. But she also has a significant presence in more

mainstream media, appearing regularly on CTV and CBC television as a commentator (Palmater, n.d.) Another example is Chelsea Vowel, a Cree blogger for *Huffington Post* who also writes for *The National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* (Vowel, n.d.). Both of these women are strong advocates for Indigenous rights who are appearing in traditional media.

But even more important are the identifiable Indigenous voices who work in mainstream media. Prominent among these are Duncan McCue, an Anishnaabe journalist and professor at the University of British Columbia (McCue D., n.d.), and Wab Kinew, a Midewin journalist and the director of Indigenous Inclusion at the University of Winnipeg (Kinew, W., n.d.). McCue works as a reporter for CBC television in Vancouver, and also teaches courses in reporting in the Aboriginal world, while Kinew is a musician, journalist and academic who may be best known for hosting the CBC series *The Eighth Fire*.

In a recent media panel held at Vancouver Island University, both McCue and Kinew acknowledged the racist portrayals and biased agenda-setting that has created the current media narrative. But they also saw signs of improved and increased reporting on Indigenous issues in recent years. Both called for more Indigenous voices in mainstream media, and an approach to reporting on Aboriginal issues that is more measured. As Duncan McCue advised journalism students recently, “that extra 20 minutes you spend having tea with an elder can make all the difference in the world” (Vancouver Island University, 2014). Kinew’s position is perhaps best summed up by an explanation of the concept of the “Eighth Fire”, which draws from an Anishnaabe prophecy that says now is the time for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous to come together for “justice and harmony” (Eighth Fire, n.d.). The four-part series deals with many of the myths and stereotypes surrounding Indigenous people, and argues that it is in both communities’ best interests to work together. In other words, it argues for the ethical space of

engagement. In an interview with *The Toronto Star*, Kinew says “to me, it’s just a question of knowledge and education. I believe, at their heart, Canadians are good people, they have open minds and open hearts and, presented with the truth, they do want to do the right thing.”

(DeMara, 2012) Kinew’s notion is that knowledge and education about Indigenous issues will create a greater respect for diversity and equality. In turn, the media can play a role by changing the agenda, and framing its portrayal of Indigenous people in a way that reflects this reality.

So, from the perspective of the legal framework surrounding the federal government and Indigenous people, and the development of powerful Indigenous voices, we are well down the path to an ethical space of engagement. But there is still much work to be done, and current disputes over pipelines carrying liquid natural gas and petroleum from the Alberta oilsands show that the federal and provincial governments are not yet negotiating with attitudes of equality, despite the state’s duty to consult. This was shown recently when the British Columbia government announced a change in policy that would override First Nations treaty rights over 99 percent of natural gas production. Reaction was swift from the B.C. Indigenous community. Officials from the provincial government were escorted out of hearings held by B.C. Indigenous leaders on natural gas development that very day. Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said “in a stunningly stupid move, the province has effectively declared war on all B.C. First Nations and jeopardized all LNG discussions throughout the entire province of B.C.” (“B.C. government flips on environment rules”, 2014) Yet, within hours, the province rescinded the policy and apologized, showing a level of respect that would have been hard to imagine just a few years before. In this one incident, we catch some hint that the ethical space of engagement is closer by the reaction of the Indigenous leaders, and the provincial government’s quick move to

rescind and apologize. But, the very fact that they quietly passed this order in council shows that we are still some distance from that space.

Methods

Research Design

This research is situated in the critical tradition, which examines assumptions in society relating to habits, beliefs and power relations, and maintains that communication is defective when it supports social conditions that give some groups privilege over others. Further, the critical tradition believes in exposing and dismantling the social mechanisms that support privileged groups (Craig & Muller, 2007, p 425). Within the critical tradition lies Antonio Gramsci's concept of "cultural hegemony," which says privileged classes maintain their position by persuading lower classes to voluntarily consent to the current sociopolitical structure, rather than through brute ideological domination. Further, the institutions of civil society such as religion, education, and media play a role in the persuasion by supporting the hegemony of the privileged class (Durham & Kellner, 2012, p 5). Culture is the medium through which the consent of the governed to elite power is negotiated, often in the form of value-laden messages, campaigns, doctrines, and social movements; these messages, campaigns, doctrines, and movements offer the public certain symbolic satisfactions and material benefits in return for their consent. An example is the welfare state: as a hegemonic construct within Western liberal democracies, it binds the loyalty of the public to the state and its governing elites. In turn, the public receives the psychological reassurance of having a degree of social security, while also obtaining material goods in the form of unemployment insurance, welfare, health care and retirement benefits.

This research had two parts and both use the methodology of Narrative Inquiry to first analyze media stories and then uncover common themes and experiences from interviews. A key element of Narrative Inquiry is that the narrative has a plot or sequence of events that usually revolves around one point that the narrator believes is important (Griffin & May, 2012, p. 443). But more importantly, the narratives used by media help the audience to understand stories with images and phrases that are laden with meaning. As described by Anderson and Robertson (2011), this is done as a shorthand to aid in telling the story, but the impact of the technique is to perpetuate stereotypes among the audience (p. 6).

The first part of the research project was an analysis of the narratives of news stories surrounding the leak of Dr. Bryce's 1907 report. This analysis gives an historical context to the media narrative, beginning at the height of the period of assimilation in Canada. The second part was a series of interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who either work in the media, or who have experience working with media. The focus of the interviews was to reflect on the current media narrative, and speculate on how to change it.

Media Narrative Analysis of Reporting on Residential School Health Issues in 1907

Data and data gathering. A search was conducted of newspaper articles on the leaked report on public health conditions in Indian Residential Schools in 1907. To narrow the scope of the research, the search was restricted to 10 major papers in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia to reflect geographic and political diversity. To narrow the time frame, searches were conducted on these papers from November 15 (the day the story broke) to November 22, 1907. The location of the story within the newspaper and the other headlines of the day were also recorded for comparison and context.

Data analysis. As outlined by Helen Fulton (2005a), Media Narrative Analysis breaks down stories primarily through interpretation of linguistic choices, relationships between participants, the relationship between the narrator and audience, and the manner in which the text unfolds (p. 245). Fulton (2005) quotes semiotician Roland Barthes in her introduction to the book *Narrative and Media*, and argues that news reporting creates myths about the existence of universal truths and objective reality which then normalizes those concepts. In the case of Indigenous people in Canada, this creates a “we and them” duality, where non-Indigenous people represent what is true and real, while the Indigenous people or “The Other” don’t understand or share our beliefs (Fulton, p. 7). The concept of “Us vs. ‘The Other’ ” was a recurring theme in my review of literature related to agenda-setting and framing and so it was appropriate to use this framework to examine media reporting, not only in 1907, but today.

This analysis was conducted to understand the underlying assumptions, prejudices and approaches that dominated relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in 1907. Further context was added by surveying the other news stories of the day to deduce the salience of this story. The 1907 news coverage was coded; then these codes (or categories) were used to discover recurring themes, language, style, grammatical constructs, underlying assumptions and prejudices, and the role of the narrator (including viewpoint and angle, categorization, cohesion, and omissions). Together these elements created a snapshot of the treatment of Indigenous people at the height of Canada’s move to assimilate them. This data provided historical context for the issues identified in the literature review and through participant interviews.

Interviews

Data and data gathering. The second part of this research project used narrative interview techniques to elicit observations and reactions to five topics: the modern portrayal of

Indigenous people; the current media landscape, including both traditional and social media; systemic issues arising from the process of gathering news in a traditional media context; the presence or absence of an Indigenous voice; and the economic, political and social issues that influence media narratives. Narrative interviewing is more discursive in nature than traditional question-and-answer interviewing techniques. The interview takes on more of the tone of a conversation, with the interviewer and participant alternately listening and responding collaboratively to create meaning out of experiences (Riessman, 2006).

However, in reality the style of these interviews was both inductive and deductive. As described by researcher Carol Rivas (2012), the research was deductive because the themes that were developed for the interviews came from the literature review, which was conducted beforehand. However, the participants homed in on aspects of identified themes and added their own perspectives, which is an inductive technique (p. 371).

Six people were interviewed from a list of ten possible participants. Five of the interviews were conducted on the telephone while the sixth was done in person. Participants were sent a summary of findings from the literature review and a list of five possible topics that could be discussed, although participants were encouraged to bring up topics that they felt were relevant but were not part of the list. The interviews took between 30 minutes and one hour, and they were recorded and transcribed.

The areas of inquiry listed above came from the results of my literature review. Often I used these results to get a reaction from the participant and then probe for a narrative that reflected his/her experience or observation of that result. The interviews were conducted with people who work or have worked in journalism, or who deal with journalists as part of their job.

This experience gives them a narrative authority, which in turn gives their words a validity and depth not possible in a quantitative study (Griffin & May, 2012. p. 444).

Data analysis. Transcribed interviews were reviewed and coded using the five categories: *Portrayals of Indigenous People, the Current Media Landscape, Systemic Issues of Journalism, the Invisible Indigenous, and Approaching the Ethical Space of Engagement*. Common themes were teased out of these categories and a set of recommendations and conclusions drawn from the findings.

Findings

Introduction

The findings of this research covers a timeline that begins with a media narrative analysis of media coverage of Dr. Bryce's 1907 report, and concludes with an analysis of narrative inquiry involving six interview participants. There are two sets of findings: the first surround the 1907 event, and the second focus on data derived from the interviews.

The analysis of media coverage in 1907 examines the position of the story within the news of the day and its visibility to assess its salience. The analysis of the media narrative uses a variety of techniques to dissect the flow of the story.

The analysis of the interviews resulted in findings in five broad categories, as stated above: *Portrayals of Indigenous People, the Current Media Landscape, Systemic Issues of Journalism, the Invisible Indigenous, and Approaching the Ethical Space of Engagement*. . These findings paint a picture of the current landscape and anticipate steps to be taken on the path to the ethical space of engagement.

Media Reaction to the Leak of Dr. Bryce's Report

Position and visibility. The story that broke Dr. Bryce's report was published in *The Ottawa Citizen* and *Montreal Star* on November 15, 1907, five months after the report had been completed. It is front page news in both papers, but it is third in salience. At the top left of both papers is a story about seven deaths in a train wreck north of Ottawa. In the middle column is an international story about a change in tariff policy in the United Kingdom. The story about the report is in the top right-hand side of the front page, indicating a tertiary level of salience.

In the next two days, this story would be re-published in only four other major publications in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia, indicating limited distribution due to lack of interest among the editorial decision-makers in Canada. As well, there were no other stories arising from the first one in the days following; it seems this story only had limited impact at the time of publication. The positioning of the story on the front page only gives it a moderate level of importance, especially when one considers how important the story has become more than 100 years later. The lack of reaction to the story in the days that follow show a lack of interest, an indicator that in 1907 the government's assimilation policy had certainly taken Indigenous people off the Canadian media agenda.

Media narrative. Analysis of the story resulted in findings relating to portrayal, agenda-setting, and attribution, all of which indicate that the locus of this story sits primarily within the realm of non-Indigenous politics, while the plight of Indigenous children is secondary. The first indicator of this is to be found in the flow of the story. It begins by acknowledging the existence of the unfavourable report and its implications in negotiations planned between churches and state. The narrative then shifts to describing the methods used to gather data for the report before giving an account of the results and possible reasons for them. The piece ends with a prediction of action. By putting the report and its role in negotiations with the church first, the flow of this

story puts the focus on the politics of the situation ahead of the impact on the victims. As well, the condition of the victims occupies less column space (27 lines) in comparison to the amount given to non-Indigenous politics (37 lines, about half of the article).

The only “voice” in this story is a quote from the report that was written by Dr. Bryce. However, this is not an unusual occurrence; when reading the other stories on the front page of the *Citizen* that day, there are no verbal quotes in any of the stories. The only quote is in the British tariff story, and it is lifted from Hansard at the British House of Commons. There are four participants in the story: Dr. Bryce, the federal government, the churches, and the victims who are discussed the least. This is another indicator that the locus of this story is with the politics surrounding the issue.

The story is written so that, in three cases, subordinate clauses are used to begin a sentence, thereby emphasizing the content of the subordinate clause over the action of the sentence. The impact is to obscure the participants and the sequence of events leading up to the report.

Here is an example: “Attention having been drawn to a large number of deaths among the pupils, either while attending school or soon after leaving, Dr. Bryce was instructed to make a report on the subject.” In this case, the action is “Dr. Bryce was instructed to make a report on the subject...” but the construction of the sentence emphasizes the large number of deaths. This technique also obscures some important points; it never makes clear who instructed Dr. Bryce, or who drew attention to the health conditions within residential schools. These are key elements in the story, and their omission clouds its meaning and brings the origin of the story into question. This happens each time this technique is used. This obfuscation leads one to wonder about the

origin of the leak. One also has to wonder if the upcoming negotiations with clergy played any role in the leak that happened some five months after the report was distributed.

Regardless of these considerations, the media reaction to the leak of the 1907 report demonstrates two features of media coverage of Indigenous issues today. First, it is a story that portrays Indigenous people as victims, a pattern we see today in coverage of issues such as housing and health conditions in remote communities. Second, it puts the locus of the story within the political arena, with the impact on victims being subordinate. A recent example of this occurred on May 12, 2014 when I did a search of Google News for stories on Aboriginal people. The top four stories were about the United Nations report that said Indigenous people in Canada are in a crisis. In all of these stories, the only people quoted represented either the federal government or the United Nations. One hundred and seven years later, it seems Canadian media are still talking about Indigenous people without talking to them.

Analysis of Semi-structured Interviews

The Invisible Indigenous. In 1996, co-producers Peter Campbell and Christine Welsh released *Return to the Healing Circle*, a documentary about the survivors of the Kuper Island Residential School. It was one of the first documentaries in which victims of sexual abuse told their stories to the camera, and the producers wanted to give the Catholic diocese of Victoria, which ran Kuper Island Residential School, an opportunity to respond:

PC: At the time that we were making it, everybody was still covering up, the church was actively covering up. Well, they had been doing it for decades, sending abusers to other schools, and further and further north. I dropped off a rough cut of it, of the film to the Bishop, Remi De Roo and I talked to his assistant on the phone and saying “there’s a lot being said in here, and I would like to give you guys an opportunity to look at it and

refute anything, or to clarify anything, it's like new to me" and about three weeks passed and I got in touch with again and said "have you seen the film" and they said they lost it. I said, "that's OK, I'll be there in 15 minutes with another copy." Never heard from them, wouldn't return my calls. So, there you go.

AB: Ignore, eh?

PC: Yeah, just deny and totally ignore. No comment. So that was pretty disgusting, I was very angry at that situation (P. Campbell, personal communication, May 7, 2014).

Peter's account is a reminder of how institutions dealt with the concerns of Indigenous people twenty years ago. In the years since, all of the churches and the federal government have admitted wrongdoing and apologized. But it was the voices of the Indigenous survivors, speaking in films like Peter's, that began it all.

During the interview, I was telling Peter a story related to me about a decision taken by elders, located in Indigenous communities on southern Vancouver Island in the early 1990s, to tell the stories of abuse:

AB: So as you said, the timing was probably just perfect. You were probably one of the earliest film crews to deal with these guys just when the community had made that decision.

PC: And I think that the decision was pretty much forced upon them, in that what was going on in number of communities was unsustainable in terms of the abuse that was happening within their own communities and the self-destructive behavior. And I think a lot of people perhaps realized that they were still under the shadow of the church and the state to be silent. And that's where that was coming from. They were taught the concept

of shame, and it was really hard for them to break through that (P. Campbell, personal communication, May 7, 2014).

But they did break through, eventually winning an apology from the federal government in June 2008, and empowering Indigenous people to speak out, and be silent no more.

Perhaps this is the biggest change from 1907. In that day there were no Indigenous voices in the media. As Indigenous journalist and personality Wab Kinew pointed out “at that time it was illegal for an Indian person to speak in public.” Since the 1960s a number of Indigenous leaders have spoken eloquently and passionately for their people. Political leaders like Harold Cardinal, Ovide Mercredi, and Phil Fontaine have been relatively common in Canadian media.

But in the last twenty years, many more voices with more opinions and in other contexts have been heard. Adam Olsen is an example. Adam grew up on the Tsartlip reserve just outside of Victoria with an Indigenous father and non-Indigenous mother. While openly identifying himself as an Indigenous person, Adam has been an elected official at the municipal level, has run for the Green party in Saanich North riding, and is currently the interim leader of the British Columbia Green Party. “I grew up with one foot in the white community and one foot in the Native” says Olsen. “I have learned to walk that line” (A. Olsen, personal communication, May 8, 2014). Olsen says one change he has noticed is that Indigenous leadership is in the media more often:

Take Chief Stewart Phillip, for example. His profile in British Columbia has grown over the past few years. He started being seen in the media as a radical. Now he's not seen as a radical. He's a legitimate voice of First Nations' interests in the province. People go to him now (A. Olsen, personal communication, May 8, 2014).

The voice of Indigenous leadership, especially the leadership of the Assembly of First Nations, has become common in the Canadian media landscape, while leaders of smaller but still powerful Indigenous groups are gaining more credibility and exposure. But there is still an uneasy relationship between Indigenous leadership and the media.

Politician Charlie Angus and non-Indigenous reporter Judith Lavoie agreed that First Nations' leadership all have to be better at dealing with media. Lavoie says it has gotten better in recent years, but there are still problems in covering local Indigenous issues:

I think getting their story across they have to realize that the media is not the enemy: it's a tool that they can use themselves. You're right, the number of people that you can phone and get a thoughtful answer from is increasing. It's increasing, in my experience, just over the last five years. Before that I found it difficult finding people who were up to date on the issues. It's still got a long way to go. I hate to suggest that they need more communication skills, but they need to be able to realize that they can influence things so much. There's two things that usually happen in First Nations communities, especially if it's a controversial issue. First, no one is talking except the chief and the chief is not available. Or you get people shooting their mouths off that don't know the issues.

Because an aboriginal community will be identified as that you need someone who knows what they're talking about (J. Lavoie, personal communication, May 21, 2014).

Charlie Angus often acts as an intermediary for First Nations leaders who do not want to deal with the media. He says there is a lack of trust that First Nations leadership must get past:

Some of the communities don't talk to media. It's definitely a reality. I've always been surprised that my communities haven't asked me why I'm always the spokesperson. CBC will call me about the flooding in a community. Some of the leaders aren't comfortable

because they've been burned in the past. They don't deal with media and that's also an issue. Sometimes it would really help to get their view, but they don't expect to be believed. It's a funny thing (C. Angus, personal communication, May 26, 2014).

There are problems on both sides of this relationship, and these problems feed on each other to create a cycle of poor relations. Media often have trouble getting cooperation from First Nations leadership resulting in stories that are missed, or positions that are missing or misrepresented within stories that are written regardless of the lack of Indigenous participation. This adds to a cycle of mistrust that is manifest on the Indigenous side in a reluctance to comment, or inability to be available to comment. This in turn feeds back to the media agenda of missed stories and positions, and so on.

It was left to Indigenous health advocate Cindy Blackstock to put a focus on Indigenous outlets and people in the media, including APTN, an Indigenous television channel in Canada:

I think some people think of APTN as creating a space for Indigenous news, but I think it also provides a seeding ground for Indigenous journalism that has an effect across the mainstream networks. A lot of the stories, for example, that are now being picked up in cases of Indigenous children at my work, APTN was the first to cover them. Now mainstream picks them up and covers them. In the same way I see some of these great journalists, editors, and technicians that APTN has embraced go on to work in other areas of journalism. That is really positive. I look at the group now that's involved. People like Wab (Kinew) and (Carla) Robinson, the CBC anchor, I think it's really great. I like that they're not entirely working on aboriginal stories. They're also talking about mainstream stories. They become a legitimate voice for all Canadians to listen to (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

And this I argue is one of the best indicators that we have moved towards the ethical space of engagement. We now have identifiably Indigenous reporters who are not just reporting on Indigenous issues, and are becoming a part of the mainstream media landscape. While this is only a small indicator, and it does not give us any idea of how far down the path we have gone, the increasing “ordinariness” of the Indigenous personality’s presence in Canadian media is important.

Portrayal. The media portrayal has shifted in recent years from the victim/warrior/child portrayal to, as Wab Kinew calls it “a portrayal of social dysfunction and financial mismanagement.” Kinew says that stereotype is used by people who want to keep control of Indigenous people:

It's typically used under the rationale that these organizations are dysfunctional with financial mismanagement. Different levels of government want control of First Nations affairs. We have to recognize that while those are new iterations of this stereotype, it comes from a large tradition. It's a modern iteration of a very old idea, which is that Indigenous people need to have their affairs controlled by outsiders because they are somehow inferior or incapable. A hundred years ago it was argued on the basis of rage and physical attributes. Today it's made on a financial and political organization basis, but it's still the same line of thinking (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

Kinew’s observations were supported by New Democrat MP Charlie Angus. Angus represents the federal northern Ontario riding of Timmins-James Bay. Within his riding are First Nations communities such as Attawapiskat and Kashechewan, where inadequate housing and flooding issues are common. Angus lobbies on behalf of the people living there, and he compares the

coverage of water problems in 2005 in Kashechewan, and housing issues in Attawapiskat in 2012. He finds the way the story is framed by politicians affects coverage:

In 2005 we had a full evacuation of the community of Kashechewan because of E. coli in the water. This is a community that has been left to fall apart. Canadians were horrified by the situation. They couldn't believe these conditions were allowed to exist. The entire media focus was on mismanagement of Indian affairs. Stories were getting out that Indian affairs spent between three and five million dollars on various reserve buildings. There were water plants that didn't even meet codes and were shut down shortly afterwards. The whole framing at that time was "we have a whole internal third world. We need to make the department of Indian affairs more accountable so we don't have such high levels of poverty." We had the exact same situation happen in Attawapiskat in 2012 with the Attawapiskat housing crisis that gathered international attention. We had initially the same media and national response, but the conservatives blew the racist dog whistle. The prime minister stood up on the day that the International Red Cross went into Attawapiskat and he said, "We gave every man, woman, and child in that community \$50,000. What did they do with the money?" That completely transformed the debate into one of shifty Indians ripping off tax payers (C. Angus, personal communication, May 26, 2014).

Angus says the impact of that shift in tone is seen in the riding. Now he is hearing the narrative of the corrupt leader and shifty Indian more often:

The other day we had to evacuate an area because of a flood and I heard the guy at Tim Horton's say, "I hope those Indians paid their bills before they left." You know? Tell me it's not having an impact because I think it is (C. Angus, personal communication, May

26, 2014).

Every participant identified this portrait in media narratives. Cindy Blackstock believes that the acceptance of that portrayal prevents media from looking deeper into the problems that create or exaggerate the issue. We discussed Robert Harding's article "The Demonization of Aboriginal Child Welfare Authorities in the News," which found that issues in the Aboriginal system on Vancouver Island were consistently blamed on financial mismanagement or social dysfunction, while issues in the provincial system were found to be systemic in nature, and not any particular person's fault. Blackstock, who worked in the B.C. child welfare system, says this shows how coverage into this issue does not give enough context:

[W]hen it happens in the province, the province can mobilize resources. For example, they can replace the management with management from another office. They have the resources to get people back on track. I would be one of the people that would get the office back on track. I'd be sent out to the agencies that were in crisis and I'd try to improve practices with the social workers that were there. At a First Nations agency you have nothing. There's no support (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

This demonstrates one of the most damaging impacts of stereotyping and framing: journalists tend to avoid looking behind the image to test it and really see if it is true, and the audience never calls them on it. This is a portrayal with a deep history; in my literature review I quoted Sir Clifford Sifton who said at the turn of the 20th century that the Indian did not have the "physical, mental, or moral get-up to compete with white man." The framing of financial mismanagement and social dysfunction is just another manifestation of this portrayal.

The second issue of portrayal also has deep political roots. The Indian Act of 1876 had a

direct impact on the tendency of media to generalize in its portrayal of Indigenous people. It officially ignored the diversity of Indigenous people by establishing one set of laws to govern all Indigenous people without regard for cultural or geographic differences. The media often looks at Indigenous issues in the context of the politics surrounding them, and those politics operate on one set of laws. But the tendency to generalize about all Indigenous people through the acts and words of a few was also identified by both Wab Kinew and Cindy Blackstock as a factor in coverage of Indigenous issues.

To demonstrate this tendency of the media to generalize, Kinew tells a story of doing follow-up coverage the day after a fire on a reserve. When his station first covered the fire, the gay man who lived in the house charged that there was a large streak of homophobia on the reserve. On day two, Kinew was sent to investigate the charges of homophobia:

I went to the community and found out that that wasn't how it happened. Everyone said, "No, the guy was just foaming at the mouth because his house just burned down and he was frustrated." I came to find out that there was a lot of openness in the community. I came back and said that there was no evidence of this being a hate crime, so why are we jumping to generalizations of the First Nations communities? That is just one anecdote, but I think it's what happens a lot (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

Cindy Blackstock sees generalization on a national scale and she agrees that generalizations about Indigenous people tend to be negative:

If you take it even bigger, that's what happens on the financial mismanagement scale. If you find an aboriginal person who holds a stereotype, that's generalized. But, if you find an aboriginal person like Wab Kinew, who to me, embodies wisdom, intelligence, and

hard work, that doesn't get generalized (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

Blackstock's comment brings the focus of the issue full circle and introduces the issue of racism in portrayal. Both Kinew and Blackstock say there is an element of racism in the fact that generalizations are so quickly made about negative aspects. This latent attitude could be related to the fact that most stories about Indigenous people involve conflict. Charlie Angus says this portrayal adds to the feeling that Indigenous people are "The Other":

Right off the bat the overall message that Canadians hear is one of conflict or dysfunction or victims as opposed to the phenomenal things that are happening. Young people who have been involved in their community are local heroes. All of that is ghettoized. It's harder for people to see the full balance (C. Angus, personal communication, May 26, 2014).

This portrait of Indigenous people uses broad strokes of incompetence and indolence. The problem with it is that the portrait paints all Indigenous people, whether they be coastal Salish people or woodland Anishnaabe people or any one of a dozen variations, with the same brush. This leads to the question of how reporters and journalists paint this picture with so little variation.

Systemic issues in journalism. One obvious place to begin is in the newsroom, where decisions about stories are made and agendas are set. Journalist Judith Lavoie says when she was working for newspapers (she became a freelance writer in 2013), it was difficult to get approval to do feature stories on Indigenous people; stories with conflict had a much better chance:

The argument against it is always, "How does this affect the majority of our readers?" I

think there was a belief that most of the aboriginal communities are not huge readers of the newspaper. To some extent, any story would be measured that way. Trying to persuade editors that this really is an important story even though it's coming from a small group of people it's going to affect a lot more. If we don't all start taking more notice of what's happening it's going to be a problem. It was an uphill battle. It was getting better, but still regarded as fringe compared to the mainstream news. Unless it involved a blockade or something. Fortunately, there's another truth to that. If it makes good pictures we'll go out to that one. There's the difficulty of trying to pitch a story at a news meeting and knowing that you may not be able to come up with it. Unlike political coverage where you know that quite often you were not going to be able to get the people that you needed for the story in the given timeframe (J. Lavoie, personal communication, May 21, 2014).

This approach by decision makers in the news business plays to the idea that only Indigenous audiences are interested in Indigenous news, and that Indigenous people are not part of the reading public. However, it ignores agenda-setting theory, which says that what is important to newsmakers becomes important to the audience.

Both Wab Kinew and Cindy Blackstock comment on the lack of engagement and understanding on the part of editors and reporters who make editorial decisions. Kinew blames the pressure of working in the daily grind of news production:

I think it's because of a result of deadlines. But also because a lot of people reporting are not really engaged with the Indigenous communities that they're reporting on. They don't have the bigger picture, or even all the information to develop something like that. I think it's a combination of the practical and the ignorant. It leads to uneven reporting

when it comes to Indigenous people (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

Cindy Blackstock believes that media have been remiss by not looking more deeply into Indigenous issues. She sees no one asking bigger questions about the role of government in the lives of First Nations people or the issue of generalization:

The media is feeding into an uninformed public with a lot of stereotypes. The media itself is subject to a lot of these stereotypes. For example, financial mismanagement. As such, they apply very little critical analysis to any stories that come their way. For example, let's assume a legitimate fraudulent action in a First Nations community. The government undertakes the Financial First Nations Fiscal Responsibility Act, applying it to every single First Nation. There is no one in the media that I was able to find that would say, "Wait a minute. There is fraud here, but why would you pass an act on an entire people?" (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

Wab Kinew believes the long-term effect of the combination of lack of engagement, acceptance of government policy, and lack of understanding among media leads to double standards in coverage. Kinew draws a comparison between the media reaction to the 2013 resignation of Alberta premier Alison Redford, and the 2014 resignation of Shawn Atleo as Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations:

Nobody questions the legitimacy of the premier's office in Alberta when Alison Redford steps down. Nobody questions that. Then Shawn Atleo steps down and immediately it's "oh, the AFN is past its best-before date" and "the AFN needs to be dismantled" and "it's an existential crisis." There's definitely a double standard when it comes to dealing with the First Nations community (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

There are well over 600 First Nations bands in Canada coming from a variety of cultural and geographical contexts. This represents a diversity that in a different context would be celebrated. Yet, that diversity is not recognized, or is seen as a negative aspect of the Indigenous world.

One of the underlying reasons for the lack of engagement is economic pressure felt by news organizations. Investigative reporting that delivers history and context to stories about Indigenous communities takes time and financial resources, and in a climate where news departments are facing increasing economic pressure, it is difficult to see any motivation for greater engagement. Filmmaker Peter Campbell is pessimistic about the chances for more in-depth coverage, simply because the audience has no appetite for it:

I think the more in-depth studies, it's not what the world wants anymore. You know it's not what's being funded on CBC. Long-form documentary or the National Film Board. So I think that more and more the erosion of thoughtful voices continues in this country through media. I know that in the past, say CBC or the Journal, there has been an ongoing series on child poverty in First Nations communities. I can't remember when that was Andy, but basically a series of five 5 or 6-minute pieces. That sort of, and I don't know who else has done that, it would be interesting to research that. So, those kind of things are done from time to time, you know the in-depth, it just takes money and look what's happening to newspapers, and look what's happening to our national institutions such as CBC and the NFB (P. Campbell, personal communication, May 7, 2014).

Campbell argues that the audience has become accustomed to “short bursts of information” and it is difficult to represent the depth and complexity of the Indigenous story under such conditions. Health activist Cindy Blackstock agrees, arguing that the “short burst of

information” is having a negative impact on media’s ability to tell complex, nuanced stories:

What I think is really getting pushed to the wayside is investigative journalism. I think we have a lot of access to information, but not a lot of access to critical thought. For myself, I tune into PBS Frontline on a regular basis because it's one place where I feel I have some opportunity to have some critical insight. In Canada, it's few and far between. A lot of these things have become entertainment shows (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

Interestingly, the younger Wab Kinew does not agree. Kinew has grown up in the digital media atmosphere, bombarded with messages. Nearly all of my communication with him was through his phone. Wab Kinew posts on Twitter and Facebook on a daily basis, again using his phone. Much more than Cindy Blackstock or Peter Campbell, Wab Kinew is in tune with the communication platforms that make best use of short bursts of information, and he is confident in the ability of Indigenous people to tell their stories in an abbreviated format:

Many people have done things that have gone viral that are only a minute or two long, or less than 140 characters long that are accurate representations of the sentiment of Indigenous communities. It is possible, but the reason it doesn't happen with mainstream media is because those people who are capable and engaged in the Indigenous communities ... these people are not the ones doing the reporting or making the editorial decisions. Reporters like Duncan McCue would acknowledge the Indigenous communities and you would see good representations (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

The two messages coming from this discussion are that it is increasingly difficult to find the conditions in traditional media to present deeper contextual coverage of Indigenous people and

events. At the same time, Indigenous people are adapting to social media and abbreviated formats and using them to create messaging for their culture.

In summary, the systemic issues that impact media coverage of Indigenous people come down to economics and engagement. Editorial decision makers are reluctant to spend time and money on covering Indigenous issues, unless the stories involve conflict. They don't see the impact of this group of people on the larger audience, and believe there is no appetite among the larger audience for stories on Indigenous people. Tight news budgets, and the audience's desire for short bursts of information, lead to non-contextualized stories that do little to promote understanding of Indigenous issues.

The media landscape. In recent years, two events were consistently identified by the participants as having an impact on the media narrative of Indigenous people: the arrival of social media, and Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Both have given space for the narratives and voices of Indigenous individuals, but in different ways.

Unanimously, the participants agreed that the TRC has had a significant impact on the media narrative, and thus on relations between media and Indigenous people. Filmmaker Peter Campbell says the commission gave voice to Indigenous people freed from their oppressors:

I think that that's a very significant movement in this country that freed the voices of both the church and state. And First Nations as well, more and more, they felt that they could talk about their experience in it because they were given a centre spot. You know they were given the opportunity to speak freely and they were respected and honoured and given the time they needed to say what they needed to say (P. Campbell, personal communication, May 7, 2014).

Health advocate Cindy Blackstock followed the TRC closely. She attended a number of public meetings, including the last one in Edmonton. She says that local coverage of the event was thorough, but national coverage of the TRC process was not:

There were four or five thousand people from Alberta. They are gathered to listen to the stories of the survivors of every political and cultural diversity that you can imagine. The local papers for that period of time were doing a good job. There was an excellent timeline in *The Edmonton Journal*. Even some of the right wing groups like Sun Media profiled the poetry that the residential school survivors had written. They did a fairly decent job of covering that. But I find the lack of national attention to be disappointing. You almost never hear about it. The only time it peers through the national landscape is when the deaths of children in residential schools were reported, or the medical experiments, or the electric chair in St. Anne's Residential School. There's been very little coverage. I'm not sure it's been at a deep enough level to shift the Canadian consciousness (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

In this case local media responded to a national event by providing significant resources and visibility when the commission visited their area. But in the greater context of national media, the TRC competed against economic and political stories that make up the agenda of much national coverage. Only when there were serious revelations that fit into the political agenda of media did the TRC make the national agenda.

Further, many in the Indigenous community believe the TRC is just another manifestation of colonialism. On the May 18, 2014 edition of the CBC Radio show *Sunday Edition*, Indigenous writer Lee Maracle says the commission offered just another victim

portrayal, and that the commission lacks testimony from the federal government, which knew about conditions as early as 1907. Here, Maracle is being interviewed by host Michael Enright:

LM: It's part of the process of colonization that's still going on.

ME: The commission?

LM: The commission, the business of residential schools, the hoodwinking of aboriginal peoples thinking that there's any kind of reconciliation. In order for reconciliation to exist, the party that hurt you has to participate and that's not the case here. Seven thousand people gave testimony and are disclosing what happened to them. This is voyeurism because everyone is watching it; that's all it is.

ME: You don't think they want to tell their stories?

LM: I think they wanted to tell their stories and be heard, but I think they want to hear from the other side. That was not an option.

ME: The other side being?

LM: The people who hurt them didn't have to speak. This is the only option presented. I think a lot of people thought it was better than nothing. Thousands did not present, including many members of my family.

ME: When you talk about the other side you're talking about the people who perpetrated the abuse and ran the schools?

LM: Crimes. It's crimes. Genocide crimes. First, the removal. Second, the beatings, the starvations, the rape. Those are crimes. I know we call them abuses when they're children, but they're actually crimes. When we look at the genocide convention, it's a crime of genocide.

ME: You don't think that the commission itself had any value?

LM: I wouldn't say that, but it's not about reconciliation.

On the same show, Indigenous scholar Taiaiake Alfred says the commission allows the non-Indigenous to focus on individual acts performed on individuals by individuals, offering Canadian society an escape from the pain of deeper, more collective reflection:

To me, this creates a narrative about the dark chapter in Canadian history that takes away the guilt of the collectivity of Canadians for the taking of native land and places it on individual priests, nuns, and administrators. I think that was something that the Canadian government could accept. Most native people see that the true route is the large-scale collective justice that is yet to even be considered.

The perspective shown by Alfred and Maracle reminds us of the diversity of opinion in the Indigenous community, but it also reminds us that in many ways Canada still has a colonial and paternalistic approach to Indigenous people. Taiaiake Alfred says the TRC has not changed the portrayal of Indigenous people as victims:

We are portrayed as damaged, harmed people in the Canadian narrative. Rather than reconcile the image of the native to what we are, which is a resilient, strong, resistant people, through this process we are once again emasculated in the sense that we are the beneficiaries of Canadian good will in wanting to go back and write the history over.

However, both Maracle and Alfred believe that the TRC is an important development in relations between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities because it raised the salience of the issue. I argue that it does show movement down the path to the ethical space of engagement, because the TRC brought the stories of abuse into the media narrative of Indigenous people. As journalist Judith Lavoie observed “the stories reached people who had no idea this was going on.”

The second great change in the media landscape has been the impact of the introduction of social media. All participants agreed that social media has given a greater variety of voices on Indigenous issues through blogging, and the use of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Wab Kinew argues that the impact of connecting people from a distance and relaying messages was felt in the recent delay of bill C-33, an act to amend education for First Nations people:

For the political organization side and amplifying the voice of the grassroots side, I think it's extraordinarily powerful. Realistically, when you think about it, with the Prime Minister's office coming to the table and meeting with [Assembly of First Nations Chief Shawn] Atleo happened because of social media and protests. That's a tangible outcome from a social media campaign. The combination [effect] was Atleo's resignation and Bill C-33 being put on hold. A lot of the momentum for the resignation of the chief and the education bill came from social media as well. There's a lot of politicians involved in the campaign, but social media gave it traction (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

Green Party politician Adam Olsen is an active participant in social media, and a strong advocate for the power of Facebook. Olsen participated in a drumming ceremony organized in December 2012 through Facebook in support of the Indigenous movement, *Idle No More*. He remembers the feeling of belonging to a greater community:

For the first time in the Canada that I know there were amazing community gatherings organized entirely on Facebook. "Be at Uptown at 11:30 on Sunday. We're going to drum there. We're going to sing together." We showed up and there were 500 other people who showed up as well. The media coverage says that a few people showed up. The real power wasn't the media that was generated from it; it was the feeling that was

generated. The real media to me was not the reporting of the story, but what was generated from the story itself, which was the feeling we got by singing and dancing together and listening to the drummers around Christmas time. There's something really community-building about it (A. Olsen, personal communication, May 8, 2014).

The power of social media to connect communities separated by great distance may in the long run make it the most powerful tool in the re-emergence of Indigenous identity. While there is great diversity among the Indigenous peoples in Canada, there is also a unity of worldview and purpose that has been hampered by the limitations imposed by geographic distance. It is possible the ability to break down barriers of time and space using social media will allow a greater sense of community among the Indigenous.

Blogging has also changed the landscape by giving Indigenous writers and thinkers a platform, but the benefits come with distinct challenges. Writers like Pam Palmater and Chelsea Vowell have managed to transcend Indigenous audiences to become voices on traditional media. Wab Kinew says they are read by mainstream reporters who then use these writers for sources, or use the information in formulating their own stories: “It means they can write about Indigenous issues without leaving the office in Toronto.” Kinew is aware of the danger of this approach—“How can you write about these issues if you don’t go there?”—but he is more concerned about the “veracity problem” of social media. Judith Lavoie, a non-Indigenous journalist, agrees:

It's always so difficult. Even when it's a topic that you really know. Trying to figure out all the tweets and messages. How much of it is a real voice and how much of it is a special interest group? I'm certainly aware that that's a problem. But, it changes things

hugely. You've got people talking about issues that normally they wouldn't even be aware of (J. Lavoie, personal communication, May 21, 2014).

As much as the participants praised its impact on grassroots action, many agreed the downside of social media is considerable, and it all centres on the issue of veracity. Wab Kinew describes how a Twitter campaign with little factual substance led to the resignation of a Grand Chief:

Let's look at (the resignation of Grand Chief) Shawn Atleo. That was a powerful campaign on Twitter. It got a lot of media attention. That looked like it had a lot of support by the Indigenous communities, but did it really? I would say that it was probably not that widespread. Shawn Atleo was called Harper's puppet, but was he really? No. Something like that gets traction on social media and people take it as fact and run with it. That's what I urge caution on. I do believe that social media is a tremendous source for good, but we have to recognize that it can be twisted and hijacked to further certain people's agendas (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

More darkly, two participants express concern about the spread of racism through social media. Adam Olsen is concerned about the comments sections under stories in traditional media outlets and blog posts. But Charlie Angus is more concerned about the insidious spread of extreme-right wing propaganda through reposting of stories and memes in Facebook and Twitter :

That's the downside of social media. I see this on Facebook. I'm seeing propaganda that's really disturbing. People don't know. I think what's needed is people to take responsibility. I spend a lot of time saying "that post isn't true" or "that post comes from a neo-Nazi website." I think that we have to call people out and say that posts aren't true because they can be very damaging. I started to see an attempt to create an impression that Atleo was the same as Stephen Harper, which is completely false. New media is a

dangerous God (C. Angus, personal communication, May 26, 2014).

So, while the introduction and widespread use of social media has been a groundbreaking development, it has brought both negative and positive aspects to the media landscape. It has introduced new and important Indigenous voices, some of whom have direct impact on the narratives in traditional media; social media has been a powerful tool in organizing grass roots voices that together have created change. But the power of the medium also brings dangerous negative elements which can harm the dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous culture.

In summary, the media landscape is in flux. Traditional media have been introduced to the concept that the federal government allowed and sometimes sanctioned abuse of Indigenous people and this has shifted the media narrative, but there are questions about how far it has moved. Social media has also shifted the narrative by introducing new voices. However the lack of a critical approach from many users of social media is making it easier for extreme groups to get their views aired and perhaps normalized. It is a landscape full of new and exciting developments but also powerful downsides.

The ethical space of engagement. The central metaphor that I have employed in this thesis has been “the journey.” I have spoken often of being on a path to this conceptual place called the ethical space of engagement. The problem with this metaphor is that it has no scale, no way of saying if we are one-third, one-half or three-quarters of the way to the ethical space. The starting place for this journey was 1907, and we have milestones and markers that define the progress that has brought us to this moment, but we have no idea how far we are from the ethical space.

If one were to judge solely by the relationship between the federal government and Indigenous people, we have a long distance to travel. One of the three foundations of the ethical space is that the federal government and First Nations have an equal relationship. In today’s

space of engagement, First Nations answer to the federal Department of Indian Affairs. As well, many First Nations communities are engaged in legal battles to assert their treaty rights.

Recently the B.C. government tried to forego environmental review of 99 percent of Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) development. Swift and decisive opposition by First Nations resulted in the government rescinding an order in council. “It’s just another example of how we still have to fight for everything we have” says Wab Kinew. But, from an Indigenous perspective, he focuses on the communities affected by the development:

It's clear that that community is going to engage with resource development. To me it's important that they're not willing to do that at any costs. Their engagement will be done in a way that respects their environment and their community. To me, that's awesome. It's a balance between development and staying true to who you are as a community with a culture. It's also being a good citizen on earth, making sure the environment is a consideration. I was really heartened by that. They got a response that was needed by the government, that was important too (W. Kinew, personal communication, May 12, 2014).

Cindy Blackstock is more familiar with policy and legal issues at the level of the federal government. Her most recent action was a complaint to the federal Human Rights Tribunal about the difference in funding of child welfare between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems. She is shocked at how little the government’s position has changed over the years. She relates the story of having lunch with residential school survivors, and then appearing at the Human Rights Tribunal:

Three or four days later I walked into the Human Rights Tribunal and I see the government lawyers and witnesses defending their actions toward this current generation.

The themes that are there were there at the time the schools were running and at the time of your great grandfather's report (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

Charlie Angus finds colonial attitudes from the government in unrelated matters. He looks for clues in the symbolism used in Canadian society:

On the \$20 bill we had beautiful First Nations art from BC. They don't have it any more. Now we have Vimy Ridge on our \$20 bill. There's a colonial attitude of this government that's taking away those symbols from the national narrative. The sense of pride that we were starting to see from the late 1990s and early 2000s is now experiencing a push back (C. Angus, personal communication, May 26, 2014).

In its approach to Indigenous people, it is clear the federal government does not consider First Nations to be its equal, and it continues to show a colonial and paternalistic approach to its relationship. As Charlie Angus demonstrated the government approach to Indigenous people is reflected in public opinion, the relationship between the two is holding back the momentum of the journey toward the ethical space of engagement.

By contrast, many participants felt the relationship between individuals is better. Adam Olsen notes that he has both Indigenous and non-Indigenous friends on his Facebook page, and he says that makes it a place of engagement. But he has also seen a softening of attitudes in recent years. "I think that the engagement of the people is happening at a different level than from our governments ... I don't see the anger like I saw it" (A. Olsen, personal communication, May 8, 2014).

Charlie Angus, who before he became an MP was a social activist, has also noticed a change in approach from everyone but government:

I think that things have transformed in extraordinary ways. I worked for an aboriginal community 14 years ago when we were running blockades. No one talked to us. Now they do. Government is the one that continues to not want to come to the table (C. Angus, personal communication, May 26, 2014).

Clearly, there is a lack of connection in the level of engagement, with the federal government lagging behind its population. This is at the core of this thesis—that changing the media narrative can help create more connection between Indigenous, non-Indigenous and the federal government.

All participants agreed that increased education about Indigenous people, both within the school system and within media circles, is a key element. Peter Campbell suggests taking a different approach to the cliché media image of Indigenous drumming and dancing as an example of the education process:

If there was a news article or a documentary about the significance of drumming and dancing, and what that means and why it's important to them and what is being honoured, or what is being communicated then perhaps we wouldn't see it as a cliché (P. Campbell, personal communication, May 7, 2014).

Universally, participants agreed that more education about diversity among Indigenous people and familiarity with Indigenous worldviews would go a long way to bridging the cultural gap between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Suggestions were also made about adding curriculum on covering Indigenous issues at journalism schools, and creating funding for news organizations to become more engaged and informed.

But the most far-reaching changes were suggested by Charlie Angus and Cindy Blackstock. Angus argues that it is time for serious self-reflection among non-Indigenous members of Canadian society:

I don't think that Canadians have ever examined themselves through a racial lens the way that Americans have. With Canadians, we like to see ourselves as multi-cultural. When it comes to Indians, it's a blind spot. I'm always surprised at what I hear. I'm not saying that it's the norm, but if people spoke about black people or Jewish people that way, there would be a lot more eyebrows raised (C. Angus, personal communication, May 26, 2014).

Cindy Blackstock agrees, suggesting that Canadians need to take a long hard honest look at the thinking that led to residential schools. But she takes another step and asserts that it is time for Indigenous people to declare their own freedom:

I think the thing that we've missed in Canada is that we need a social movement, a Martin Luther King movement, a Civil Rights movement in Canada for Indigenous peoples that centres on freedom, justice, and equality. If we did that it would necessarily shape the media narrative. If we leave it at negotiation tables we're dead in the water. I think some of us have become almost reflexive participants at those tables. We believe that we can negotiate freedom at those tables. I've come to understand that that's not possible. Freedom is something that you self-declare. Once you self-declare it, the world around you reacts, including the media. We've not done that in a systematic way. Idle No More was one step in that direction, but it was so loosely formed and not sustainable. It provided a good bullet, but the movement hasn't happened (C. Blackstock, personal communication, May 27, 2014).

The conditions that will need to be in place in order to reach the ethical space of engagement are more education about Indigenous people and issues, self-reflection among non-Indigenous people, and a social movement that will set the agenda and declare freedom for Indigenous people. Media narratives can play a role in establishing all three.

Conclusion and Recommendations

After conducting narrative inquiry research into the narratives of the Indigenous in Canadian media, it is clear that the ethical space of engagement is still a long way away. It is also clear that non-Indigenous media have to become more engaged and more knowledgeable of the Indigenous population of Canada to advance closer to the ethical space of engagement. Education is key to breaking down the idea that one group is higher than another on some kind of racial hierarchy. Many of the framings and agenda-setting decisions that damage the relationship come from a lack of knowledge and understanding.

While Indigenous people number only about three percent of the Canadian population, they will have a disproportionate say in the future of the country because most economic development projects identified in Canada will have to be negotiated with First Nations. As noted above, former Grand Chief of the AFN Shawn Atleo estimates there are currently plans for \$695 billion of new investment in Canada in the next few years. It is safe to conclude Canada's economic health over the next decades relies heavily on our legal and treaty relationship with First Nations.

In order to understand and report on these issues, greater knowledge of First Nations and consistent contact with a variety of Indigenous voices must become an assumed part of journalism practice in Canada in the coming years. Despite the increased economic pressure on newsrooms, I argue the impact of Indigenous legal status, and the role First Nations

organizations will play in Canada's economic health, justifies finding resources to research and feature Indigenous culture and community in news coverage.

In the findings about portrayal, it is clear that generalizations about Indigenous people are always negative. Two participants suggested that non-Indigenous members of society need to go through self-examination to come to terms with the racism suggested by recurring negative narratives. As well, the role of federal policy regarding Indigenous people and its impact on the narrative needs to be researched more. It seems clear that the paternalistic approach first outlined in the Bagot Report of 1842 has continued to this day. The very existence of a department in charge of Indigenous affairs as part of the federal government does not give Indigenous people the equality with the federal government required as part of the ethical space of engagement. As well, the impact of political discourse on media narratives cannot be ignored, and the cause-and-effect impact of political discourse on attitudes to Indigenous people may be a possible area of study extending from this work.

Portrayals of Indigenous people have shifted from the victim and the warrior to the financially irresponsible and the incompetent. There is some indication that comments from Canada's Prime Minister about a housing crisis in northern Ontario, which were repeated in the media, are becoming part of the narrative of Indigenous people. Clearly, politicians have a responsibility to use more careful language when addressing issues involving Indigenous people.

The current media landscape has changed the discourse of Indigenous issues in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, blogging, Twitter and Facebook have created connections between First Nations and Indigenous people and led to the creation of grassroots action, most notably as the organizing force behind Idle No More. The impact of Twitter on the resignation of Shawn Atleo and the scrapping of Bill C-33 clearly demonstrate this impact.

However, social media is still a largely unmediated, professionally unregulated landscape, and there are indications that extreme political groups are using social media to normalize their message. Traditional media are facing struggles due to economic pressures and a change in media habits as a result of the introduction of social media, and this means there are fewer resources to devote to improving coverage of Indigenous issues.

Despite this, it is clear that media narratives have shifted and taken us marginally closer to the ethical space of engagement. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission gave Indigenous people an opportunity to speak without the influence of the church or government; in doing so, they reached many Canadians who had no idea of the atrocities committed against Indigenous people as part of Canada's nation-building strategy. While it is debatable whether the impact of the Commission will result in the self-examination called for by some participants, it is a necessary step towards the ethical space of engagement.

Finally, one of real problems for Indigenous people has been the inability to have an influence on the news agenda. The suggestion that a Martin Luther King figure needs to be at the forefront of a movement united in its declaration of freedom is a powerful reminder that, as a non-Indigenous person, it borders on paternalistic to suggest that only "we" can create the conditions necessary for effective change. It is likely that media narratives will change only marginally until Indigenous people have a better opportunity to affect the media agenda through non-threatening and peaceful means.

Limitations and Scope for Further Research

My sample size of participants was smaller than I would have liked and I would have preferred to have more Indigenous voices in the participant sample, especially from an Indigenous reporter. There is scope for further research into the issue of Internet trolling in

comments sections, and insidious representations of extreme right-wing views through re-postings in social media. There is also research possible on the link between views aired by bloggers, and the appearance of those views in traditional media. Another possible field of research is to analyze the images and words used to represent Indigenous people first in positive news stories, and then in negative stories. Finally, the impact of federal policy on the narratives of Indigenous people would provide needed perspective on the sources of racism against Indigenous people in Canada.

Recommendations

At the beginning of this research, it was not my intention to offer any recommendations. However as this research progressed five recommendations emerged:

1. That media management devote resources to learning about and engaging with First Nations communities.
2. That local news departments commit to consistent contact and coverage with regional bands. While creating series and special programming on Indigenous people is important work, priority should be put on consistent and regular coverage.
3. That First Nations must develop effective media management practices. Difficulty in contacting First Nations leaders and getting timely information discourages news organizations from committing resources to news coverage. On the other hand, First Nations communities have to discuss and come to some agreement over how to handle media coverage.
4. Journalists must use a more critical lens when covering Indigenous issues and people. Extra care must be taken to look past assumptions and stereotypes to dispel negative portrayals of Indigenous people.

5. Canadian society in general must commit to learning more about Indigenous politics, culture and history in order to dispel myths and inaccurate portrayals. Indigenous curriculum must be a standard part of the Canadian elementary school system.

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