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Critical Visual Literacy:
Exploring Representations of Aboriginal Peoples in Children's Literature

by
Patricia Dunn

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Education at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2013

2013 Patricia Dunn

Critical Visual Literacy:
Exploring Representations of Aboriginal Peoples in Children's Literature

by

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September 9, 2013

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, my thesis does not infringe upon anyone's copyright nor violate any proprietary rights and that any ideas, techniques, quotations, or any other material from the work of other people included in my thesis, published or otherwise, are fully acknowledged in accordance with the standard referencing practices.

I declare that this is a true copy of my thesis, including any final revisions, as approved by my thesis committee and the Graduate Studies office, and that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other University or Institution.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore how Aboriginal peoples and knowledges have been and continue to be portrayed through visual texts in children's picture books. This study examines children's books that were published from 1960 through to 2010. This exploration is important as students and educators interact with these texts in their daily lives both inside and outside of school. Drawing from a critical literacy framework, a critical text analysis is used to gain insight into representations of Aboriginal and First Nations people in children's books. While critical literacy practice is a key component in education today, there appears to be a lack of critical inquiry and discussion concerning visual texts found in children's texts. A critical inquiry into representations of Aboriginal peoples in children's books is essential, especially in a time when a significant number of Aboriginal students still struggle with academic achievement and finding cultural relevance in the education system. Ultimately, the study may help address these issues by beginning the process whereby students will be able to develop critical visual literacy dispositions in order to address issues of equity.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my former and future students, in hopes that education becomes
relatable, relevant, and reflective of their real, lived experiences.

And to my teachers, in particular, my father, Bill Dunn, who has taught me that the most
meaningful lessons learned in school are the ones unplanned.

I also dedicate this thesis to my mother, Margaret Dunn, whose love for writing, reading,
and advocating for what is “right” has inspired me to do the same.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to have Dr. Christopher Greig as my advisor. My first graduate class was his “Issues in Education” course. As I sat down at a table of older teachers and principals, I was so nervous that my voice was shaking as I introduced myself. Always speaking in a calm, gentle tone, Chris introduced us to the realities of education and society. Through classroom discussion and textual interactions, I became aware of issues of race, gender, sexuality, and social class, as well as how they are implicated by power and privilege. Chris, your class and the issues we discussed were a large part of the reason why I pursued this thesis. You have opened my eyes, but more importantly, my head and my heart, to a field of educational work that holds the potential to make positive change. Your continued efforts and encouragement to “read closely, read widely and read with intelligence” acts as the springboard for a lifetime love of critical interactions with literature.

I also wish to give warm and sincere thanks to Dr. Cam Cobb, the internal reader. Cam, your knowledge of Aboriginal culture, customs, and issues has been invaluable. Your thorough and detailed contributions are very much appreciated. I am also deeply thankful to Dr. Renée Bondy, the external reader. She provided relevant and beneficial insights arising from her extensive knowledge of history, education, and women’s studies. I would also like to thank Dr. Jonathan Bayley for volunteering his time and chairing the thesis defense.

My sincere gratitude also extends to my partner, Gordon, and to my family. Without their loving support, this venture would not have been possible.

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***“Oh Great Spirit, keep me from ever judging a man
until I have walked a mile in his moccasins.”***

(Elliott, Snook & Grant, 2004)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Historically, institutional and individual racism has disadvantaged Canadian Aboriginal peoples economically, socially, culturally, and politically (Mosby, 2013; Howard, 2006; King, 2003; Battiste, 2005a; Dua, Razack, & Warner 2005). In the context of schooling, both forms of racism have been prevalent. Schooling and the policies, educational practices and resources that have come to form and shape education have contributed over time to disadvantage Aboriginal peoples. One key site for the reproduction of social, economic and political inequities has been children's literature (Lerer, 2008, p. 9). A critical examination of children's literature is the focus of this work.

This chapter describes the purpose of this study and helps contextualize my research by providing a brief history of North America, Aboriginal peoples and the effects of colonization. Aboriginal education is also reviewed from both a historical and contemporary context. This includes detailed information about residential schools and the impact that these schools have on Aboriginal peoples, their livelihood, and culture. As well, this chapter introduces readers to critical visual literacy as a theoretical framework, informed and shaped by post-colonial theory. The section titled, the *Importance of the Study* describes for readers the potential benefits of this work for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identities, and the critical ways they may wish to explore children's literature. The background and context for this research may aid readers in understanding the early origins of this work, and is followed by my own personal experiences, as I locate myself in the research. The *Statement of the Problem* leads to research questions. This introductory chapter provides the study's foundations that inform the chapters that follow.

Historical Context

Historians have demonstrated that North America was populated by Aboriginal peoples well before the time Christopher Columbus is said to have ‘discovered’ America in 1492, reaching well into the millions. Leiding (2006) explains: “Prior to 1492 there were 3 to 5 million Indigenous people in America.” However, the significant numbers of Aboriginal peoples declined in dramatic fashion due to European contact. As Leiding further notes, “following the disastrous contact with Europeans, by 1850 there were only about 250,000 Indians left in North America” (p. 112). The history of European colonization of North America and its negative impact on Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples is one of the more striking historical tragedies found in Canadian history.

Understood against the backdrop of being a White settler nation, where a key strategy in the development of Canada was the seemingly eradication of Aboriginal people and Indigenous communities, Aboriginal peoples were not recognized as land owners or equals in the eyes of the Europeans. In fact, it wasn’t until 1960 that adult “Registered Indians” were considered to be full citizens in Canada. Situated in the broader context of colonial imperialism and conquest, European settlers drove the Aboriginal peoples from their lands, in part to make room for railroad construction and immigrant settlement. Of course, it goes without saying that the Canadian government’s attempt to cleanse vast swaths of land of Indigenous communities reflected the prevailing White colonial attitude of “no respect” for Indigenous culture, traditions, or ways of knowing (Daschuk, 2013). Reflecting the prevailing racist attitudes of the day, James Daschuk, in his recent book, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*, shows how infectious disease and state-supported starvation contributed to the

eradication of Indigenous communities in the context of land that is now known as the Canadian west. Bruchac (1994) describes the treatment of Aboriginal peoples by Europeans in the following analogy: it is as if “we were living in an Africa which had lost 90% of its population in the last 500 years and was being run as a single united continent by European colonials” (p. 147). It now goes without saying that European colonials established governments and made use of military forces in ways that had an enormous negative impact on Aboriginal communities across the Canadian context and elsewhere.

One key way that colonial forces had a deeply negative impact on Aboriginal communities was the way in which they attempted to “civilize” Aboriginal peoples. White Europeans attempted to “civilize” the Aboriginal peoples by forcing their laws, religious views, cultural and social norms, and ways of knowing upon them. Dockstader (1961) describes how:

Federal efforts attempted to replace Indian ways with White ways. During the period when Commissioners of Indian Affairs were nominated by church councils, the Government co-operated with the missionary groups in completely halting all expressions of Indian culture- art, language, dance, and custom. (p. 29)

The erosion of Aboriginal culture and customs began very early during the colonization of North America through such government policies as the Indian Act enacted by the Parliament of Canada in 1876 and the General Allotment Act passed by United States Congress in 1887. Thomas King, in his 2003 book, *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*, has pointed out that Canada, “which is generally seen as lagging behind United States in most things – capitalism, taxation, aggression – actually took the lead in legislating Indians out of existence with the 1876 Indian Act” (p. 132). In any event, as the weight of historical evidence has

demonstrated, together these policies attempted to solve what was termed the “Indian problem.”

Another key way that the process of colonialization negatively impacted Aboriginal peoples was the way in which it actively ignored and dismissed Aboriginal peoples’ traditional understandings of spirituality; White European colonists believed that it was their duty to Christianize the Aboriginal peoples. This began the education of Aboriginal peoples by the colonials to move them from their own spirituality toward Western Christianity (Stout, 2012, p. 1). Yet, it wasn’t just about the erasing of Indigenous and Aboriginal spirituality, it was also about eradicating their native languages. Stout (2012) describes how educating the Aboriginal peoples meant teaching them English: “The educational institutions that arose presaged the boarding schools that were established more than a century later” (Stout, 2012, p. 2). By making strong efforts to eradicate Aboriginal spirituality and language, often by sending Aboriginal children away to residential schools, the government intended to replace Aboriginal culture, language, and customs with Eurocentric values.

The oppression put in place by European colonizers affected the Aboriginal communities in the areas of religion, health, home, family, work, trade, and culture. Education was perhaps the most cruel and longstanding example of oppression and forced assimilation when it came to colonialism. I now turn to discuss the residential schooling system with a particular focus on how it traumatized thousands of Aboriginal children and families for generations.

Residential Schooling

The residential schooling experiment is a prime example of how Aboriginal peoples in Canada have been significantly discriminated against. Although religious orders had such schools in operation since the 1840s, the Canadian federal government began to formally support

Aboriginal residential schools in the 1880s. The schools “were set up to assimilate Aboriginal people forcibly into the Canadian mainstream by eliminating parental and community involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012, p. 1). The government began closing the residential schools in the 1970s, and the last residential school was located in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and did not close until 1996, well more than a century after opening (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012).

The residential schooling system was geographically spread across Canada. Other Canadian residential schools, for example, were located in Vancouver, British Columbia; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Fort George, Québec. Seventeen schools were located in Ontario including one in Brantford, while twenty-five schools were situated in Alberta. A number of schools were placed in northern Canada including fifteen schools in Northwest Territories, thirteen schools in Nunavut, and six in Yukon. The high number of residential schools, situated across Canada, reflected the government’s efforts to systematically assimilate Aboriginal peoples in new and widespread ways.

The Canadian government operated the schools in partnership with a number of Christian churches whose members usually helped to administer and run the schools. “Missionaries pressured Ottawa to introduce compulsory attendance in Indian schools. This became a reality in 1894 and 1895 with amendments to the Indian Act that gave Indian agents the authority of the law to force Indian children under 16 to go to school” (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, p. 45). After these amendments to the Indian Act were made, a significant number of Aboriginal children were forced to attend residential schools. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of

Canada (2012), set up to begin to address the historical legacy of colonialism as it relates to Aboriginal peoples, reports that “more than 150, 000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were placed in what were known as Indian residential schools” (p. 1). Unfortunately for the children and their families, the residential school system was the site of systematic neglect, abuse and mistreatment. Historians have been able to show how physical and sexual abuse of students in the residential schooling system was wide spread. In the late 1800s, the government introduced a plan to decrease spending and increase revenue in an effort to cut taxes. Principals of the schools responded by reducing spending on food and increasing the labour of students (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003. p. 45). More recent research by Ian Mosby has shown how the residential schooling system in northern Canada served, during the 1945 postwar period, as a scientific laboratory where children were experimented on in the name of nutritional science (Mosby, 2013). Rather than provide food to the hungry children within the context of the residential schools, government employed doctors used the lack of food to develop their research into malnutrition.

The horror and tragedies caused by these schools are painfully remembered by a vast number of families across Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2012) went to every province and territory in Canada to meet with former residential school students and listen to their personal testimony. “Former students described how they came from loving families and were cast into loveless institutions. They spoke of tremendous loneliness, and of young children crying themselves to sleep for months” (p. 5). The Commission’s Interim Report documents several accounts of student abuse and “stories of harsh discipline, of classroom errors corrected with a crack of a ruler, a sharp tug of the ear, hair pulling, or severe and frequent

strappings” (p. 5). Former residential school students spoke of being sexually abused within days of arrival by staff or older students. Cote (2001) documents a young Aboriginal girl’s traumatic experience upon arrival:

As we approached the school I became more excited, talking as loudly as I could. The priest turned me over to a nun, who took me upstairs to the infirmary and took my clothes off. She went to fill a bathtub with water. She was very rough, told me to shut up and called me a dirty, filthy, little Indian... it shocked me...She was pulling my hair, and kept telling me to shut up and to stand still. I fought back. Nobody was going to treat me like dirt. When I protested that she was hurting my head by pulling my long hair, she became more angry and pulled my hair harder. I jumped up to leave but she knocked me down in the tub...She began to scrub me up and down my body, separated my legs and began poking her fingers in my vagina. I was shocked and I protested more by jumping out of the tub and yelling. She slapped me in the face and pulled my hair harder, calling me a dirty little savage. ‘We have to clean you inside and out.’ She held me down under water several times while she continued to beat me. She almost drowned me. I am sure she would have if I had continued to resist her. Even today, I have nightmares about escaping from water. Such fear of water has been so terrifying for me that I have never learned how to swim. (as cited in Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003, p. 52)

The voice of this former student is evidence of the abuse and injustices committed against Aboriginal children in Canadian residential schools. The physical abuse experienced by this young girl nearly killed her. Other former students testified to classmates dying. They spoke of children who died of disease, killed themselves, or died mysteriously without explanation (Truth

and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012, p. 5).

While the personal testimony of the residential schooling survivors has found its way into official reports, it has only been recently that the experiences of men and women within the context of the residential school system have been expressed in children's literature. One account is documented in the 2002 non-fiction children's picture book, *As Long as the Rivers Flow*. In the book, author Larry Loyie recounts his own real lived experiences being separated from his family and forced to attend St. Bernard's Mission residential school in northern Alberta in the 1940s. Loyie writes about the manual labour the children had to do everyday such as planting potato fields and washing floors. He describes the teachers as cruel and mean spirited. In an effort to convert the children to Christianity and eradicate Native languages, he writes about being forced to go to church everyday and learning Latin in order to be a church altar boy (Loyie, Brissenden, & Holmlund, 2002, pp. 34-36). In the book's epilogue, Loyie, Brissenden, and Holmlund (2002) write:

Tens of thousands of North American Native children...were taken from their families to residential schools during a hundred-year period that began around 1880. Some children were as young as two years old... If they spoke their Native language, the teachers washed their mouths with soap or strapped them. Parents who tried to keep their children at home could be put in jail. (p. 32)

The 2004 film, *Indecently Exposed: With Jane Elliott*, documents a discrimination workshop, conducted in Regina, Saskatchewan, that challenges the attitudes of a group of non-Indigenous Canadians, as well as that of the Canadian government, toward Indigenous peoples (Elliott, Snook & Grant, 2004). Some of the Aboriginal participants share their real lived

experiences of forced enrolment in residential schools as evidence of the systematic racism in Canada. While some participants describe daily incidents of “subtle sabotage,” one Aboriginal male details the horrific tragedies and the torment of “humiliation, whippings, and beatings,” as well as the pain of isolation. He feels he is “always on the outside looking in” and describes his loss of pride in his cultural identity with the statement, “I was always ashamed to be an Indian” (Elliott, Snook & Grant, 2004). “Residential school abuse and its intergenerational effects have created devastating impacts on entire Aboriginal communities” (Goforth, 2007, p. 11). Reyhner and Eder (1989) describe the schools as “a severe system of cultural genocide” organized “under the euphemistic intention of civilizing the Indian” (as cited in Howard, 2006, p. 46). The suffering for former students continues as “some people still find themselves reliving the moments of their victimization. For them, residential schools are not part of the past, but vivid elements of their daily life. Sights, sounds, foods, and even individuals can trigger painful memories” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012, p. 6). The horrific injustices caused by the implementation of the residential school system, remain a stark reminder of a dark part of Canadian history that is only now fully being realized. It also goes without saying that the horrific experiences of Aboriginal peoples within the context of the residential schooling system continue to negatively impact many residential schooling survivors and their families today.

Aboriginal Peoples and Education Today

Aboriginal children have historically fared poorly within the mainstream school system compared to other populations. Due to structural and systemic issues of racism, Aboriginal students did less well academically and socially than other groups, fueling much higher dropout rates (Riley & Ungerleider, 2011). Despite the overwhelming evidence that shows Aboriginal

people have not done well in public mainstream schooling, there does seem to be some positive change. Aboriginal student achievement in schools has begun to change for the better as programs and initiatives have been put into practice. For example, the 2009 book *The Gifts Within: Carrying Each Other Forward in Aboriginal Education*, provides some evidence that there is a change reflecting an increase in academic achievement among Aboriginal students. The book contains several accounts of Aboriginal students succeeding in education in both academic and extra-curricular areas. Such success is connected to examples of Aboriginal digital intelligence (Bunda, 2009), keen and active engagement in guitar programs (Classens, 2009), and Aboriginal student involvement with a Student Success Team (Holmes, 2009).

While Aboriginal student success reflects a new and positive change, we should not be misled into thinking issues of equity have been addressed directly in relation to Aboriginal education. Quite clearly, as the evidence consistently demonstrates, Aboriginal academic underachievement persists in contemporary school settings. Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) write:

Formal education, or schooling, is critically important for its ability to provide the kinds of experiences, knowledge, skills, and credentials required for success in contemporary Aboriginal communities and Canadian society; but it is also implicated in the processes that contribute to failure and marginalization among large segments of the Aboriginal population. (p. 2)

As mentioned, Aboriginal students do not do as well as other populations in Canada, in terms of academic achievement. For example, Statistics Canada (2010) reports:

In 2006, 29% of Aboriginal teenagers aged 15 to 19 were no longer pursuing a formal

education. This was higher than the average of their non-Aboriginal counterparts (19%) in Canada. Compared with the youth populations of other countries (Indigenous and non-Indigenous combined), the percentage of Aboriginal 15- to 19- year olds not in education in Canada was almost double the average of 15% across the 31 member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2008.

Howard attributes the lack of success to a loss of trust, writing that “for generations of Indian people, schooling has not been a positive experience, and it will take much work on the part of educators to regain their trust” (Howard, 2006, p. 48). Understanding the context of the colonial experiment with residential schooling system is integral to grasping the lack of trust among Aboriginal peoples in relation to schools. Perhaps there is no better area that reflects the historical legacy of oppression against the First Peoples of Canada than the context of education. “Educational achievement is problematic for First Peoples in Canada, as is the case with other aspects of First Nation life...[and] may be better characterized as a result of colonialism and postcolonial oppression” (Deer, 2009, p. 97).

However, Deer (2013) provides another possible attribution for the lack of success, stating, “A survey of current scholarly literature on contemporary Aboriginal education reveals that there may be a lack of compatibility between contemporary K-12 education, especially that of public education, and what may be regarded as Aboriginal cultural values” (p. 73). This lack of ‘compatibility’ may be seen as a disconnect between contemporary public schooling and Aboriginal cultural values, that potentially reinforces Eurocentric skills, knowledges, and values. Deer’s explanation which rests on the idea of cultural and social disconnect between public education and aboriginal values, again is not that surprising, when it is considered in the context

of Canadian history.

The attitudes and cultural differences of an education system that is Eurocentric in its origins and administration most certainly negatively impacts Aboriginal achievement in education. This is precisely why educators who advocate for positive change regarding this issue have been putting out the call for transformation of school curriculum. As Deer remarks, “Transforming the Eurocentric school curricula and pedagogical practices employed in most schools in postcolonial Canada into culturally appropriate programming for First Nations students may be a more appropriate means of addressing educational underachievement” (Deer, 2009, p. 102). Considering the frequency of picture books used in early literacy and beyond, perhaps children’s picture books is a good place to begin the transformation of curricula in schools in order to be more culturally responsive.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how Aboriginal peoples have been represented in visual texts in children’s books over time, 1960 - 2010. Using a qualitative approach, this study aims to raise critical consciousness regarding Aboriginal representations in visual texts with the goal of empowering all students, particularly Aboriginal students. This is in line with the practice of critical literacy education that will guide the analysis with the hope for positive social change. This study will move beyond the notion that visual text observation requires passive action, assumed free from meaning making where the viewer fits the role of mere onlooker (Freire, 1973, p. 5) toward a critical literacy visual culture where the viewer is an active participant. In such a culture, meaning making is tied with visual text observation, creating a profoundly true aesthetic experience:

The Arts especially address the idea of aesthetic experience. An aesthetic experience is one in which your senses are operating at their peak. When you're present in the current moment. When you are resonating with the excitement of this thing that you're experiencing. When you are fully alive. (Robinson, 2010, video file)

As an active participant, the viewer utilizes critical visual literacy skills in a respectful manner. This requires an open, inclusive environment for inquiry, investigation, examination, interrogation, interpretation, deconstruction and reconstruction of visual texts (Newfield, 2011).

Definition of Children's Literature

For the purpose of this study, children's literature will be defined as any book, fiction or non-fiction, inclusive of one or more visual text(s), that is targeted to children ranging in ages from four to 14 years. Children's literature "centers on texts written for and read by children" (Lerer, 2008, p. 11). Youthful encounters with literature may spark meaningful and lasting impressions, as we learn that "children's literature is perhaps the most influential genre read" (Christensen, 1994, p. 8). Children's literature over time is an important consideration since the dataset is comprised of children's books published from 1960 through to 2010. "The history of children's literature is a history of image as well as word. It is a history, too, of artifacts: of books as valued things, crafted and held, lived with and loved" (Lerer, 2008, p. 322). Similar to the idea that children's books are artifacts is the idea that each book is a product of children's literature at its time of publication. Similarly, in reference to children's books, Taylor (2003) observes, "the books are themselves social artifacts that do not exist in a vacuum, but in relationship to other artifacts and social relations" (p. 306). Changes over various decades and the relationships between the various children's books for this study may lead to answers about

the movement and change of children's literature over time.

Definition of Visual Text

This study will concentrate on the visual texts found in children's books that students and educators likely interact with in their daily lives both inside and outside of school. While the data set for this study is restricted to the visual texts in children's books, I will also explore other forms of visual representation in order to capture the broader contours and discourses reflected in children's literature. For the purpose of this study, other visual texts may include: visual images, pictures, photographs, artworks, symbols, animations, comic strips, and graphic novels, all of which may be found in children's books. Other forms of visual representation that may be referred to includes video clips and movies. Although the focus will be explicitly on the visual texts within children's books, I have chosen to refer to other forms of visual texts found in the broader socio-political-cultural context in order to contextualize, reference and compare various visual media. In his vocabulary study on visual literacy, Connors (2011) recognizes the learning potential for defining visual texts under such broad terms:

Suddenly movies, billboards, videogames, and magazine advertisements—that is, the kinds of texts with which [students] interact in their everyday lives—become fodder for analysis. As students view these texts anew, and as they experiment with a vocabulary that enables them to think and talk about images in ways they were not previously accustomed to, I find that they become more critical consumers of visual texts. (pp. 87-88)

Definition of Aboriginal

For the purpose of this study, the term Aboriginal is inclusive of all Indigenous peoples of North America, both status and non-status, including First Nations, Inuit, Anishanabe, and Métis

peoples. Aboriginal peoples and knowledges will stem from a Canadian perspective with particular attention on Aboriginal peoples, knowledges, and issues; however, “it is not helpful to attempt to define Indigenous knowledge, for it is a comparative knowledge system that should not be pounded into Eurocentric categories” (Battiste, 2005b, p. 128). Battiste (2005b) explains how Western categorization results in issues of fragmentation and limitations, where “the embedded essences of Indigenous knowledge are lost in their visible manifestations” (p. 130).

While it is important to acknowledge that there is great variance within Aboriginal cultures and Aboriginal ways of knowing, Battiste (2005b) details the interrelationship of all Indigenous knowledge as “flowing from the same source: (1) the relationship of Indigenous peoples with the global flux; (2) their kinship with other living creatures; (3) the life energies as embodied in their environments; and (4) their kinship with the spirit forces of the earth” (p. 128). Using this lens, one learns Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing should be valued as holistic, encompassing “a way of life, an intimacy and directness with nature” (Battiste, 2005b, p. 130).

Language concerns persist regarding the appropriate use of terminology in reference to Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is federally recognized as one of the five National Aboriginal Representative Organizations in Canada. Congress representative, Randy Martin, has been working on self-identification terminology policy and projects for many years. Martin describes:

The term Aboriginal (with a capital A) is the most widely used and accepted term to refer to all the original peoples of Canada. It includes First Nations, Inuit and Metis, as well as non-status Indians, and is a constitutionally recognized term. Do not use the plural term "Aboriginals" as many people find this offensive. Also, don't combine terms (i.e. Native

Aboriginal people). Representatives from all Aboriginal groups, which are called National Aboriginal Organizations (NAO's), have accepted the term Aboriginal for joint documents, policy statements, press releases, etc. (R. Martin, personal communication, January 11, 2012)

However, discussion on proper terminology continues. Martin describes the following controversy:

It is appropriate to use the term Indigenous, although it may not include Metis and has no legal definition in the constitution. It is also appropriate to use the term Native, but over the last 20 years it is becoming less and less common. Many groups like the term and many don't. Anishanabe refers to a particular segment of First Nations people, but it does not refer to all Aboriginal peoples, or all First Nations people in Canada, and does not include Inuit or Metis. My organization has an issue with the term First Nations replacing the term Indian. The term First Nations started being used in the early 1980's to refer to Bands. Since most non-status Indians did not live on-reserve, they never identified with the term First Nations. For example, I am Mi'kmaq, Aboriginal, Native and Indigenous, but I am not First Nations. (R. Martin, personal communication, January 11, 2012)

It is important to approach issues surrounding language in an open-ended way and to remain respectful and conscious of changes. Even though I have an Aboriginal background, I grew up using the term, "Indian." Since my youth, I have made changes in my own use of language toward more socially conscious terms such as "Aboriginal" or "Indigenous". In the future, we may become familiar with new terms as changes in social consciousness lead to the change of language.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is drawn from critical visual literacy, and is informed by post-colonial theory. I begin with a brief explanation of critical visual literacy.

Critical Visual Literacy. Students and teachers make meaning from visual texts. Every individual may have a unique interpretation and response to each visual text. There may be a lack of inquiry and critical discussion concerning visual texts found in children's literature depicting Aboriginal peoples and knowledges.

Critical visual literacy involves uncovering, revealing, questioning, deconstructing and reading against texts to aid in the reconstruction of texts through new understanding. Critical visual literacy is a relatively new educational concept, but the need for it has deep roots in education. In the early 1970s, Freire theorizes about the individual as subject or object through means of integration or adaptation (Freire, 1973). Freire describes the role of object as someone who conforms and adjusts instead of making choices to change reality. In his book, *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Freire (1973) suggests that:

What happens to a greater or lesser degree in the various "worlds" into which the world is divided is that the ordinary person is crushed, diminished, converted into spectator, maneuvered by myths which powerful social forces have created. These myths turn against him; they destroy and annihilate him. (p. 6)

Howard (2006) seeks to unearth societal myths in his book, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know – White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*. If society continues to subsume the role of spectator, as Freire put it, then legitimizing myths are perpetuated (Howard, 2006). This process is also caused by society's general lack of awareness and used as a prime mechanism of social

control (Howard, 2006). How visual texts shape our beliefs or assumptions must be considered through use of critical visual literacy.

In the article, *Visual Literacy*, Felten (2008) describes a 21st century cultural power shift from text and words to the dominance of images. Felten describes a “visual explosion... [in an] image rich world...[where] images no longer exist primarily to entertain and illustrate. Rather, they are becoming central to communication and meaning-making” (p. 60). Janks (2010) also writes in support of the potential for visual texts, “It is important to recognize that visuals and other forms of meaning making are as important as words in the construction of reality” (p. 63). Felten’s (2008) research demonstrates that these notions have not necessarily transcended into the academic arena. “Schools have traditionally placed primary emphasis on textual literacy. Our pedagogy and academic training often focus on words and [verbal] texts as the source of knowledge” (Felten, 2008, p. 62). However, in some instances, researchers have provided examples of a validity in visual texts that surpasses verbal texts. “Photographs create a powerful sense of “reality”, “truth” and “evidence” because they resemble the objects they represent, unlike in the case of verbal language” (Newfield, 2011, p. 82). Visual texts are a major component of children’s literature and may be more important than verbal texts, especially in children’s picture books.

While Felten chooses to focus on visual literacy benefits for students enrolled in higher education, some of his research is applicable to other contexts of schooling. He concentrates on technical and practical applications that visual literacy nurtures for students’ learning and thinking skills in relation to the content and capacities of specific subjects. Felten (2008) sheds light on cognitive benefits, including that “seeing is not simply a process of passive reception of

stimuli but also involves active construction of meaning” (p. 61). However, Felten fails to delve further into the opportunistic potential that such benefits hold for critical literacy and pedagogy.

Newfield (2011) has devoted her research to deciphering between visual literacy and the newly coined term “critical visual literacy” (p. 81). Newfield (2011) explains:

The shift from asking how different images represent different facets of the life of an iconic figure to asking how an image constructs an identity for that figure is highly consequential, and is in keeping with the deconstructive spirit and methodology of critical visual literacy. (p. 92)

Through use of a classroom workbook resource comparison, she questions the addition of the word ‘critical’ to the term visual literacy. Her research reveals that “‘Critical’ came to be seen...as an analysis seeking to uncover the social and political interests in the images’ production and reception in relation to the social effects of power and domination” (Newfield, 2011, p. 92). This addition of the word “critical” is a crucial component of the term “critical visual literacy” as it allows for the deconstruction and reconstruction of politically or socially informed texts.

The works of Freire (1973) and Howard (2006) show understanding that what happens in society transcends into the classroom. It is the duty of “schools [to] be responsive to changing social needs” (Schechter, 2011, p. 259). Because of this responsibility, teachers and students become inclined to seek out knowledge, stay informed, and take action for change. Critical visual literacy allows for this and may be valuable for both educators and students. Put simply, “we cannot simply denounce public schooling as an instrument for the reproduction of inequality” (Curtis, Livingstone, & Smaller, 1992, p. 100). However, the public education

system and the values it encompasses are a product of early society, inclusive of the power and politics of the ages. “The education market does not invent or import an entirely new values system, rather it draws upon classical liberal views underpinned by a political and economic individualism which is deeply embedded within modern Western societies” (Ball, 2003, p. 112). Writing in the early 1990s, Curtis, Livingstone, and Smaller’s (1992) educational research with elementary teachers and administrators discusses the value system in education, describing “schools as places where certain kinds of knowledge, values and skills are ignored while other kinds are rewarded” (p. 80). One might imagine schools to be places with a set of circumstances that encourages the development of certain ideas or literacies.

Post-Colonial Theory

The theoretical framework has also been informed by post-colonial theory. From the time that European colonists created schools for Aboriginal children and began to teach them English, the influence of colonists on Aboriginal language, customs, and culture has been enormous. Battiste (2005b) highlights the relevance of post-colonial theory, stating, “Post colonial theory helps us to unravel the colonial mentality that has endangered and subjugated peoples around the world. It raises our consciousness, develops our resistance, and helps us engage in transformative action” (p. 121). Similarly, Kanu (2011) relates post-colonial theory to representation, which can include visual texts in children’s literature. Kanu (2011) writes:

Of central importance in the postcolonial theory of racialized othering are issues of representation and positionality...Representation includes practices such as inaccurate characterizations of the ‘other’ and their truth, knowledge, and histories in the curriculum; photograph illustrations and images which become representations of

identity especially when reprinted in textbooks; erasures and omissions; token mentioning; and invisibility...Representation is important not only because it reflects identity at a particular historical moment, but also because it creates that identity. (p. 47-48)

Post-colonialism is not entirely about rejecting all Western theory and research. It involves recognizing the knowledges and identity of Aboriginal peoples and creating means of empowering their future (Battiste, 2005a). Visual texts can be used, therefore, to create a positive image of Aboriginal peoples and ways of knowing.

Importance of Study

This study will inform educators and students about Aboriginal representations in visual texts and help to challenge many popular Aboriginal representations in children's books. Iseke-Barnes and Danard (2007) describe how "surface understandings of Indigenous art and culture revisit ongoing discrimination and racist myths that have been institutionalized within dominant society" (p. 7). Any visual texts that children observe in children's books have the potential to influence their thoughts and feelings. If an Aboriginal person is shown in a stereotyped way, this may be a form of unfair discrimination or racism.

Kanu (2011) stresses the importance of educational studies centred around race and racism, stating, "Not only does race and racial classification determine how we are treated and how we treat others, it also profoundly structures our access to resources and rights, making the study of racism fundamental to any effort to understand educational disparities and to bring about social change" (Kanu, 2011, p. 47). It is therefore important that teachers, students, administrators, and parents learn about and have an understanding of critical visual literacy as a

tool to enhance awareness around issues of race and racism.

Critical visual literacy practice may allow educators and students to be more conscientious about the power of visual texts to shape their beliefs about themselves and the world in which they live. It also may introduce critical thinking and inquiry opportunities that can lead students to take action and make a difference. Carger (2004) saw the possibility for this in her art literacy work with students, stating, “The art was a concrete referent depicting items about which the students had their own images and expectations, and they were more willing to critically express thoughts related to it” (p. 289). It is my hope that this research study will raise critical awareness of Aboriginal representations in the classroom, in order to lead to constructive and productive conversations among classroom members and provide them a safe space to question assumptions made about Aboriginal peoples. With new, more complex, understandings of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges, teachers and students may feel empowered to use critical literacy skills with respect to other social justice issues.

Background and Context

My observations as a teacher have led me to question how visual texts encountered by students in and out of school may influence their conceptions of reality. On both a personal and professional level, it frustrates me to see images that portray cultural or racist stereotypes. For example, in the grade two teacher resource text provided to Ontario teachers, *Complete Canadian Curriculum 2* (2008), a worksheet on beavers shows a cartoon drawing of two Aboriginal men chasing two beavers (p. 288). The Aboriginal peoples are depicted with angry expressions, large noses, with arms raised, holding knives aimed at the two terrified beavers. The two males are dressed in vests, with bare chests. Both are depicted with long hair, parted in the

middle, with two ponytails on either side. This depiction reproduces a stereotype of what constitutes traditional male Aboriginal dress. Moreover, the anger and violence expressed by the two men toward the beavers is deeply troublesome as the depiction fails to represent Aboriginal peoples' "kinship with other living creatures" as a source of Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, 2005b, p. 128). It is extremely disturbing that a visual text widely distributed to Grade 2 children in Ontario shows such a negative, stereotyped portrayal of Aboriginal peoples.

It is also distressing to witness students' artwork being sent home without discussing the art or questioning the artist's intent or message, despite the fact that some students draw from race and gender stereotypes. This is a missed opportunity, as all too often, educators and students fail to question the visual texts that are intricate elements of education practices. Carger's (2004) study justifies the intellectual value in questioning and discussing art, writing that for the students in her study "art held the potential to be a vehicle not only for self-expression and imagination but also for the expression of knowledge" (Carger, 2004, p. 287). The practice of critical visual literacy can be applied to not only mainstream visual texts, but also student created artwork.

A lack of inquiry concerning visual texts found in children's books undermines the very purpose of critical literacy, which is to liberate and empower students through use of questioning. Laman (2006) addresses this issue by recognizing that "critical inquiry weaves critical literacy practices throughout the curriculum and offers children prolonged engagement with issues that are important to them and ... democracy" (p. 204). The disconnect between critical literacy and visual texts leads me to question whether visual texts found in elementary school classrooms are being dealt with in ways that best serve students' critical thinking

regarding social justice issues, in particular, those involving Aboriginal peoples and knowledges.

Aboriginal Studies is now an integral part of the Ontario curriculum. The social studies curriculum requires grade three students to “research interactions between new settlers and existing communities of First Nation peoples” (Ontario. Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 25). Visual texts used for this part of the curriculum, together with others found in mainstream and non mainstream media and literature targeting child audiences, have made me question how viewers of visual texts differentiate between the complex lived realities of Aboriginal peoples and visual representation. I question whether assumptions evoked by visual texts become accepted knowledge. Furthermore, I am deeply interested in how critical literacy practice may contribute to the interpretation of meanings or messages elicited from visual texts.

As an artist and visual learner, my interest in visual texts and the potential of the visual in education has been apparent since early childhood. Having always relied on visual and aesthetic forms to aid with my perceptions of verbal texts, I have had a growing interest in the power of the visual image and the influence it may have over world view. An example of this power in my life occurs whenever I am at a restaurant, as I almost always neglect to read the written text on menus and instead choose the meals showcased in visual pictures. My experiences have led me to question: If visual texts can impact the choices one makes in life, how can critical consciousness intervene to empower the choice maker in negotiating reality?

Locating Myself in the Research

The decision to centre my research on Aboriginal peoples and knowledges is, in part, based on my observations in schools. Schools, in my view, tend to reproduce stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples, rather than challenge them. As an occasional teacher, I was shocked to

observe a classroom teacher make a racially biased remark to an Aboriginal grade six student, saying, “You, out of everyone, should know about constellations!” We can do better for all of our students, particularly Aboriginal children.

My decision to engage in this form of research was also fuelled by my own false assumptions regarding my identity. When I was born, I was named Patricia after my mother, a Mayflower descendant. A few years later, I was given the Aboriginal name, Sun In Her Hair, by my grandmother. Although my paternal great grandmother was a full blooded Mi'kmaq, raised on the Listuguj reserve in Eastern Canada, for the majority of my life, I denied my own Aboriginal Mi'kmaq roots and ancestry, identifying myself as a White female of European descent. My older sister and brother have a different father. My younger brother and I became aware of this difference as children. I identified with my older siblings' and my mother's English and Irish heritage. As a child, I never truly felt Native and I believed that the disconnection from my Aboriginal identity confirmed that I was a “whole,” rather than “half” sister to my older siblings.

My confusion in identity was partly due to the fact that my grandfather, who is Aboriginal, chose to embrace Western ways of knowing. He did this, in part, by placing value on Eurocentric systems of education and English knowledge. My grandfather has one brother and six sisters. Two of the sisters attended a Catholic school. One sister recalls crying at school every day since a nun, who was her teacher, repeatedly told her that her Protestant father “is going to burn in hell.” Growing up, some family members embraced their Aboriginal ancestry, some living in Aboriginal communities, pursuing careers centred around Aboriginal knowledges and culture, and advocating for Aboriginal rights and freedoms through Aboriginal ways of knowing

inclusive of art, music, science, medicine, and spirituality. In particular, my great uncle embraced Aboriginal ways of living and became a well-known cultural leader. My grandfather, in contrast, earned an engineering degree, became a successful manager of industry, a devout Christian, and a lover of classical music and opera. His lifestyle and choices were not reflective of Indigenous knowledges. Similarly, my grandfather encouraged his children and many grandchildren to pursue Westernized goals through White ways of knowing and Eurocentric education systems.

A variety of experiences have shaped my own assumptions about my own Aboriginal identity. I remember my great grandmother's funeral where a woman in Aboriginal dress burned some herbs and some of my Native family danced in a circle around the burning herbs, and inhaled the smoke. A family member told me that the dance in a circle was symbolic of the circle of life. Later, as an adolescent, I felt humiliated when friends attending a bonfire at my house, watched my father doing an "Indian dance" with a blanket, bare chest, and face painted like Indians in a cowboy movie, even though it was done in fun. When I later attended a summer camp that revered Aboriginal culture, I gained a sense of understanding and pride of my heritage.

Indigenous knowledge, as described by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) is considered to be "a cumulative body of knowledge and beliefs, handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings with one another and their environment" (4:454 as cited in Battiste, 2005b, pp. 128-129). As may be the case with other partially Aboriginal families, my immediate family members transmitted a minimal amount of this cultural knowledge, thereby obscuring and limiting my Aboriginal pride and identity. This cultural loss has resulted in shame and difficulties in accepting or understanding my own history.

Growing up, visual texts did not aid in my perception of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges, as the Aboriginal peoples in the shows I watched and books I read were usually warriors and savage-like. None of them looked like me. I later learned that these visual text portrayals, of people like my great grandmother and our family, are hindered by the negative implications of White social dominance and control (Howard, 2006). “It can be overwhelming and discouraging to find our self-images have been formed by others, but if we don’t dissect them, we will continue to be influenced by them” (Christensen, 1994, p. 12). I came to realize how my negative impressions of Aboriginal peoples were perpetuated, in part, by visual texts that I observed. Through this research, I strive to demonstrate the capabilities of critical visual literacy. This may allow for a richer understanding when negotiating between reality and a false consciousness (Janks, 2010).

Statement of Problem

Over the course of the past few decades, visual representations of Aboriginal peoples are continually produced and published in children’s literature, and these visual texts are often unquestioned and unchallenged. We may fail to recognize the power that visual texts have on individual impressions and interpretations.

In today’s information age, challenges arise in education calling the power of visual texts into question. Connors (2011) describes “a so-called visual generation” writing that educators may believe that this generation is able to “interpret the subtle meanings that images convey” (p. 74). He warns that this may be a false assumption. Felten (2008) reinforces this notion, stating that students’ exposure to images does not mean they have sophisticated visual literacy skills. He uses the analogy that just because one listens to an iPod does not make him or her a composer or

a critic of music (p. 60).

Considerations must be made in regards to the matter of text and oral culture. It is important to acknowledge “the strong oral tradition of Aboriginal peoples” (McKeough et al., 2008, p. 150). McKeough et al. (2008) inform readers:

Historically and today, First Nations people share important knowledge, culture and traditional lessons through the telling of stories. It is through the telling of stories and legends that First Nations people preserve what is most important to them— language, traditions, culture, and identity... stories play a critical role for Aboriginal students in learning to read and write. (p. 150)

Iseke-Barnes and Danard (2007) document Aboriginal acts of text-based recording to preserve their oral stories, “Indigenous peoples [have been]...using technologies such as picture writing on skins, birch bark, pottery, and rocks for the purpose of storytelling and as a mode of recording oral history” (p. 5). In the children’s book, *Neèko Nambe Ik’oo K’eezho: The Old Man with the Otter Medicine*, the need for text-based writing is explained through the hopes and fears of Aboriginal experience. Author Blondin (2008) writes:

My grandparents told me many stories that I was supposed to transfer to my children and as many people as possible. Many of my stories are a history of my people and our culture. I have told many stories in my travels but people today are very distracted by everyday business. My fear was that our stories would be lost in the future. The only way to preserve our stories is to put it in writing so people and school children can read them when they want in the future. (p. 2)

The shift from oral learning to predominantly text-based learning has been a part of the

Eurocentric process. This process involved a shift from community-oriented learning reliant on active experience and ongoing dialogue and inquiry where “stories are used to provide a sociocultural and historical account of the community knowledge from elders to youth” (McKeough et al., 2008, p. 150) toward institutional learning heavily focused on the transmission of text-based knowledge and rooted in what Freire would call a banking system (Freire, 1970). In banking education, the teacher fits the role of the subject and acts as an active participant while the students take on the role of passive objects and are regarded as "adaptable, manageable beings” (Freire, 1970, p. 60). As Freire (1970) describes, “The more completely they [students] accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them” (p. 60). In this way, learning lacks inquiry, discussion, and may become one-dimensional as only one perspective is offered.

Sir Ken Robinson’s video, *Changing Education Paradigms* (2010) confirms that the hegemonic power system that put the Eurocentric process in place is still functioning. “The current system of education was designed and conceived and structured for a different age. It was conceived in the intellectual culture of the Enlightenment, and in the economic circumstances of the Industrial Revolution” (Robinson, 2010, video file). Countering the Eurocentric process, and countering the power system itself needs to be multifaceted. An important part of this involves addressing the matter of how various types of texts, such as visual texts found in children’s books, are designed to portray Aboriginal peoples, cultures, and knowledges. As Newfield (2011) explains, “Visual texts interpreted by different perspectives will have different meanings, and may position observers.” Newfield (2011) further asserts, “The shift to critical visual literacy

is an acknowledgement that texts work to position us, and that this happens below the level of consciousness” (p. 92).

My investigation seeks to answer the research question: How do visual texts found in children’s picture books portray Aboriginal peoples and knowledges published in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s? This study will also attempt to answer the following question:

What continuities and/or changes occur within visual texts from decade to decade?

With the focus of this study centred on critical visual literacy, a component of critical literacy, critical pedagogy remains integral in these facets of literacy and is an important foundational theory. Critical pedagogy speaks clearly on the positive aspects of struggling to overcome personal and societal oppression (Friere, 1970). Struggle, discomfort and tensions are approached in positive ways as learning opportunities that hold the potential for empowerment. A critical pedagogy perspective provides a way of understanding struggle, not only in comprehending visual texts, but also as reading, observing, and engaging in discussion. This approach extends the possibilities for reflection on assumptions about the world and how we make meaning with each other and with texts.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review will examine Aboriginal historical perspectives, as well as understandings of White dominance and its long-standing effects on societal epistemology regarding Aboriginal peoples and knowledge. In addition, the literature will be reviewed pertaining to Aboriginal representations, as well as the growing body of work on critical literacy. Studies on the practice and use of historical images and visual texts in critical literacy education will also be discussed.

The Need for Critical Literacy in Schools. The Western world has experienced many centuries of exposure to European dominance and cultural conflict (Howard, 2006). The English and French terms “used to describe Indigenous peoples reflect a European way of conceptualizing the issues and tend to reinforce colonial myths, racism and stereotypes” (Battiste, 2005b, p. 126). Schools must play an essential role in recognizing and revealing the histories of such dominance and equipping students with the knowledge and skills to deconstruct racist myths in pursuit of equity.

It is important that educational values are justified and inclusive of shared ethical principles of equity and social justice, as this is the teaching foundation for critical literacy teachers (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). Ontario’s Language curriculum document supports critical literacy education and acknowledges students as critically literate members of society and citizens of the world, stating, “In the context of anti-discrimination, critical literacy involves asking questions and challenging the status quo, and leads students to look at issues of power and justice in society” (Ontario. Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 29).

Janks (2010) defines critical literacy in support of Neo-Marxist theories of power as an

“emancipatory project in which subordinated groups [are] rescued from ‘false consciousness’ in the interests of social justice” (p. 36). The book, *Critical Literacy: Enhancing Students’ Comprehension of Text*, extends this explanation to include that critical literacy helps these groups to “politicize themselves and engage in action aimed at challenging existing structures of inequality and oppression” (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004, p. 15). The authors further explain:

Critical literacy views readers as active participants in the reading process and invites them to move beyond passively accepting the text’s message to question, examine or dispute the power relations that exist between readers and authors. It focuses on issues of power and promotes reflection, transformation, and action. (p. 14)

Thus, students are taught to ask: (1) Who wrote the text, (2) What constitutes the text, (3) What is the style of the text, (4) What information did the author choose to include or exclude from the text, (5) Within what sort of context was the text written and how is this visible in the text, and (6) What did the author intend readers to derive from the text and to what degree was this achieved?

Verbal and visual text relationships. “Illustrations have a crucial role to play in enabling children to gain meaning from books and they work in partnership with print in picture books” (Evans, 2007, p. 241). Whether it be a stagnant image or moving picture, visual texts are often accompanied with verbal text of some form such as written, spoken, or sung. “Visual images of all kinds are increasingly used to represent meaning, ideas and feelings, often in complex combinations and orchestrations with words, sounds and movement” (Newfield, 2011, p. 82). The passive text observer may make assumptions concerning the relationship between verbal and visual text as one of mutual support, complementary to each another, where visual

text reinforces verbal text. While this is true of some resources, Janks (2010) reminds readers of the alternative, “Often visual text that accompanies the verbal text offers a different version of reality from that of the verbal text, such that the reader is offered contradictory points of view” (p. 63). Janks (2010) suggests that contradictions may occur since most genres of texts are multimodal with contributions from multiple authors such as author, illustrator, and photographer.

Laman’s (2006) research takes readers inside educator Ms. Brice’s multiage, multilingual classroom where critical literacy and inquiry activities are valued and continuous. In her research, Laman recounts an activity involving students’ own production of visual and verbal text in response to reading the picture book, *Freedom Summer* (Wiles & Lagarrigue, 2001). Laman (2006) observes:

Ms. Brice asked... [students]...to write and draw their questions and responses on large sheets of poster paper. This collection of drawings and writings hung on the wall throughout the year and marked the beginning of a critical inquiry journey... [including]...practices like reading newspaper accounts, books, and Web sites...interrogating new math textbooks... [and] studying a local store’s gendered Halloween advertisement. (p. 204)

Students used verbal and visual texts to conduct reader responses, a form of reflection that Evans (2007) describes as important for uncovering “many of the implicit and explicit messages found in picture story texts” (p. 236). Laman’s (2006) critical literacy focus concentrates on practical applications in the classroom, describing Ms. Brice’s students as engaged text analysts.

The students’ interpretations of race based picture books is coupled with their notions of

various cultural models. Laman (2006) defines cultural models as constructed worlds or storylines that inform and guide one's understandings of experience and behaviour. Laman (2006) documents one student's empowering change of thought after a classroom critical literacy lesson, "Helena took her question home and reconsidered her earlier held cultural models that picture books may not represent real things" (p. 211). Cultural models align with discourses, "culturally encoded repertoires for meaning making" (Janks, 2010, p. 64).

Popular and frequently used representations may alter individual thoughts and feelings. "Discourses speak through us" (Janks, 2010, p. 66). Dominant representations of reality have resulted in a common standard discourse of viewing Aboriginal peoples as savages or warriors (Howard, 2006). This discourse has become naturalized and made to seem inevitable and true. Because of this perception, deciphering between reality and representation becomes a difficult task.

Australian advocates for critical literacy, Mission and Morgan (2006), explore the potential for the aesthetic in their book, *Literacy and the Aesthetic: Transforming the English Classroom*. The authors use post-structuralism as a theoretical framework to aid in comprehending texts and their relationship to human society and identity (Mission & Morgan, 2006). The authors utilize a variety of resources including the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960), poetry by Shakespeare, and even an episode of the sitcom *Friends* (Bright, 1994), to show how the combination of critical literacy and the aesthetic can transform classrooms and help students to grasp critical literacy concepts (Mission & Morgan, 2006). Mission and Morgan (2006) found that their inclusion and consideration for the aesthetic involved paying attention to individual identity, human emotion, creativity, and the value and productivity of texts.

Aboriginal representations. For the past fifty years, representations of Aboriginal peoples have been found in mass media books, television programs, and films. As far back as the early 1960s, Dockstader (1961) wrote:

The average adult...grows to maturity without very much opportunity really to learn very much about, or to understand, this minority group...So, unless the individual is particularly interested...he encounters the Indian again only through the media of television, motion pictures, or the Western story—none of which are noteworthy for edifying portrayals of Indian lifeways. (p. 30)

Dockstader comments on the general lack of education in Aboriginal Studies received by the “average adult”. He disapproves of Aboriginal representations in the listed forms of media. He wrote this at a time when televisions were a main source of technology, prior to the age of the Internet. While he acknowledges that people may view misrepresentations of Aboriginal “lifeways,” he fails to define the term or suggest how to deconstruct such portrayals in critical ways.

In the early 1970s, Mallery’s book focused on Aboriginal picture-writing as a form of representation of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges found across both the United States and Canada. Picture-writing is described as drawings or pictures on rock surfaces or other materials such as tree bark or animal skins and “is a mode of expressing thoughts or noting facts by marks... It is one distinctive form of thought-writing without reference to sound, [or] gesture language” (Mallery, 1972, pp. 25-26). This visual technique utilized by members of various Aboriginal tribes demonstrates the communicative potential for visual texts. Mallery discusses how Aboriginal people may have drawn themselves or their life experiences through picture-

writing. In one example of an Ojibwa picture-writing text, the figure of a head is drawn with lines running downward from the eyes, which Mallery (1972) notes has the verbal meaning, “I want to see you, medicine man” (p. 233). Any reflective, first-hand representations of Aboriginal experiences have provided “information and verification as to points of tribal history, religion, customs, and other ethnologic details” (Mallery, 1972, p. 28). It is important to note that differing points of view may lead to different interpretations. These early visual texts showing Aboriginal representations are of historical value, as Mallery (1972) describes, “The execution of the drawings, of which the several forms of picture-writing are composed, often exhibits the first crude efforts of graphic arts” (p. 27). Mallery does not provide further details regarding how contemporary art is impacted by these early Aboriginal visual texts.

In her book, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (2008), Archibald expresses her own concerns with Aboriginal representations that she experienced in her own early schooling. Archibald (2008) recounts:

My memories of encountering First Nations stories in school curricula go back to my teaching experiences in elementary schools from 1972 to 1979. I also have faint memories of learning about a few Indian legends through the subjects of reading and social studies during my elementary and high school years. These memories are ones that I have tried to forget or ignore because I felt humiliation and emotional pain over the way that the Indian cultures and peoples were represented and studied. Indian stories and by implication Indian cultures and peoples were portrayed as simplistic and primitive. (p. 85)

Archibald (2008), a member of the Stó:lō nation, describes the pains and embarrassment

associated with her learning experiences with Aboriginal Studies in public school. She approached such lessons from an Aboriginal perspective. The negative connections she felt from these experiences may have been implicitly tied to her personal sense of Aboriginal identity. Archibald shares these recollections to show the need for positive, culturally appropriate educational experiences for students.

Interacting with text. Kanu's five year research study found in the book, *Integrating Aboriginal Perspectives into the School Curriculum* (2011), documents the voices of Canadian Aboriginal learners and their educational experiences interacting with various forms of texts. Kanu's (2011) analysis highlights that eight out of the ten Aboriginal students in the study "pointed out that they were better able to understand and retain concepts when presented through visual images" (p. 72). Kanu (2011) provides readers with examples of student statements including that of Ned who says:

Mrs. B can explain something verbally over and over and many of us still ask her for further clarification. But when we see it in pictures...it is different...It does grab your attention...It's like a different way of learning. (p. 72)

Aboriginal student, Rich, reinforces Ned's sentiment regarding learning through use of visual text interactions, stating, "We...see the images in front of us and then understanding becomes less difficult" (Kanu, 2011, p. 72-73).

Bolgatz and Colleary (2008) encourage their students to expand their views of text, writing, "students might begin to understand that "reading the text" had a broader definition than simply examining words on the page" (p. 128). In Newfield's (2011) analysis of critical visual literacy she discovers one of the differences between visual and critical visual literacy occurs in

the manner of reading text. She reveals that visual literacy requires readers to engage, identify, and give in to the power of the image and reading *with* the text, while those who engage in critical visual literacy require estrangement, critical distance, resistance to a text's discourses, and reading *against* the text (p. 92). Teachers, Cook and Tashlik, (2010) write:

We need to introduce students to the idea of text as a point of departure: the text is there for *us* to give it meaning...Expecting students to engage with a text means that we open up possibilities for different opinions, for dissent, for getting even deeper into the text to find evidence to support ideas and points of view. (pp. 21-22)

Evans' (2007) work with picture books provides insight on how children develop text meanings and understandings through text engagement "about the immediate world in which they live and about the international world further afield" (Evans, 2007, p. 239).

Taylor (2003) writes about how "children are just beginning to acquire self and personality at the very time they are reading...[children's] books" (p. 306). From a young age, students not only observe visual texts, but also produce them. It is through the production of artworks and images that students tell stories of their own real, lived experiences, and interpretations of the world. "Illustrations provide a starting point from which the reader gets meaning and to which the reader gives meaning" (Evans, 2007, p. 241). Students may produce their own visual texts as an act of agency in response to the visual texts that surround them in their school or home environment.

Teaching Aboriginal Studies. In the article, "Thoughts on Teaching Native American Literature," author Bruchac (1994) shares his experiences teaching Native literature to post-secondary college classes and relates this to his own Aboriginal ancestry and upbringing.

Bruchac (1994) makes learning culturally relevant by placing importance on the environment, suggesting learners move out of the classroom and into the forest, and encourages his own adult students to understand Aboriginal culture by gaining “a sense of the American earth, of the land, and the people as one” (p. 148). Battiste (2005a) applies a Canadian educational perspective:

In Canada, educational institutions have a pivotal responsibility in transforming relations between Aboriginal peoples and Canadian society. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples asserted that all institutions should consider respect for Aboriginal knowledge and heritage to be a core responsibility rather than a special project to be undertaken after other obligations have been met. (p. 228)

Regardless of positive social change, Indigenous peoples throughout the world have been categorized as “the other” or inferior (Howard, 2006). “Over five hundred years of social, political, and economic domination, Western society enforced its cultural codes of Otherness upon American Indians to gain... complicity in the power structure” (Poupart, 2003, p. 87).

Iseke-Barnes and Danard (2007) reinforce this idea and outline the following consequence:

Indigenous peoples have been denied inherent rights and dignity by a mainstream society that does not hear our voices, denies our history and identity, and has worked to destroy our languages and cultures. In this mainstream ideology, Indigenous Peoples have become cultural artifacts constructed by dominant society. (p. 7)

In his book, Howard (2006) reminds readers of the realities of White dominance, the impact that White dominance had over Aboriginal history in North America and the repercussions that resulted for Aboriginal peoples. Howard (2006) details:

For each...being “discovered” by Europeans has resulted in devastating loss and

oppression through the combination of disease, warfare, land theft, discriminatory government policy, the removal of children from their homes, the introduction of alcohol, and the use of foreign religion and education as tools of forced assimilation and cultural genocide. (p. 40)

Aboriginal North American tribes and families were subjected to a European process of “civilizing the Indian,” where traditional Indigenous spiritual practice was made illegal and education was used as a tool for reinforcing forced assimilation (Howard, 2006). McMaster (1989) documents evidence of forced assimilation, stating:

One role of the Indian Affairs' agent (to ensure that these Indians were being "civilized", i.e., becoming good farmers and tradesmen), was to exhibit their [arts and crafts] products to show their civilized qualities rather than their traditions, assuming that this would instill a Euro-Canadian spirit of competitiveness and motivation. Beneath the veneer, however, lay the chilling fact that the Indian was a showcase for the Department's policy of assimilation. (p. 209)

Howard (2006) examines the theory of social positionality based on the premise that European colonialists constructed social reality through means of education, religion, and government policies to justify and perpetuate their position of power (p. 49). Howard (2006) also outlines social dominance theory, a theory that relies on White social hegemony that places White people at the top, and unjustly categorizes and identifies Aboriginal peoples as infidels, heathens, and uncivilized savages. “As for Native Americans, initially, they were not even considered human. They were referred to as “savages,” “animals,” and “heathens.” These terms were used by the initial invaders to this continent as a means of obtaining the land. Man could

not take land from another man; however, man could take land from an animal” (Dixon, 2012, p. 27). It is questionable whether or not these historically rooted theories hold precedence in society’s present day epistemology of Indigenous peoples. Battiste (2005b) addresses these concerns for education, stating:

In schools, we must engage in a critique of the curriculum and examine the connections between and the framework of meanings behind what is being taught, who is being excluded, and who is benefiting from public education. We must centre Indigenous knowledge by removing the distorting lens of Eurocentrism so that we can immerse ourselves in systems of meaning that are different from those that have conditioned us.

(p. 127)

“Like colonized groups throughout the world, American Indian people learned and internalized the discursive practices of the West—the very codes that created, reflected, and reproduced...oppression” (Poupart, 2003, p. 87). Aboriginal artists, activists, and scholars work toward the eradication of the Eurocentric lens through use of modern technologies such as canvas, paper, sculpture, film, photography, radio, and music, to name a few, and contribute toward the sustainment and education of cultural knowledge inclusive of Indigenous worldviews and the living reality of Aboriginal peoples, all while resisting colonial narratives (Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2007).

History and historical images. History and historical images can play an important role for critical visual literacy lessons in the classroom. In the article, “What Colour was Joan of Arc’s Hair?: Developing Critical Literacy through Historical Thinking Skills,” Bolgatz and Colleary (2008) encourage secondary students to confront issues of gender and power in a global

studies course during a unit on Joan of Arc. The authors offer new methods for teaching critical literacy through use of visual texts:

We might give students a wide variety of images and challenge them to explain the different “texts” ... For each image presented, students would be asked to come up with theories explaining why Joan was presented or portrayed in the ways that she was and what purposes might have been served? (Bolgatz & Colleary, 2008, p. 128).

Newfield (2011) touches on historical images in her own work, writing that the “crucial question for critical visual literacy relating to historical images concerns the original context for the production and meaning of the images as well as their re-publication in the present” (p. 92). Both Newfield’s (2011), as well as Bolgatz and Colleary’s (2008) analysis, place importance on the elements of sourcing and contextualizing, encouraging “students to look at the representations as products of their times and creators...and to conjecture how the source and the context impacted the making of the image” (Bolgatz & Colleary, 2008, p. 128).

In Leland and Harste’s (2001) study, students become the creators of historical images in response to a book about the treatment of slaves. Leland and Harste (2001) are conscious of the many graphic and disturbing images in the book, and describe how the students responded in their own drawings, “Students illustrated their responses with images that reflect a sense of brutality” (p. 4). Leland and Harste (2001) paint a vivid observation of a student, Jessica, who drew a visual text of a slave with a scarred back from being whipped and explained how Jessica’s accompanying written text, “It made me hurt inside just to see someone’s flesh torn apart” speaks to the impact books can have on the lives of the students who read them (p. 4).

In the 1990’s, Christensen (1994) wrote, “Unlearning the Myths That Bind Us: Critiquing

Fairy Tales and Films,” an article that highlights her experiences critiquing cartoon fairy tales and films with her high school English students. Christensen (1994) documents a senior secondary student’s analysis of a cartoon involving Aboriginal peoples:

Indians in Looney Tunes are also depicted as inferior human beings. These characters are stereotypical to the greatest degree, carrying tomahawks, painting their faces, and sending smoke signals as their only means of communication. They live in teepees and their language reminds the viewer of Neanderthals. We begin to imagine Indians as savages with bows and arrows and long black braids. There’s no room in our minds for knowledge of the differences between tribes, like the Cherokee alphabet or Celilo salmon fishing. (p. 10)

This detailed response to a visual text demonstrates one student’s ability to think critically and deconstruct text forms. While Christensen’s study highlights secondary students’ capabilities to wrestle with the words, ideas, and pictures presented in children’s literature and movies, she does not extend her research to include children or elementary participants. The perspective of children may add new dimensions to such work with critical literacy, as the materials Christensen chose to work with aim to target child audiences.

In contrast, Evans’ (2007) study concentrates on young children’s perspectives. She decides to use the same picture story text multiple times throughout one school year to aid in deciphering how children negotiate difficult, sensitive concepts such as war, social class, and body image. In her article, “War and Peas in the 21st Century: Young Children Responding Critically to Picture Story Texts,” Evans (2007) discovers that intricate meanings and messages rely on the individual and how one identifies with the text, clarifying that no one text has only

one predetermined single meaning. “The book had acted as a catalyst, stimulating the children to think and communicate their ideas in relation to what was happening in the wider world in a socially perceptive, critical manner” (p. 235).

While there is a surplus of research on critical literacy, as well as visual literacy, there are relatively few studies that concentrate on critical visual literacy practice. Upon review of the literature, it appears that research is deficient regarding the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges in the visual texts accessed by students, such as children’s picture books.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Drawing from a variety of children's books and other contextual matter, I analyzed visual texts using a critical visual literacy framework. This textual analysis included the approach of an analytic auto-ethnography.

Anderson (2006) outlines five key features of this contemporary methodology: (1) complete member researcher status; (2) analytic reflexivity; (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self; (4) dialogue with informants ["data" or "others"] beyond the self; and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis (p. 373). The approach to this study encompasses all of these five features. I have written in ways that allow for visibility or awareness of my voice, and included personal reflections to ensure this. The fourth feature, dialogue with informants beyond the self, was my interactions with the data set of visual texts.

My experience and perspective as a member of the Mi'kmaq nation, connected to the Listuguj reserve, personally connected me to the subject of this study. Atkinson, Coffey, and Delamont (2003) write:

[Auto]ethnographers-as-authors frame their accounts with personal reflexive views of the self. Their ethnographic data are situated within their personal experience and sense making. They themselves form part of the representational processes in which they are engaging and are part of the story they are telling. (as cited in Anderson, 2006, p. 382)

A qualitative textual analysis rooted in analytic auto-ethnography is appropriate for addressing the research question, "How do visual texts found in children's picture books portray Aboriginal

peoples and knowledges published in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s?”

Method

A collection of children’s picture books comprises the major data set for this study (See Appendix A). I used multiple methods to identify and decide upon the selection of books. First, I engaged in informal discussions with elementary school teachers and librarians to get some sense of the children’s books that are commonly used in their schools and that include representations of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges. Next, I traveled to the University of Windsor’s Leddy library, Niagara Falls Public Library, and a variety of elementary school libraries in Windsor, Ontario. I identified and explored texts that have representations of Aboriginal peoples in both current and historic collections and archives. Finally, I engaged in a comprehensive Internet search using a variety of databases to locate and identify texts with representations of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges.

In order to ensure that I was gathering together a wide selection of children’s books, I also searched for websites to aid in the selection of books for this study. I used search engines to find websites that would provide a thorough cross section of children’s picture books. I used the resource JSTOR at the website, www.jstor.org, to look for sources of children’s picture books depicting Aboriginal peoples and knowledges. I selected JSTOR as an appropriate resource because of its accessibility to a wide and diverse range of sources. I also used the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) as a resource to search for both Newbery Medal and Honor Books and Caldecott Honor Books at the website:

www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newberymedal/newberyhonors/newt.

Award winning books are frequently acquired by school and municipal libraries and therefore

are widely available to children. Not surprising but important to the theme of the study was that very few award winning books have any Aboriginal content. The historical erasure of Aboriginal peoples from children's books speaks to the way in which race, power, and ideology come together to construct particular versions of reality that, more often than not, privileges whiteness. However, the notable exceptions, *Annie and the Old One* (Miles & Parnall, 1971), a Newbery Honor Book in 1972, and *When Clay Sings* (Baylor & Bahti, 1972), a Caldecott Honor Book in 1973, are among the books selected for this data set.

Through a popular Internet search engine, I found Aboriginal based children's books published by Theytus Books at the website www.theytus.com. Theytus Books is located on the Penticton Indian Reserve in British Columbia and claims to be the oldest Aboriginal publishing house in Canada. The book, *Neèko Nambe Ik'oo K'eezho: The Old Man with the Otter Medicine* is published by Theytus Books (Blondin & Beaverho, 2008).

Through use of the same search engine, I also found the website, www.GoodMinds.com, which is Native owned and operated on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in Ontario. The site provides educational resources for schools, libraries and the general public with respect to Aboriginal studies. With respect to Aboriginal content in children's literature, the site includes two lists: (1) Recommended Books and (2) Books to Avoid. I decided to obtain and analyze six books from the recommended list and six from the list of books to avoid. For example, *Indian Bunny* (Bornstein, 1973) appears on the Books to Avoid list. *Sky Sisters* (Bourdeau Waboose & Deines, 2000) is on the Recommended list.

In addition to the twelve books above, which provide a sampling of positive and negative content as judged by the Aboriginal website owners, I decided to expand the content of the study

with books that fit the scope of this study for two reasons: they are widely circulated and available in the mainstream, mass market, or they are used as supplements to the school curriculum. *Disney's Pocahontas* (Korman & Williams, 1995), for example, is a mainstream book, while *War of 1812: Western Hooves of Thunder* (Misiak & Paterson, 2009) is one of a series of books published by Real People's History in Brantford, Ontario.

Further to the above, I combed my own home library for books that have Aboriginal content. These include *Come Over to My House* (LeSieg & Erdoes, 1966), *Big Bird Visits Navajo Country* (Alexander & Swanson, 1992), and *The Fire Stealer* (Cleaver, 1979). All three of these books were also found in school libraries. Altogether, this brought the number of books for this study to a total of fifty.

Books were categorized and colour coded according to the following periods of time: 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Covering five distinct time periods allowed for the analysis of a variety of visual texts produced for elementary audiences during these specific places in time, and for comparisons between time periods.

I examined each children's book in a defined and consistent manner. First, I observed the front and back cover, and leafed through all pages in the book. Second, I consulted and analyzed the inside cover for any information concerning the visual texts within the book. Third, I made detailed notes on one of the visual texts according to the following criteria: medium, colour, technique, and subject matter. Fourth, I documented personal use of any of the six critical visual literacy skills, as listed in Appendix B, with each children's book. I focused on critical visual literacy questions appropriate for deconstructing each visual text. This allowed for the reconstruction in understanding the visual text. Fifth, I detailed and documented my own

personal reflections in response to the visual texts in each book. I did this by jotting down my own notes and questions as I examined the fifty texts included in this study.

One visual text was selected from each of the fifty children's picture books. The visual text was chosen if it fit at least one or more of the following criteria: (1) the visual text is on the front cover; and/or (2) the visual text is interesting or engaging with some form of Aboriginal peoples and/or knowledges. The rationale for the first criteria, "the visual text is on the front cover," is that the visual text depicted on the front cover is the primary image associated with the book, it is the very first visual text that viewers may look at, and a conscious choice was made by the publisher, author, or illustrator to place this visual text on the front. The second criteria, "the visual text is interesting or engaging with some form of Aboriginal peoples and/or knowledges," involves two forms of rationale for visual text selection. The visual text that is interesting or engaging may be chosen because it "jumps out" at the viewer. A visual text that immediately engages my attention, as a viewer, could also potentially be actively explored by other viewers.

The data set for this study is strictly children's picture books that students and educators interact with in their daily lives both inside and outside of school. However, I make reference to other forms of visual text media, such as cartoon television shows or motion pictures throughout the analysis. The reason for this is that it aids in contextualizing the children's books with the period of publication. This proved beneficial when analyzing the continuity and changes in visual texts over time.

The report format is descriptive with enough detail to enable readers to imagine that they, too, are observing the data. I interpreted findings, drew inferences and formed conclusions that may provide the education community with new, scholarly information and questions.

Ethical Concerns

Briefly, I will outline some of the ethical concerns that I have taken into consideration in the course of this research study. One concern involved the respect and protection of all authors and illustrators of books within the data set. The intention of the research was to interrogate text, not the individual text contributors. I ensured that all text interactions, recordkeeping, and written analyses were carried out in accordance with all copyright and publication laws.

As a member of the Aboriginal community, I aim to respect the dignity of all Indigenous peoples, inclusive of my own. I approached this work thoughtfully, with great care and attention placed on the vulnerability and fragility of humankind. It was the intent of this research to pursue social justice and contribute to positive social change. Throughout the entire research process, I was mindful of Bruchac's (1994) suggestions for learning about Aboriginal peoples, including: clearly defining Native and the diversity of what we call Indian, Native, First Nations, Anishinawbe, Aboriginal, in that it refers to many nations within a continent, to teach the Indigenous view of life as holistic, where culture is deeply engrained and the verbal word is regarded as *alive*, and that there are many songs, stories, and ceremonies that are flawed due to poor translation. Most importantly, any approach to Aboriginal critical literacy learning must be based on foundations of respect for the culture and the peoples (Bruchac, 1994, p. 148).

During the process of analysis, I was careful to reflect on and critically interrogate my own assumptions about identity and race and other social justice factors. The significance of this self reflective practice is highlighted by Howard (2006) who details this well, stating:

We must assume that we will be changed in the process of engagement and dialogue. We cannot help our students overcome the negative repercussions of past and present racial

dominance if we have not unraveled the remnants of dominance that still lingers in our minds, hearts, and habits. (p. 6)

I was mindful of the potential impact this study may have had on my sense of self. I am now more fully aware of how the colonial process through which European peoples came to dominate Canada has buried various truths around my identity, encouraging Indigenous peoples like myself to deny our traditional Aboriginal identities and mistakenly think of ourselves as colonized White subjects of Canada.

By critically reflecting on the representations of Aboriginal peoples in children's texts, my own thinking has changed in a way that has allowed me to deepen my understanding between my own relationship of identity construction, popular texts, and issues around colonialism, race and racism. As Anderson points out, "The auto-ethnographic interrogation of self and other may transform the researcher's own beliefs, actions, and sense of self" (Anderson, 2006, p. 383).

Conclusion

Through use of a critical text analysis, this study explored the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges in visual texts under a critical pedagogy lens. Critical visual literacy skills were utilized when observing and interpreting a variety of visual texts and provided new evidence and information in the area of Aboriginal critical literacy research. These new knowledges are negotiated within a post-colonial framework to maintain respectful practice with the goal of making education just, culturally relevant, and relatable for all students.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

Exploring the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges, along with the continuities and changes in the visual texts in children's picture books from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, is the focus of this study. I documented and organized the texts in a chronological format. Through use of a thematic, cross comparison of the data, seven major themes were revealed: (1) physical appearances of Aboriginal peoples; (2) facial expressions; (3) Aboriginal actions, events, and activities; (4) absence or presence of women and girls; (5) setting in the distant past; (6) balance of power; and (7) portrayal of Indigenous knowledges.

Physical Appearances of Aboriginal Peoples

The physical appearance of Aboriginal peoples in images found in children's literature is important when exploring issues of race and racism. In order to explore the physical appearance of Aboriginal peoples, close consideration was given to clothing, physique of physical bodies, hair and accessories, as well as skin colour. A number of commonalities and changes became apparent as data was analyzed.

Clothing and a Lack of Clothing. One notable trend found in the analysis of the visual text in from the 1960s was the lack of clothing on Aboriginal characters, particularly males. For example, in one visual text from the 1960 book *Injun Summer*, four Aboriginal males appear bare-chested; the other Aboriginal males are wrapped in blankets (McCutcheon & Erickson, pp. 82-83). In a similar way, the Aboriginal male found on the front cover of the 1968 text titled, *My Indian Book*, shows him with a bare chest and wearing a yellowish decorative covering as a loincloth (Grant & Merryweather). In the visual text from the 1965 book, *Crazy Horse: Sioux*

Warrior, three Aboriginal males are shown bare-chested. Two Aboriginal men wear pants, while one wears only a loincloth (LaMonte Meadowcroft & Cary, 1965, pp. 38-39). In the 1969 book, *Granny and the Indians*, three Aboriginal males are drawn naked with the exception of a loincloth and moccasins (Parish & Turkle, pp. 32-33).

In the 1970s, the absence of clothes on Aboriginal males continued, but as Aboriginal females appeared in images, they were noticeably covered up, often in dresses. For example, in both the 1972 text, *A Color Picture Dictionary for Children: H to M* (Wright & Low, p. 184) and the 1977 text, *North American Indians* (Gorsline & Gorsline, pp. 8-9), artists depicted all males with bare chests, wearing only pants or a hanging cloth reflecting the prevailing stereotypes of the day. The women, however, are shown wearing dresses that cover their arms to their elbows and their bodies to their knees.

Other visual texts sporting bare-chested Aboriginal males with only cloth coverings are found in a variety of children's books published across the decades: the 1970 book, *Indians: The First Americans* (Martin & Frankenberg, pp. 18-19), the 1972 book, *When Clay Sings* (Baylor & Bahti, pp. 16-17), the 1985 books, *Indians of the Plains* (Bains & Baxter, pp. 26-27), and *Pocahontas* (Santrey & Wenzel, 1985, p. 19), the 1992 book, *Encounter* (Yolen & Shannon, front cover), and the 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas* (Korman & Williams, p. 19). Besides these examples, as we progress into the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, artists began to move away from the 'naked' look and portray Aboriginal characters wearing more clothing, albeit stereotypical traditional clothing. Unfortunately, I was hard pressed to find recent examples of diverse and complex representations of Aboriginal peoples in business suits or other professional dress, despite many moving into the professions such as law and medicine.

Nonetheless, an excellent example of the transition to more clothing is in the visual text found in *Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?*, published in 1986. In it, a young Cree boy wears contemporary 1980s clothing including a turtleneck sweater, jeans and striped socks (Wheeler & Bekkering, 1986, pp. 10-11). A similarly clothed Cree boy wears a red, long sleeved shirt with yellow pants and black shoes in the visual text from the 1988 book, *How the Birch Tree Got Its Stripes* (Littlechild, p. 21). In the 1987 book, *Death of the Iron Horse*, an Aboriginal male is fully dressed. He wears a light blue, long sleeved jacket with green pants (Goble, front cover). The visual representations of these Aboriginal males in modern attire sends a positive message that Aboriginal peoples are present and prospering in contemporary society.

Inuit or Aboriginal peoples in cold climates were often portrayed wearing coats with hoods. In *How Summer Came to Canada*, published in 1969, an Aboriginal female wears mittens, moccasins, and a yellow coat with detailed designs and an orange hood, while an Aboriginal male on snowshoes wears a brown, long sleeved, fringed jacket (Cleaver & Toye, pp. 22-23). In the visual text from the 1989 book, *Peter Pitseolak's Escape from Death*, two Inuit individuals wear blue coats with hoods up that match the colour of the water (Pitseolak, p. 105), while the Inuit girl from the 1985 book, *Very Last First Time* wears a red coat with a fur hood, striped mittens, and decorated boots (Andrews & Wallace, front cover) and the Inuit girl wears a fur hooded, blue coat in the 1988 book, in *A Promise is A Promise* (Munsch, Kusugak, & Krykorka, pp. 12-13). The Ojibway sisters in the 2000 children's book, *Sky Sisters*, are wearing modern parkas and scarves (Waboose & Deines, pp. 26-27). Both Inuit identities in the 2008 book, *Neèko Nambe Ik'oo K'eezho: The Old Man with the Otter Medicine*, wear coats with hoods with white fur trim around their faces (Blondin & Beaverho, front cover). The attire of

Aboriginals in the North is depicted consistently throughout the decades.

The portrayal of Aboriginal peoples in contemporary clothes became more common in the 1990s and 2000s. Such is the case in the visual text explored in the 1997 book, (Bourdeau Waboose & Reczuch, 1997, p. 23), the 2002 book, *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (Loyie, Brissenden, & Holmlund, 2002, p. 3), and the 2006 book, *Secret of the Dance* (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, p. 4). In *Big Bird Visits Navajo Country*, published in 1992, all characters are shown wearing jeans and sweatshirts (Alexander & Swanson, pp. 12-13). In the 1993 photograph in the book, *Powwow*, an Aboriginal adult male wears surfer shorts and a pink T-shirt (Ancona, p. 14). The focus of this photograph is clothing as one adult and three children look at a beaded necklace and traditional clothing in a suitcase on the ground. One boy wears a blue, striped T-shirt and a young girl wears a pink dress (Ancona, 1993, p. 14). Upon further exploration, the back cover solidifies the focus of this compilation of photographs: "Suits and ties give way to bustles and moccasins as men, women, and children come together to share in the traditions of the powwow" (Ancona, 1993, back cover). Contemporary Aboriginal peoples are advantaged by the portrayal of this inquisitive moment in time.

Physique. While exploring the various visual texts, the physique of Aboriginal bodies became noteworthy, especially because of the large number of shirtless, bare-chested males shown in dichotomous and simplistic ways, as either skinny and fit or large and fat. The body of the Aboriginal male on the front cover of the 1968 book, *My Indian Book*, for example, shows toned muscles and a skinny, tall physique (Grant & Merryweather), whereas the visual text in *Granny and the Indians*, published only a year later in 1969, shows three Aboriginal people running who are portrayed as plump or fat (Parish & Turkle, 1969, pp. 32-33). The stereotypical

portrayal of Aboriginal men as ‘plump’ seems to have some durability within children’s literature. In the 2003 text *Brother Bear*, for example, an elderly Aboriginal man is short, with baggy, loose clothing making him appear plump. However, the bear in front of him is twice the size of the man (Marsoli, pp. 24-25). These visual texts, with Aboriginal bodies that exemplify two opposite extremities of physique, were particularly prevalent in the 1960s, but still persisted in the decades after, reaching well into the 2000s.

In all decades, despite the real diversity of bodies among Aboriginal men, Aboriginal males were depicted very narrowly, and often shown with broad shoulders and muscles. In the 1970 text, *Indians: The First Americans*, all Aboriginal peoples depicted are very skinny, tall, and physically fit (Martin & Frankenberg, pp. 18-19). The Aboriginal male shown in the 1972 story, *When Clay Sings*, a book that won the Caldecott Honor, is depicted with a broad shouldered, fit body (Baylor & Bahti, pp. 16-17). Spring forward close to a decade and a half later, and I see an Aboriginal male in the non-mainstream 1985 book, *Pocahontas*, who has large, muscular arms and chest (Santrey & Wenzel, p. 19). Similarly, in the mainstream 1995 picture book, *Disney's Pocahontas*, all four Aboriginal males have a very fit, physically strong physique, with muscular pectorals and abdomens (Korman & Williams, p. 19). A physically fit, muscular Aboriginal male also appears in *The Golden Dollar: Legend of Sacagawea*, published in 2000 (Fernandez, McIntyre, & Davis, p. 11). Such portrayals of strong male physique may evoke meanings that all Aboriginal males are physically fit and physically powerful. More importantly, they may be assumed to be physically aggressive, and by extension become constructed as a symbolic threat to the social order. Aboriginal identities are not only disadvantaged by this common representation of Aboriginal males because it sets the unrealistic

expectation that all males should be physically strong, but, as mentioned, become constructed within the context of children's literature as a particular threat, an assumed danger, to a White, patriarchal society that is grounded in 'whiteness'.

Hair, braids, and feathers. Continuities were found with respect to hair colour, hairstyles, and decorative accessories. In the 1960s, several visual texts depicted Aboriginal peoples with black hair, often tied in braids, wearing decorative beaded necklaces and bands, sometimes with feathers protruding upward from their heads. Examples of this were commonly found in children's books from the 1960s including, *The First Thanksgiving* from 1962 (Rogers & Lowenbein, pp. 24-25), *Indian Warriors and their Weapons* from 1965 (Hofsinde, front cover), and *Granny and the Indians* from 1969 (Parish & Turkle, pp. 32-33).

From the 1960s through 2000s, black braids appeared as a common hairstyle for both males and females. In the 1974 book, *The Friendly Wolf*, a female has two long black braids with a white flower in her hair (Goble & Goble, front cover). All Aboriginal peoples in *Indians of the Plains*, published in 1985, are painted with black hair, and most have braids (Bains & Baxter, pp. 26-27). In the 1987 book, *Death of the Iron Horse*, the Aboriginal male depicted has black, long hair tied in two braids (Goble, front cover) and in the 1988 book, *How the Birch Tree Got Its Stripes*, the Cree boy has two black braids curving upwards on either side of his head (Littlechild, p. 21). Such is also the case for Aboriginal characters in visual texts found in other children's picture books, such as *Little Firefly: An Algonquin Legend* from 1990 (Cohlene & Reasoner, pp. 10-11), *Walt Disney's Peter Pan* from 1996 (Coco & Dias, p. 13), *Sacagawea: Lewis and Clark's Shoshone Guide* from 2000 (Robertson & Thompson, pp. 15-16), and *War of 1812: Western Hooves of Thunder* from 2009 (Misiak & Paterson, p. 18).

Another popular portrayal in children's literature is that of Aboriginal males with completely shaved heads, with the exception of a mohawk (a single centred band of hair). Examples of this are found in both mainstream and non-mainstream versions of books about Pocahontas. In the non-mainstream 1985 book, *Pocahontas*, all Aboriginal males wear beaded necklaces and have shaved heads, black mohawks, and white feathers behind their ears (Santrey & Wenzel, p. 19). In comparison, in the 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas*, all four Aboriginal males have bald heads with black mohawks that extend into long ponytails (Korman & Williams, p. 19). The consistency of these two portrayals creates questions about the tribe that Pocahontas came from, "a tribe of Eastern Woodlands Indians" (Santrey & Wenzel, 1985, p. 7), and whether the males actually looked this way. Similarly, in the 2000 book, *The Golden Dollar: Legend of Sacagawea*, an Aboriginal male is shown with a shaved head and mohawk (Fernandez, McIntyre, & Davis, p. 11).

In several visual texts from the 1960s and 1970s, Aboriginal adult males were depicted wearing large feathered headdresses atop their heads. Such headdresses were seen in the children's literature from the 1960s and 1970s, including *Injun Summer* from 1960 (McCutcheon & Erickson, pp. 82-83), *Granny and the Indians* from 1969 (Parish & Turkle, pp. 32-33), where the headdress came down so far that it was completely covering the male's eyes, *Indians: The First Americans* from 1970 (Martin & Frankenberg, pp. 18-19), and *The Friendly Wolf* from 1974 (Goble & Goble, 1974, front cover). In the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s, feathered headdresses worn by males appear less frequently, such as in the 1989 story, *A Girl From Cat River* (Carpick, p. 99) and the 1997 story, *Morning on the Lake* (Bourdeau Waboose & Reczuch, p. 23). However, some visual texts from these decades still depict males with large headdresses, such as

in the 1986 book *Great Tales from Long Ago: Hiawatha* (Wadsworth Longfellow & Molan, pp. 28-29), the 1996 book, *Walt Disney's Peter Pan* (Coco & Dias, p. 13), the 2009 book, *War of 1812: Western Hooves of Thunder* (Misiak & Paterson, p. 18), and the cover of the 2005 book, *North American Indian*, shows a real life example of an elderly, Aboriginal male who wears a large feathered headdress on his head in a black and white photograph (Murdoch, front cover).

It is important to note that the examples of males shown with full-feathered headdresses were all Aboriginal adults. By contrast, Aboriginal children's hair was often black and left down or tied. In the 1964 book, *Indian Children of America*, a young Aboriginal girl has long black hair, tied in a ponytail with a decorated band around it (Farquhar, p. 32). One of the three children depicted on the 1974 front cover of *Three Little Indians* has two black ponytails resting on both his shoulders and he wears an elaborate bone necklace. To the right, I see the Cree female child with long black hair. The young Nootka boy is shown with a mass of black hair on top of his head that extends tucked behind his ear (Stuart & Glanzman, front cover). This trend changes in later decades, as I see the young Ojibway boy with a brunette mushroom cut in *Morning on the Lake*, published in 1997 (Bourdeau Waboose & Reczuch, p. 23), and the young Aboriginal sister has two brunette braids in *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, published in 2002 (Loyie, Brissenden, & Holmlund, p. 3). Blonde or red-headed Aboriginal peoples have yet to be seen in visual texts.

Skin colour. Artists' choices for skin colour are intrinsically tied to issues of race and racism, as viewers make visual connections. In terms of children's literature, the color red was used as a racial descriptor and was the predominant Aboriginal skin tone of the 1960s, reflecting to a degree the way in which race and racism was colour-coded. For example, in the 1960

children's story, *Injun Summer*, twelve Aboriginal males are drawn in blended red and orange watercolours (McCutcheon & Erickson, pp. 82-83). The following verbal text accompanies this illustration and functions to support the embedded racist attitudes found in the visual text:

Jever, notice how the leaves turn red 'bout this time o' year? That's jest another sign o' redskins. That's when an old Injun sperrit gits tired dancin' an' goes up an' squats on a leaf t' rest. Why, I kin hear 'em rustlin' an' whisperin' an' creepin' 'round among the leaves all the time; an' ever' once 'n a while a leaf gives way under some fat old Injun ghost and comes floatin' down to the ground. See-here's one now. See how red it is? That's the war paint rubbed off'n an Injun ghost, sure's you're born. (McCutcheon & Erickson, 1960, p. 83)

The voice of a White male is heard as he comments on “how red” the “redskins” are. These racist verbal remarks and visual colour choices work in unison to discriminate against Aboriginal peoples. May it be further noted that *Injun Summer* is from an anthology called, *Best in Children's Books* (1960), which likely means that it reached a fairly wide reading audience, adults and children alike.

Red skin colour appears in other visual texts from the 1960s and 1970s such as the 1966 book, *Come Over to My House* (LeSieg & Erdoes, p.4), the 1972 book, *A Color Picture Dictionary for Children: H to M* (Wright & Low, p. 184), the 1974 books, *The People and Places Book* (Fadiman, pp. 56-57), and *Three Little Indians* (Stuart & Glanzman, 1974, front cover). However, some illustrators choose different colours, including a vibrant orange in the visual text on the 1968 front cover of *My Indian Book* (Grant & Merryweather), and brown tones used for Aboriginal clothing and skin colour in the 1962 book, *The First Thanksgiving*

(Rogers & Lowenbein, pp. 24-25). Different from all other 1960s examples, in the 1961 children's book, *Little Chief*, a young Aboriginal boy called "Little Chief" is depicted with a white face made up by the whiteness of the page, with the exact same facial features and skin colour as eight White characters (Hoff, pp. 62-63). The lack of variation between the faces of the Aboriginal boy and the White identities conveys the message that this boy blends in with the group and is "assimilated" as one of them. The visual text positions viewers to observe all individuals as White in regards to appearance.

Brown tones were often used for Aboriginal skin colour in the 1970s and 1980s. A dark brown colour is used in *The Friendly Wolf* (Goble & Goble, 1974, front cover) and *Death of the Iron Horse* (Goble, 1987, front cover), both written and illustrated by Goble in 1974 and 1987 respectively. Oranges appear in several of the visual texts from the 1990s. The Algonquin girl portrayed in the 1990 book, *Little Firefly: An Algonquin Legend* has burnt orange skin (Cohlene & Reasoner, pp. 10-11), and the Algonquin Girl shown on the 1992 front cover of *The Rough-Face Girl* has orangey-tan skin that is covered in bruises and scars (Martin & Shannon). Also, all four Aboriginal men portrayed in the 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas*, have burnt orange skin colour (Korman & Williams, p. 19). While reds do not appear in visual texts from the 1980s and beyond, burnt or vibrant oranges do not work to minimize racist practices.

It is interesting to note that Inuit portrayals strayed from the above common skin colour choices for Aboriginal peoples. Instead, Inuit peoples' skin appeared fair. White, pale pink, and cream colours were commonly used, as with *Very Last First Time* (Andrews & Wallace, 1985, front cover) and *Neèko Nambe Ik'oo K'eezho: The Old Man with the Otter Medicine* (Blondin & Beaverho, 2008, front cover). In *A Promise is a Promise*, the Inuit girl's face appears a pale

beige or cream with very rosy pink cheeks (Munsch, Kusugak, & Krykorka, 1988, pp. 12-13).

In the 2000s, the skin colour of Aboriginals varies, and vibrant one-dimensional reds, oranges, and browns are no longer used. Rather than using one distinct colour for skin, in the 2000 book, *Sacagawea: Lewis and Clark's Shoshone Guide*, figures are distinctly detailed with flesh-like representations, as a plethora of colours are layered and blended to appear more life-like (Robertson & Thompson, pp. 15-16). Also published in 2000, the same application of various layered colours is used in the visual text in *Sky Sisters* (Bourdeau Waboose & Deines, pp. 26-27). The non-fiction 2005 book, *North American Indian*, contains a photograph of an Aboriginal male (Murdoch, front cover). While the photograph is black and white, the Aboriginal man's skin is dark with light shining on half his face to make it partially white. The 2006 visual text illustration in *Secret of the Dance* is completely coloured using a black and white value scale (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, p. 4). This elimination of colour allows viewers to explore the artist's intended focus, which could possibly be the figures and themes of the visual text.

In conclusion, several continuities and changes were apparent with respect to the portrayal of the physical appearance of Aboriginal peoples inclusive of clothing, physique of physical bodies, hair and accessories, and skin colour. The lack of clothing on Aboriginal males was a key feature in the construction of Aboriginal identities in children's literature throughout the 1960s and continued in the 1970s, and to a certain extent, beyond. Aboriginal female bodies were covered up, often in dresses. The shift to seeing more clothing on Aboriginal males, as found in the context of children's literature, appears to begin in the 1980s. Inuit portrayals or portrayals of Aboriginals in cold climates were of coats with hoods in the 1960s through to the

2000s. In the 1990s and 2000s, it became common to show contemporary clothes on Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal peoples were most often portrayed as slim and physically fit, and less commonly fat or plump. In all of the decades, Aboriginal males appeared with broad shoulders and muscles, reproducing a particular version of Aboriginal masculinity.

Aboriginal peoples were commonly shown with black hair, often tied in braids, or for the male, a shaved head and mohawk. Not surprisingly, large feathered headdresses were most usual in the 1960s and 1970s, but appeared less in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Aboriginal children's hair, which was frequently portrayed as black, and left down or tied in the 1960s and 1970s, changed in later decades to modern styles. Aboriginal hair is only portrayed as black or brunette in visual texts thus far.

The color red was a common skin colour choice in the 1960s by illustrators of children's books, with browns and oranges used in the 1970s and 1980s, vibrant oranges in the 1990s, and a multi-layered array of colours in the 2000s. To a certain measure, this change perhaps reflects the work of Aboriginal rights groups who worked in Canada and elsewhere to undermine stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples. The portrayal of Inuit peoples, however, was consistently fair or light in colour. Black and white drawings evoke questions concerning colour "blindness" and whether or not a complete absence of colour aligns with socially just practices.

Facial Expressions

While exploring the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples, facial expressions as a particular way to manufacture Aboriginal identity appeared as a common theme. The rendering of facial features, such as the eyes and mouth, influences viewer perceptions of characters' emotions, and

impacts their impressions of the people portrayed (Allen, 1996, p. 158).

Visual texts from the 1960s were fairly uniform in the portrayal of Aboriginal faces. In keeping with a common stereotype found in general of representations of Aboriginal males for well over a century across varying forms of media including film and television, most of the Aboriginal males depicted in children's books had serious, stoic expressions. For example, in the visual text found in the 1960 children's story, *Injun Summer*, all twelve Aboriginal men have serious, somber expressions (McCutcheon & Erickson, pp. 82-83). Similar to these twelve men, all three Aboriginal men in the visual text found in the 1965 book, *Crazy Horse: Sioux Warrior*, have serious, stern looks on their faces (LaMonte Meadowcroft & Cary, pp. 38-39).

The visual discourse that constructs Aboriginal males as serious and stoic was reinforced by the Aboriginal male's expression on the cover of the 1968 text, *My Indian Book*. In this particular case, his eyes are squinted as he looks off to the side and his mouth is closed and shows a serious expression (Grant & Merryweather, front cover). In a similar way, on the front cover of the 1965 book, *Indian Warriors and their Weapons*, all three Aboriginal men have serious expressions and slits for eyes (Hofsinde, front cover). Although this black ink drawing is elaborately detailed, the heavy shadows and single medium does not show us facial features, such as eyes, that are expressive. This lack of detail in the eyes may lead readers to infer that the three Aboriginal males are always either serious or emotionless. There is little indication within children's literature that Aboriginal men laughed, smiled or joked around with other people, despite the fact that they surely did.

In any event, serious or stern male Aboriginal expressions reflected a particular narrow version of Aboriginal masculinity which remained a constant in the visual texts from the 1970s

and 1980s, and still found in the 1990s. Three Aboriginal males have stern expressions in the visual text in the 1974 book, *The People and Places Book* (Fadiman, pp. 56-57). In the visual text in the 1985 book, *Pocahontas*, three Aboriginal males show stern expressions, but seem less emotive than the visibly upset, angry European male (Santrey & Wenzel, p. 19). The White male's voice is being heard because the viewer can see his emotions. A more emotive, but still serious Aboriginal expression is found in the 1986 book, *Great Tales from Long Ago: Hiawatha*, as the male's face seems to show anger. This image captured my attention due to the furrowed brow and frown on the Aboriginal male's face, as his eyes focus on a nearby bird in flight. (Wadsworth Longfellow & Molan, pp. 28-29). Similarly, in the 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas*, the Aboriginal men have furrowed eyebrows, as they all look sternly at the White man in the visual text (Korman & Williams, p. 19).

Serious and stern expressions are not always coupled with anger, as the Aboriginal male depicted in the 1990 book, *Sky Dogs*, has hard shadows on his very creased face and a serious, but stoic expression (Yolen & Moser, p. 16). This visual text, which draws on the stereotypical mythic, single and solitary heroic Aboriginal male, seems to position the viewer to see this person also as a stern, reflective and deep thinker.

On the contrary, the visual text in *A Girl from Cat River*, published in 1989, shows a Cree adult male with distinct, almost life-like, facial features whose mouth forms a tiny smile, while his eyes are closed, a sign that he is listening, as he plays the violin (Carpick, 1989, p. 99).

Other considerations were made with respect to the portrayal of the expressions of Aboriginal children. In the 1964 book, *Indian Children of America*, the Aboriginal boy has a serious smirk on his face, indicated by the tiny singular line that forms his mouth, and his eyes

are squinting downward (Farquhar, p. 32). Smiling children is a common occurrence, as with the children in the visual texts found in the 1961 text, *Little Chief* (Hoff, 1961, pp. 62-63), the 1966 book, *Come Over to My House* (LeSieg & Erdoes, p.4), and two decades later, in 1986 book, *Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?* (Wheeler & Bekkering, 1986, pp. 10-11). On the front cover of the 1974 book, *Three Little Indians*, the viewer is shown three children with differing expressions. The young Cheyenne boy portrayed on the left of the illustration looks at the viewer with wandering eyes and an inquisitive expression. To the right, a Cree girl smiles happily at the viewer. The young Nootka boy looks up into the distance with a serious, but calming expression (Stuart & Glanzman, 1974, front cover). None of these portrayals match the stern, serious expressions seen on the faces of Aboriginal adult males in visual texts.

However, Aboriginal children are not always portrayed as smiling or inquisitive, as with the frowning Inuit girl in the 1988 book *A Promise is a Promise* (Munsch, Kusugak, & Krykorka, pp. 12-13) or the screaming Cree boy with his eyes closed, eyebrows raised and mouth wide open, with two pink circles on each cheek in *How the Birch Tree Got Its Stripes*, also published in 1988 (Littlechild, p. 21).

A general lack of detail in the facial features of Aboriginal peoples was common in the visual texts in both the 1960s and 1970s. Facial features are shown only with black dabs of paint on the Aboriginal male depicted on the front cover of the 1968 text, *My Indian Book* (Grant & Merryweather). In the 1962 book, *The First Thanksgiving*, no detail was used for any of the twenty-three faces depicted in paint (Rogers & Lowenbein, pp. 24-25). In the visual text for the 1970 children's book, *Indians: The First Americans*, the only facial features the Aboriginal peoples have are black dots for eyes (Martin & Frankenberg, pp. 18-19). Similar to the

Aboriginal faces shown in *Indians: The First Americans* (1970), the Aboriginal male depicted in the 1972 text, *When Clay Sings*, has two black eyes that stare out at the viewer, but no mouth (Baylor & Bahti, pp. 16-17). This lack of detail for eyes and complete absence of a mouth seems to imply that Aboriginal peoples are emotionless, or perhaps voiceless. Alternatively, it is possible that the artist has, for some reason, decided to hide the emotions of these Aboriginal characters from readers.

In Allen's (1996) multicultural picture book study, students said they did not want to read a book with an ambiguous illustration of Black characters where "the faces on the cover did not have discernible eyes, nostrils, or mouth" and looked depressing (p. 158). Students who interact with the simplistic drawings in *When Clay Sings* (Baylor & Bahti, 1972, pp. 16-17) may lack interest in the Aboriginal character without facial features. Worse, students may be fearful and react in a negative way to the character.

The lack of detail and absence of specific facial features continues in some visual texts in the 1980s and 1990s. The illustration on the 1987 front cover of *Death of the Iron Horse* shows no facial features for both the Aboriginal male riding a horse and the White man driving the train (Goble, front cover). The Aboriginal depictions in the 1985 book, *Indians of the Plains*, are detailed, but there are no vivid details in faces (Bains & Baxter, pp. 26-27). Aboriginal peoples are disadvantaged by the way this visual text is painted. They are expressionless due to the painting technique. I question whether the lack of facial features or expression was purposeful. Might the artist's choice to show characters without mouths symbolize their lack of say?

This question was again pertinent when exploring the visual text from the 1990 book, *Little Firefly: An Algonquin Legend* (Cohlene & Reasoner, pp. 10-11). Cohlene and Reasoner

(1990) show no facial features with the exception of a black slit for all eyes depicted. The only evidence of emotion is a single green tear dropping from an Aboriginal woman's black eye slit. The main character is crying, yet such simplistic artistic forms with undistinguished facial expressions may lead viewers to fail to understand or sympathize with her (Cohlene & Reasoner, 1990, pp. 10-11). Allen's (1996) study revealed that students "tended to prefer more realistic drawings in which the characters' features are clear and recognizable. They were able to identify these books as distinct from those using sketches and simpler portrayal[s]" (p. 156).

Another common finding was open eyes with entirely black irises and pupils. This sometimes was paired with non-Aboriginal characters who had more detailed, colourful eyes. In *Brother Bear*, both eyes of the elderly Aboriginal man have black irises and black pupils, while the bear that he looks at has cartoonish eyes with brown irises and black pupils (Marsoli, 2003, pp. 24-25). This is also the case with black and white photographs of Aboriginal peoples. On the front cover of *North American Indian*, the photographed Aboriginal male has a distant look in his black irises and pupils. His mouth is closed and forms a frown (Murdoch, 2005).

In the 1990s and 2000s Aboriginal peoples were portrayed with more emotional warmth in their expressions and attitudes. In the 1992 book, *Big Bird Visits Navajo Country*, all six Navajo people, as well as the character Big Bird, are shown smiling (Alexander & Swanson, pp. 12-13). An Ojibway grandfather is smiling in the visual text in the 1997 book, *Morning on the Lake* (Bourdeau Waboose & Reczuch, p. 23). A Shoshone Chief smiles with both his eyes and mouth in the visual text found in *The Golden Dollar: Legend of Sacagawea*, published in 2000 (Fernandez, McIntyre, & Davis, p. 11).

Smiling is not always an indicator of positive representation. Although all five

individuals are smiling in the 2009 text, *War of 1812: Western Hooves of Thunder*, Aboriginal expressions are negatively portrayed as the elderly male's tongue hangs out. Both the elderly Aboriginal male and female have drowsy eyes that are almost shut, sending the message that the two older Aboriginal peoples appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol as indicated by their lackadaisical expressions in comparison to the other four individuals at the table who appear wide eyed and alert (Misiak & Paterson, 2009, p. 18).

Aboriginal peoples are humanized by the portrayals of facial expressions in some visual texts from the 2000s. The visual text in the 2002 book, *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, shows differing facial expressions on family members that send messages about the transition from Aboriginal childhood to elderly life. Children are shown smiling. An Aboriginal boy appears to have bright eyes with a twinkle in them, and a content expression. His younger brother has a wide smile on his face and similar smiling eyes. The grandmother and grandfather, who watch their four grandchildren, have serious, but content expressions (Loyie, Brissenden, & Holmlund, p. 3). The illustrator is taking the stance that this is a loving, positive family scene where children are happy and playful. The oldest child appears content but less playful, and the grandparents are stoic, content, and observe their grandchildren with warmth and a watchful eye. The 2006 book, *Secret of the Dance*, highlights a positive Aboriginal attitude compared with a White male with a negative expression (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, p. 4). The White male or Indian agent's lip is turned upward and his mouth is snarling. His eyes are squinted and his furrowed brow shows an angry expression. The Aboriginal adult male in the visual text is looking at the White male. His eyes and mouth appear to be smiling (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, 2006, p. 4). This difference in expressions made me question the power of perspective and how perspective may influence

perceptions or impressions of various identities. How might shifts in perspective negotiate changes in perception?

In conclusion, facial expressions on the characters portrayed create impressions for the viewer. The 1960s was a decade that did little to undermine a monolithic and stereotypical portrayal of Aboriginal faces, particularly those of males, as serious, stern, and/or stoic. This construction of a particular Aboriginal masculinity appears to have some durability and persistency, as this trend continued on into the 1970s, 1980s, and in some visual texts of the 1990s. In contrast, the portrayals of the expressions of Aboriginal children were commonly found to be smiling and happy in most visual texts. Facial features showed a general lack of detail in the 1960s through 1990s with many missing facial features. Whether this is an indicator of the Aboriginals' lack of say, or a symbol that Aboriginal peoples are emotionless, or that the artist made the conscious choice not to show the emotion of Aboriginal characters would be a topic for further study. Warmer expressions and attitudes appeared to humanize Aboriginal peoples in the 1990s and 2000s, even though smiling and warm expressions do not guarantee positive representations.

Aboriginal Actions, Events, and Activities

Actions, events, and activities are often a central focus of a visual text. Such acts performed by Aboriginal peoples inform viewers' active understanding and perception of Indigenous peoples and their knowledges. This section will explore both the changes and continuities involving the actions, events, and activities observed in the visual texts from decade to decade.

Some visual texts show Aboriginal peoples engaged in barbaric or savage-like behaviour.

The visual text in the 1965 book, *Crazy Horse: Sioux Warrior*, positions viewer amongst violence in a war-like scene as an Aboriginal male is bent backward, dying, with an arrow in his neck, shot by an Aboriginal with his arm extended, holding a bow, while seated atop a terrified horse. In the bottom left corner of the illustration is a third Aboriginal male holding a bow with an arrow aimed at the male on the horse (LaMonte Meadowcroft & Cary, pp. 38-39). Aboriginal peoples are demonized in this visual text since the message sent by this horrific action is that Aboriginal males are physically violent and fight and kill one another. This does not emulate the holism of Indigenous knowledges. Again, symbols of barbaric brutality appear in the 1969 book, *Granny and the Indians*, as Aboriginal peoples are gathered carrying kidnapped White Granny, while holding weapons such as a spear, net, torch, and shield, and even a large rolled up blanket (Parish & Turkle, pp. 32-33). This ‘barbaric’ behaviour, visually read by and available for children, perpetuates societal myths surrounding Aboriginal peoples and reinforces prejudices.

In contrast, some 1960s portrayals of Aboriginal actions are cognizant of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing. An Aboriginal male walks on snowshoes towing an Aboriginal female on a sleigh in a natural, snowy setting toward a teepee in the 1969 text, *How Summer Came to Canada* (Cleaver & Toye, pp. 22-23). Three Aboriginal adult males are depicted sitting on horses riding on a grassy surface in the 1965 book, *Indian Warriors and their Weapons* (Hofsinde, front cover), while emerging out of the tunnel of an igloo is an Inuit child, kneeling with both hands on the ground in the 1966 book, *Come Over to My House* (LeSieg & Erdoes, p. 4).

Gender roles are evident through character actions in some of the visual texts from the 1960s and 1970s. In the 1964 text, *Indian Children of America*, a young Aboriginal boy holds his

left arm fully extended, up in the air. He dangles a dead chipmunk. In his right hand he holds a bow. The sitting girl holds up a white doll with both hands. She has a small, blue wigwam next to her (Farquhar, p. 32). In this text, viewers learn that Aboriginal boys are hunters who kill rodents at a young age, while Aboriginal girls play with dolls and dollhouses. Messages about gender specific activities for Aboriginal males and females are also found in the 1977 book, *North American Indians*, as males are seen doing physical labour, while most women are sitting, sewing or cooking (Gorsline & Gorsline, pp. 8-9). The 1972 text, *A Color Picture Dictionary for Children: H to M*, is consistent with this theme as an Aboriginal boy is depicted holding a spear with a fish. Not far from him, a woman is leaning over a pot, while two Aboriginal adult males are shown both holding weapons in the air (Wright & Low, p. 184). These visual texts are not only products of their time of publication in the 1960s and 1970s, but do little to convey to the reader that Aboriginal communities were largely matriarchal. They also may exemplify a lack of acknowledgement or a possible resistance to affirmative actions of the feminist movements of the time, as indicated by the number of representations that show conformity to specified gender roles.

In keeping with the historical legacy of Aboriginal stereotypes, there were still barbaric and savage-like illustrations in some visual texts from the 1980s and 1990s, such as an Aboriginal male holding a large boulder with both hands, focused on a bird in the 1986 book, *Great Tales from Long Ago: Hiawatha* (Wadsworth Longfellow & Molan, pp. 28-29), an Aboriginal male on his horse in pursuit of a moving steam engine with a lassoed rope in the 1987 book, *Death of the Iron Horse* (Goble, front cover), and Aboriginal males holding a spear and restraining the White explorer's arms in the 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas* (Korman &

Williams, p. 19).

However, some visual texts show Aboriginal peoples engaged in activities other than savage behaviour. The visual text from *Very Last First Time*, published in 1985, shows a young Inuit girl sitting on ice, with her legs dangling in a hole in the ice. She rests her left hand on the handle of a metal shovel positioned vertically next to her. She holds a pan with holes in her other hand (Andrews & Wallace, front cover). In the 1986 text, *Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?*, five children are sitting down on the floor of a classroom looking at a moccasin with lacing and beadwork (Wheeler & Bekkering, pp. 10-11). In the 1989 story, *A Girl from Cat River*, a Cree adult male plays the violin in front of an audience of three people (Carpick, p. 99). These three accounts show Aboriginal people performing positive, “civilized” actions, in accordance with White, middle-class values. It is important that we remember that the term “civilized” is relative in that it has been informed by Western colonialism and does very little to generate and positively represent Indigenous knowledges.

Events and actions involving interactions with elements in nature and animals are found in some visual texts. In the 1974 children’s book, *The Friendly Wolf*, two Aboriginal people, a male and a female, walk in a sunflower field behind a very large, grey wolf, about twice their size (Goble & Goble, front cover). In the 1988 text, *How the Birch Tree Got Its Stripes*, a Cree boy is shown in the middle of page, screaming, with legs and arms spread wide, held by trees with arms and hands depicted on either side of the boy's body. The trees' hands grip the boy's extended arms (Littlechild, p. 21). In the visual text from the 2003 text, *Brother Bear*, an elderly Aboriginal man stands behind a large bear in the foreground with both arms raised, motioning with his body to stop (Marsoli, pp. 24-25). The artist positioned the viewer to view the animal as

vulnerable and the Aboriginal male as concerned and helpful. These interactions with nature and animals show cognition that many Indigenous beliefs are respectful of nature, in recognition of Indigenous knowledges.

Aboriginal peoples are commonly depicted gathered together around a fire, often in celebration. The 1960 visual text in *Injun Summer* shows twelve Aboriginal males gathered around a smoking fire. Three dance, while two beat handheld drums, and three smoke pipes as vibrant orange and red watercolours dance across the page (McCutcheon & Erickson, pp. 82-83). Similar to this scene, in the visual text in *Indians: The First Americans*, published in 1970, six Aboriginal males dance around a fire with tools and sticks in hand while four males play various types of drums (Martin & Frankenberg, pp. 18-19). Musical drumming is common, as the bunny on the front cover of the 1973 book *Indian Bunny* has its paw extended over a freestanding drum with lacing, as if to be playing the drum (Bornstein).

Gatherings by the fire appear in visual texts from the 1990s and 2000s, but often show a small family engaged in eating a meal, rather than a large tribe dancing with music. In the 1992 text, *Big Bird Visits Navajo Country*, the artist showed a Navajo family conversing and enjoying each other's company outdoors around the fire, as characters sit around a smoking campfire with plates and spoons in hand (Alexander & Swanson, pp. 12-13). A family meal is also shown in *War of 1812: Western Hooves of Thunder*, published in 2009, as five people sit at a table eating corn and chicken, in front of fireplace with a rifle hanging above it (Misiak & Paterson, p. 18). While the fire remained a constant from the 1960s through until the 2000s, there was an apparent shift to family-centred gatherings around the fire, rather than tribal celebratory gatherings. This change may be in recognition of contemporary, Western culture that emphasizes the single-

family unit rather than a tribal community. It may indicate the Aboriginal family is more Westernized and therefore separated from their tribe. It may also reflect loss of Aboriginal identity and heritage experienced by many Indigenous peoples due to forced assimilation.

In summary, there are many commonalities across the decades concerning actions, activities and events, and some changes. Visual texts in the 1960s showed Aboriginal peoples engaged in barbaric behavior and these representations may perpetuate societal myths about Aboriginal peoples as savages. A few visual texts from the 1980s and 1990s continued to show barbaric actions, but more visual texts began to display positive, “civil” Aboriginal actions. In the 1960s and 1970s, distinct gender roles were evident through character actions in some of the visual texts. Some visual texts embraced Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing through the portrayal of Aboriginal actions. Gatherings around a fire changed from a common tribal dance in celebration in the 1960s and 1970s, to a smaller family group around the fire engaged in eating a meal in the 1990s and 2000s.

Absence or Presence of Women and Girls

The portrayal of all characters within the visual texts raised several questions about the presence, or often absence, of female characters. These questions centered around women and girls of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal identity, as I often asked, “Why is there such a difference in the ratio between the genders?;” “How are females represented?;” and “Why is there such a lack or absence of females?”

In the 1960s, the visual texts seldom included depictions of female characters. In the 1960 text *Injun Summer*, twelve Aboriginal males are depicted while women are absent from this visual text (McCutcheon & Erikson, pp. 82-83). This absence of females and strong presence of

Aboriginal males persists in the 1965 book *Crazy Horse: Sioux Warrior* (LaMonte Meadowcroft & Cary, pp. 38-39) where I see three Aboriginal males depicted with bow and arrows aimed at one another.

When female characters were included in visual texts, attention was given to whether the females depicted were fully or partially shown, as well as turned away or facing the viewer. In the 1964 book, *Indian Children of America*, two Aboriginal children are shown in the selected visual text: a boy and a girl (Farquhar, p. 32). The boy stands tall on the left side of the page, while the girl sits cross-legged in the bottom right corner. She is turned away from the viewer, showing only side profile. The boy looks down at the girl and the girl looks up at the boy. This, and the physical stance of the characters, displays a visual hierarchy from the top of the page, where the boy stands, to the bottom, where this girl looks up at him from below, that showcases the imbalance of power between the genders during this era. In the 1960s, middle class women, who were the prevailing popular representation of femininity, generally worked predominantly in the family home, and all women lacked power and equality in the workplace and in politics compared to men.

Females and Aboriginal peoples continue to be disadvantaged by the visual text in the 1969 children's book, *Granny and the Indians* (Parish & Turkle, pp. 32-33). This particular visual text shows the presence of one White female, portrayed as vulnerable, among nine Aboriginal peoples. Two of these nine Aboriginal males carry a screaming White "Granny" with her feet up in the air (Parish & Turkle, 1969, pp. 32-33). While the verbal text of this story may provide additional information regarding the artist and author's intent, the visual text itself implies that Aboriginal peoples are savage kidnappers, and together, have collaborated to capture

a White, female, grandmother.

As awareness of women's rights issues became part of mainstream society in the 1970s, there were some changes involving the portrayal of women and girls in some of the visual texts of this study. Unlike the books prior to the late 1960s, some visual texts documented female relationships, and females as happy and active. The visual collage in the 1969 book, *How Summer Came to Canada* (Cleaver & Toye, pp. 22-23), depicts an Aboriginal woman, side profile, who seems to be looking toward a horizon. A Navajo mother and daughter relationship is captured visually as two females stand in loving embrace while observing a desert sky in the 1971 book, *Annie and the Old One* (Miles & Parnall, pp. 16-17). An Inuit girl is independent in nature and smiling with her mouth open and eyes wide, and the artist takes the stance that the Inuit girl is content, calm, and an explorer found on the front cover of the 1985 book, *Very Last First Time* (Andrews & Wallace, front cover). While emotionally warm portrayals of women were beginning to surface during this time, oppression was still a very serious issue for Aboriginal women and girls. Smith (2005) raises the issue that one of the most devastating forms of oppression was the mass sterilization of Native women in the 1970s. "Between 25 and 50% of Native women between the ages of 15 and 44 were sterilized" (as cited in Dixon, 2012, p. 35).

As these horrible acts of injustice were forced upon Aboriginal women in the 1970s, attention focused on the oppressive realities faced by Aboriginal peoples and their communities. The need for Aboriginal activism grew during the 1960s and 1970s. In the United States, the 'Red Power Movement' "used social protest to demand that the government honor treaty obligations by providing resources, education, housing and healthcare to alleviate poverty" (Plutte & Fortier, 2001). The efforts of supporters of this movement are well documented in the

PBS documentary, *Alcatraz Is Not an Island* (Plutte & Fortier, 2001). The film explains that the central goals of the movement were to build Aboriginal colleges, create Aboriginal education programs, and put in place museums and cultural centers to begin the healing process after centuries of cultural repression (Plutte & Fortier, 2001). While the movement declined in the late 1970s, Plutte and Fortier (2001) explain:

The Red Power Movement accomplished many of its goals. By the early 1980s, over 100 Indian studies programs had been created in the United States. Tribal museums opened, and the United Nations recognized an international indigenous rights movement... fighting [continued] for Indian rights in land and grazing rights battles; protesting athletic team Indian mascots; and working for the repatriation of sacred objects taken from Indian land.

While members of the Red Power Movement succeeded in bringing Aboriginal issues of equity to the forefront of society and creating new opportunities for Aboriginal education, Aboriginal gender inequities in children's literature were still apparent, as indicated by the visual texts.

Positive and negative portrayals of the role of women persisted throughout the 1970s and 1980s, but the absence of women and girls and the presence of males remained in several of the selected visual texts such as *Indians: The First Americans* from 1970 (Martin & Frankenberg, pp. 18-19), *The People and Places Book* from 1974 (Fadiman, pp. 56-57), *Pocahontas* from 1985 (Santrey & Wenzel, p. 19), and *Death of the Iron Horse* from 1987 (Goble, front cover).

Some visual texts showed European Colonial influences on Aboriginal women. In the 1985 children's book, *Indians of the Plains*, ten Aboriginal women stand among sixteen Aboriginal males (Bains & Baxter, pp. 26-27). All ten women are shown in long skirts and

blouses, and four show crosses on their blouses. Some clothing is patterned polka dots or stripes. The message that I gathered from this visual text was that the women are "civilized" in accordance with European standards since they are depicted wearing European clothing. In contrast, the men are shown wearing almost nothing and engaged in fighting.

The presence of female characters became more common in the 1990s, but women were still portrayed in some negative ways that may inform gender stereotypes. In *Walt Disney's Peter Pan*, published in 1996, an Aboriginal girl sits in a boat with two White males standing above her. She has ropes wrapped around her tiny body (Coco & Dias, p. 13). White males are advantaged by the power relations in this text as the illustrator takes the stance that a young female is inferior and can be dominated by powerful, White males.

There seems to be an equal presence of both males and females in the 1993 book, *Powwow* (Ancona, 1993, p. 14). Men are absent from the visual text in the 1990 text, *Little Firefly: An Algonquin Legend*, and three Aboriginal women are present (Cohlene & Reasoner, pp. 10-11). The woman in the foreground appears sad, as a single green tear drops from her black eye slit. Two Algonquin girls appear in the background far away, both with an arm on one another's back (Cohlene & Reasoner, 1990, pp. 10-11). The message in this visual text seems to indicate that the two females embracing in the background have something to do with the reason why the girl is crying. This message made me question if this portrayal may be reflective of lived experience, as well as why males and non-Aboriginals do not appear. These depictions may contribute to negative stereotypes that label women as gossipers, vicious, and boastful, and thereby harm the idea of women and girls as united.

Little Firefly: An Algonquin Legend exemplifies the need for the advocacy initiative of

the Canadian Indigenous Women's Movement that aims to unite Aboriginal women. In her article, "The Womb is to the Nation as the Heart is to the Body: Ethnopolitical Discourses of the Canadian Indigenous Women's Movement," Jo-Anne Fiske (1996) discusses the political struggles of Canadian Aboriginal women "to achieve full citizenship within their cultural communities and to restore the dignity their foremothers knew prior to European colonization" (p. 65). Fiske (1996) goes on to describe how Aboriginal women may experience feelings of disconnection or exclusion from their cultural communities, "whether by colonial legacies such as the Indian Act or by internalization of Euro-Canadian patriarchy" (p. 76). Ouellette (2002) offers a difference of perspectives between Aboriginal women and non-Aboriginal feminists, "As colonized persons, Canada's Indigenous women may view their oppression differently from those of middle-class Euro-Canadian feminists" (p. 12). The Canadian Indigenous Women's Movement is distinguished from other feminist movements since it provides an alternative to most Aboriginal organizations, which have a tendency to be male dominated (Ouellette, 2002).

An organization central to the movement is the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), formed in 1974. The organization's 2010 report, "What Their Stories Tell Us: Research Findings from the Sisters in Spirit Initiative," identifies a national crisis relating to the murdered and missing Aboriginal female victims in the Canadian West. An internal group in the NWAC, called 'Sisters in Spirit,' developed the report to contribute to the prevention, education, and healing involving the mysterious deaths of these Aboriginal women. The 2010 report specifies that there have been 582 recorded cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls (Native Women's Association of Canada). The NWAC's Sisters in Spirit report, "Between 2000 and 2008, 153 cases of murder have been identified...The majority of women and

girls...were murdered, while 115 women and girls are still missing” (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2010, p. ii). Shockingly, almost half of the murder cases have yet to be solved (Native Women’s Association of Canada, 2010). These statistics reveal a Canadian tragedy that contributes to the continued oppression of Aboriginal women and may be the cause of fear, anxiety, terror, or heartache, in response to these atrocities. Such ongoing suffering may be evidenced in visual texts in children’s literature.

Published in 1992, *The Rough-Face Girl* is an Algonquin Cinderella story. The girl portrayed on the cover eventually bathes in a lake to become beautiful and then marries the Invisible Being (Martin & Shannon). The book’s front cover is a portrayal of an Aboriginal woman that made me sensitive to the spirit of women. The Algonquin female is beaten, battered, and wrapped in bandages (Martin & Shannon, 1992, front cover). Aboriginal women are disadvantaged by this visual text. This visual text supports the position that this young woman is vulnerable and self-conscious. This woman stands alone, without the presence of other Aboriginal females, males, or contemporary characters. She is portrayed as wounded, and some may assume she has been beaten. The message sent to readers once they look into this character’s eye and see the scars and bandages is that she is fearful, and in harm, and it makes the viewer wish to take her hands down to reveal her covered face. She stares straight out at me. I feel like she is crying out for "Help!" This made me question whether this visual text hides, acknowledges, or educates viewers about messages attached to the horrific way this woman is portrayed.

The way that the Algonquin female is depicted on the front cover of the book, *The Rough-Face Girl* (Martin & Shannon, 1992), may be reflective of real lived realities of

Aboriginal women familiar with abuse. “Native women are considered inferior under patriarchal domination and are four times more likely to be abused than White women” (Dixon, 2012, p. 35). *The Rough-Face Girl* was written at a time just subsequent to the 1980s, when the issue of battered women and violence against women was raised to mainstream attention. In fact, in 1989, the Ontario Native Women’s Association published the report, “Breaking Free: A Proposal for Change to Aboriginal Family Violence.” The document raises awareness about how issues of family violence impact Aboriginal families. It also provides some revealing statistics about incidences of family violence, detailing that the frequency of occurrences in “Aboriginal communities is eight times higher than the average for Canadian society as a whole” (Ontario Native Women’s Association, 1989, p. 7). The vast difference in exposure to acts of violence between populations may be attributed to a number of reasons. Research conducted by the Native Women’s Association of Canada (2010) reported that the “intergenerational impact and resulting vulnerabilities of colonization and state policies—such as residential schools...are underlying factors in the outcomes of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and girls” (p. i). Although the children's book, *The Rough-Face Girl*, targets child audiences, issues of violence and abuse may be sensitive for children. However, this topic remains important to explore in a safe learning environment where critical conversations are valued. If such a socially loaded visual text goes unquestioned, this text may aid in informing a child’s realm of accepted knowledge.

While a number of visual texts portray women alone in vulnerable situations, others are markedly positive and show women who are strong and support one another in female family relationships. Warm, positive representations of females align with Indigenous knowledges, as

Ojibwa Elder and artist, Art Solomon explains:

The woman is the foundation on which Nations are built. She is the heart of her Nation. If that heart is weak, the people are weak. If her heart is strong and her mind is clear, then the Nation is strong and knows its purpose. The woman is the centre of everything. (Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989, p. ii)

Solomon's sentiments are reflected in some visual texts. Similar to the mother-daughter loving embrace in the 1971 children's book, *Annie and the Old One* (Miles & Parnall, pp. 16-17), the visual text in the 1993 book, *Big Bird Visits Navajo Country*, captures another female relationship as Navajo family members are depicted sitting around the fire, including a mother holding a young girl (Alexander & Swanson, pp. 12-13). While published two decades apart, both of these visual texts are set in the desert and centre on Navajo families. Also, in both texts there is a warm, loving connection between female Navajo family members. This consistency in positive female roles and relationships sparks questions about the role of women in the Navajo culture.

In the documentary film, *Miss Navajo* (2007), the wide range of differences between the role of women in the Navajo culture and patriarchal Western culture become evident:

Navajo society is matrilineal, and clan identity comes from the female and not the male. In a traditional introduction, a Navajo person first introduces himself or herself by naming the maternal clan and then the paternal clan. Women occupy a strong position, one derived from Changing Woman, the Navajos' principal deity. Women are the potters and weavers, crafts they have been practicing for centuries. Also, women have traditionally owned the land and livestock, passing these possessions down to their daughters, who have been

trained to manage them. (Luther, 2007)

Upon this further investigation, and examining the continuity in the portrayal of the visual texts in both *Annie and the Old One* (1971) and *Big Bird Visits Navajo Country* (1992), although two decades apart, it is made clear that Navajo women have instrumental leadership roles that are passed down through female generations. Central to this matriarchal lineage is, quite possibly, a strong female family bond, as depicted in the two visual texts described.

Positive female portrayals became more commonplace in the 2000s. In the visual text in the 2000 book, *Sacagawea: Lewis and Clark's Shoshone Guide*, the message is that a positive, mutually caring relationship exists between the Aboriginal male and female depicted. There is no indication of male dominance, as indicated by the female positioned physically higher than the male (Robertson & Thompson, pp. 15-16). In the 2000 children's book, *Sky Sisters*, two young Ojibway sisters are laying down making snow angels on a snowy hill in this birds-eye view landscape (Bourdeau Waboose & Deines, pp. 26-27). Both girls are shown in a positive light as they enjoy this playful snow activity together.

Unlike earlier visual texts with blatant gender roles, some of the visual texts from the late 2000s require a keen eye and active questioning to allow for the deconstruction of the image. In the 2009 text, *War of 1812: Western Hooves of Thunder*, the visual text positions the viewer to observe all parties on a physically even level as they sit at a table, although the table is divided according to gender: four females sit on one side and two males on the other (Misiak & Paterson, p. 18). This imbalance is reminiscent of the subtle inequities that may go unnoticed if critical visual literacy skills are not utilized. Two Inuit peoples are shown on the front cover of the 2008 book, *Neèko Nambe Ik'oo K'eezho: The Old Man with the Otter Medicine* (Blondin & Beaverho).

There is no indication of whether the two characters are female or male. While gender neutrality may be perceived as positive since one cannot claim an absence of women, it may also be perceived as negative since it neglects to identify a female presence or celebrate women. Questions then arise about how visual “blindness” impacts or impedes empowerment.

Although there was a shift in the 2000s to seeing more females in positive roles, the dominance of males in visual texts is an ongoing issue, as witnessed in the 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas* (Korman & Williams, p. 19), *North American Indian* from 2005 (Murdoch, front cover), and *Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws: The Voyageurs* from 2008 (Meyer & Solomon, p. 16). Gender inequities remain an ever-present concern for books across the decades and raise questions for further study in a multitude of other topics in children’s literature.

While there have been a number of changes since the 1960s in regards to the portrayal of women and girls in visual texts depicting Aboriginal peoples, there is also evidence of continuity. In particular is the lack of women and girls accompanied by the dominance of males. Also, in visual texts across the decades females are sometimes shown in negative ways, portrayed as vulnerable, controlled, kidnapped, or dominated. Other negative portrayals show females conniving and socially cruel to one another. While positive relationships involving females became more common in the 2000s, the absence of women and girls remains an ever-present concern. In examining the fifty visual texts included in this study I was unable to identify any images of females as heroines.

Setting in the Distant Past

A major theme that became apparent during exploration of the visual texts was the setting in the distant past as indicated by clothing, actions or events, and the lack of contemporary

culture or society involving indicators such as structures, objects, or characters. Many of the visual texts seem to be set during the period of European exploration and trading, as far back as the early 17th Century when Champlain encountered Aboriginal peoples, and through the period of British and French colonization of North America, including the French and Indian War in the mid 1700s when Aboriginal peoples fought with the British and the French.

Eight out of the ten books from the 1960s illustrate a setting in the distant past. The Aboriginal children depicted in the 1964 book, *Indian Children of America*, (Farquhar, 1964, p. 32), for example, show no signs of contemporary influence. The front cover of the 1968 book, *My Indian Book*, offers viewers a look at an Aboriginal adult male standing in front of four teepees that are far in the background (Grant & Merryweather). In his right hand, he holds a long spear with five feathers attached. In his left hand is a circular shield with a red bird symbol painted on it and several feathers. He wears two feathers in his long black hair. He wears a dark, decorative necklace. In no way does the illustration suggest any influence of the era in which it was written. There is no representation of Aboriginal peoples living in contemporary society.

Aboriginal writer and professor of English at the University of Guelph, Thomas King, in his book *the Truth About Stories*, discusses the relationship between Aboriginal peoples in the construction and their placement in a particular version of the past by colonial discourses. King (2003) relates:

What Native writers discovered, I believe, was that the North American past, the one that had been created in novels and histories, the one that had been heard on radio and seen on theatre screens and on television, the one that had been part of every school curriculum for the last two hundred years, the past was unusable, for it had not only trapped Native people

in a time warp, it also insisted that our past was all we had. No present. No future. And to believe in such a past is to be dead. (p. 106)

The visual text in the 1961 book, *Little Chief*, portrays White characters in the same way as the Aboriginal boy (Hoff, pp. 62-63). The only distinction between the characters is the clothing. The White males wear contemporary plaid, buttoned shirts and jeans clothes and the White females wear knee length 1960s dresses. The Aboriginal boy is clothed in brown pants, a fringed shirt, and a headband with a single feather in it (Hoff, 1961, pp. 62-63). This difference in clothing sets this boy in attire of the distant past during a contemporary time. The trend in the 1960s to portray Aboriginal peoples in the past, as a part of distant history, indicates a lack of recognition that Aboriginal peoples exist in modern society. This notion is ignorant of the preservation of Aboriginal cultures.

Similarly, visual texts in the 1970s rarely contained indicators of the contemporary era. It was refreshing to find an example bucking this trend in a Newbery Honor Book, *Annie and the Old One*, published in 1971. Both mother and daughter wear contemporary clothing and a school bus is shown nearby (Miles & Parnall, pp. 16-17). Besides this example, however, eight out of the ten visual texts from the 1970s showcase settings in the distant past, including texts from such books as, *North American Indians* from 1977 (Gorsline & Gorsline, pp. 8-9), *When Clay Sings* from 1972 (Baylor & Bahti, pp. 16-17), and *The Fire Stealer* from 1979 (Cleaver, pp. 1-2).

In the visual text explored in the 1970 children's book, *Indians: The First Americans*, the artist is taking the stance that this scene is in the distant past (Martin & Frankenberg, pp. 18-19). During observation, I commented, "We do not hear the voices of the individuals portrayed because they are depicted as a part of distant history. If one was to reconstruct this image they

would first have to ask how this distant recollection reflects Aboriginal culture, if it does at all?"

The front cover of *Three Little Indians*, a book published in 1974 by the National Geographic Society, shows the viewer a look at three children from differing Aboriginal tribes, from a historical perspective set in the distant past (Stuart & Glanzman, front cover). The children are garbed in traditional clothing in three different locations, but collaged beside one another. Again it is important to remember what King (2003) tells us when Aboriginal peoples are primarily situated in the past through the work of White colonial discourses, it means they have no present or no future.

Nonetheless, in some visual texts, multiple time periods for settings were shown. The visual text from the 1974 book, *The People and Places Book*, shows an adult male sitting in a 1970s era lounge chair with a young boy, both wearing contemporary clothing (Fadiman, pp. 56-57). Thought clouds drift up from the adult male's head. In a large overhead cloud, the viewer sees a collage of images moving from left to right. I am shown a ship afloat with sails, four white males in Renaissance-like attire holding flags, a large bust of a White European explorer, three Aboriginal males racing on horses toward a White 'cowboy' riding on a horse in the desert (Fadiman, 1974, pp. 56-57). The White man and boy in the chair are evidently associated with the decade when the book was published, the 1970s. The variety of images in the dream cloud made me question whether these memories are a part of the past, and whether they remain in the past. I also questioned if this was an account of history or a fairy tale.

Contemporary portrayals of Aboriginal peoples in society became more common in the 1980s and 1990s. Published in 1986, *Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?* takes the viewer into a 1980s elementary classroom, where a diverse group of children are together looking at a Cree

boy's moccasin that he holds up for all to see (Wheeler & Bekkering, pp. 10-11). In the visual text observed in the 1989 text, *A Girl from Cat River*, a contemporary Aboriginal character is shown: a Cree adult male with short, brown hair, parted at the side. He wears a brown buttoned sweater as he plays a violin in front of an audience of three (Carpick, p. 99). In the visual text in the 1992 Golden Book, *Big Bird Visits Navajo Country*, a modern Navajo family shares a traditional meal around the campfire with Sesame Street character, Big Bird. Modern indicators include the clothing that family members wear and a modern camper vehicle depicted in the background (Alexander & Swanson, pp. 12-13).

The Kids Can Press children's books, *Morning on the Lake*, published in 1997 (Bourdeau Waboose & Reczuch, p. 23) and *Sky Sisters*, published in 2000 (Bourdeau Waboose & Deines, pp. 26-27), are wonderful examples of a harmonious blend that embraces the legacy of Aboriginal customs and Indigenous knowledges while portraying Aboriginal peoples as active in modern day. In *Morning on the Lake*, an Ojibway grandfather and grandson look up at the night sky. Both wear blue jeans and baggy open jackets with moccasins. The grandfather's hair is long, grey and tied in a ponytail, while his grandson has a mushroom cut, a very common hairstyle in the 1990s (Bourdeau Waboose & Reczuch, 1997, p. 23). This visual text informs viewers that Anishinawbe families embrace Indigenous knowledges, as indicated by the moccasins and star gazing, while keeping with the modern age. Also, the grandfather's long, growing hair may represent sweet grass, symbolic of kindness for many in Anishinawbe culture.

The change from seeing an overwhelming number of texts set in the distant past in the 1960s and 1970s to an increase in more contemporized themes in the 1980s and 1990s is met with opposing forces in children's books adapted from mainstream films in the 1990s and 2000s.

The very popular Golden Book collections include the 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas* (Korman & Williams, p. 19), set in the Colonial 17th century and the 1996 book, *Walt Disney's Peter Pan* (Coco & Dias, p. 13), portraying Aboriginal peoples in traditional garb in the distant Neverland, a dream-like place that is imaginary and reminiscent of the “imaginative worlds of [Indigenous] peoples and nations whose own histories were erupted and radically reformulated by European imperialism” (Smith, 1999, p. 19). Disney based books portray Aboriginal peoples in the distant past once again, as shown in the 2003 book, *Brother Bear*, as viewers see an elderly Inuit man from a post-Ice Age North America (Marsoli, pp. 24-25). Disney children’s literature contributions with Aboriginal representations continue to involve settings from the distant past. The 2013 Disney film, *The Lone Ranger* (Bruckheimer & Verbinski), is the newest addition to the trend. One of the main characters is an Aboriginal adult male named “Tonto,” played by actor Johnny Depp. If this film is adapted into a children’s book, as other Disney films have been, it will be interesting to see how it is comprised and whether there is a historical focus. However, Banks (1993) reminds readers that while:

Some films and other popular media forms do make positive contributions to racial understanding...there are many ways to view such films, and both positive and negative examples of popular culture need to become a part of the classroom discourse and analysis. Like all human creations, even these positive films are imperfect. (p. 26)

Colonial representations of the distant past have also been uncovered in non-mainstream books from recent decades. For example, the 2008 children’s book, *Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws: The Voyageurs*, created by Meyer and Solomon based out of Ottawa, Ontario, is intentionally set during the Colonial period. Verbal text accompanies the visual texts, stating, “In

the 18th century, the world is becoming a smaller place. The vast Anishinabek Nation has more neighbours with each passing season” (p. 1). This comic visual text showcases an account of history for the purpose of teaching about Anishinabek culture and customs. These visual texts are set in the distant past, but send positive lessons and messages about Aboriginal peoples.

In conclusion, several of the visual texts portraying Aboriginal people and knowledges are set in the distant past as indicated by clothing, characters, structures, and objects. Contemporary portrayals are seldom found in the 1960s and 1970s, but become more prevalent in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Mainstream Disney books are all found to be set in the distant past, and sometimes in distant dreamlands. Some recent non-mainstream visual texts are set in the distant past for the purpose of teaching history from Aboriginal-oriented perspectives.

Balance of Power

Power and relations of power are an important consideration when exploring each visual text. A show of White dominance was a constant for some of the visual texts observed. The balance of power between superior and inferior circumstance can be understood from a visual perspective as indicated by the following: the visual proportions, stance, or positioning of characters; the ratio of Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal characters; the actions or events that are depicted; and the use of simple indicators such as size or colour.

In the 1960s, several of the visual texts showed dominant White characters, particularly males, in positions of power, and inferior Aboriginals, thus contributing to the social, political and economic disadvantaging of Aboriginal peoples. In the visual text explored in the 1961 children’s book, *Little Chief*, there is an overwhelming presence of White people, as the ratio is eight White characters to one Aboriginal boy, “Little Chief”. Other Aboriginal characters are

absent. In the cartoon drawing, a White adult man shakes hands with the boy, while looking down at him (Hoff, 1961, pp. 62-63). This is suggestive of White dominance. The visual text in the 1962 book, *The First Thanksgiving*, also shows a large number of White pilgrims, nineteen, compared to four Aboriginal males (Rogers & Lowenbein, pp. 24-25). In this visual text, the illustrator positions viewers to witness a dominance of White people. The artist positions viewers to see the pilgrims as "civilized," as they are sitting at a table, with heads bowed, praying. Aboriginal males, in contrast, are sitting on the ground away from the table and they make up a small portion of the two-page painting. Aboriginal peoples are shown with light brown skin and attire, while the White pilgrims wear clothes coloured in royal blues, whites, and rich plum. In this visual text, there is an imbalance of power in numbers, position, and colour choice, even though the technique of paint application is the same for both the Aboriginal peoples and the White pilgrims. White people are empowered by this visual text, while Aboriginal peoples appear to be inferior.

In the 1964 book, *Indian Children of America*, the young boy stands tall, looking down at the girl, positioning the viewer to see males as superior and females as inferior (Farquhar, p. 32). Upon observation of this, questions arose to me, such as, "How does the stance and positioning of figures within a visual text inform viewers about positions of power?" Alternatively, "How do power structures in dominant society inform, or rather, dictate, the positioning of figures within a visual text?" These questions came to mind when exploring the visual text in the 1966 book, *Come Over to My House* (LeSieg & Erdoes, p. 4). There is an Inuit boy in the visual text whose large white eyes look up at a White, male child. The Inuit boy is on the ground, on all fours, with two uncovered hands on the snow floor, while the White boy is wearing gloves, scarf, and ear

muffs and is positioned standing above the Inuit boy (LeSieg & Erdoes, 1966, p. 4). The artist positions viewers to see the Inuit as inferior and the White male as superior. The difference in attire could be a social class indicator that the White child can afford to stay warm, while the Inuit boy cannot. The White boy's voice is heard, since the visual text is suggestive of his point of view as he travels to various houses to see how they are different from his own home. The Inuit boy is categorized as the "other" in this light.

The visual text in the 1969 book, *Granny and the Indians*, is positioning the viewer to sympathize with White "Granny" as the Aboriginal peoples run while holding her captured in the air (Parish & Turkle, pp. 32-33). Although they are dominant in numbers, Aboriginal peoples, by their hostile act, are positioned in a negative light. At the same time, the visual text reveals, perhaps to a certain measure, the anxieties and fears that may be felt by White middle-class society informed by issues of race and racism.

Aboriginal inferiority was still coupled with White power and privilege in visual texts from the 1970s, although there were some examples of Aboriginal empowerment. Aboriginal peoples were reflected in a more positive light by the visual text in the 1971 book, *Annie and the Old One*, as a Navajo point of view is represented and non-Aboriginal identities are absent from this text (Miles & Parnall, pp. 16-17). Similarly, in the 1974 book, *The Friendly Wolf*, I only see an Aboriginal male and female with animals in nature (Goble & Goble, front cover), and in the 1979 book, *The Fire Stealer*, Ojibway peoples' voices to be heard as evidenced by an absence of "industry" or Western or European peoples or knowledges (Cleaver, pp. 1-2). However, this was uncommon for most visual texts of the time.

Oddly, Aboriginal peoples are given no voice in the 1973 book, *Indian Bunny*, as the only

character present is an animal bunny who wears a headband with a feather (Bornstein, front cover). In *The People and Places Book*, published in 1974, three Aboriginal males are outnumbered by eight White males. The two main characters shown at the bottom of the second page include a White male who wears glasses and a white collared dress shirt and tie, sitting in a lounge chair with his feet resting on a stool, while holding a newspaper. His right arm rests on a young White boy's shoulder. Both males are smiling, as thought clouds drift up from adult male's head (Fadiman, pp. 56-57). The white collared shirt and the fact that the adult male has his feet up while “lounging” is indicative of a middle or upper social class. The newspaper in hand and the dream cloud could be interpreted as a symbol for aspirations, knowledge, or intelligence. The visual communication between the adult and the boy, who could possibly be father and son, indicates that the adult male is teaching the boy and passing on his position of power to his White son. In the very same book, I see pages devoted to “People with Special Jobs” (Fadiman, 1974, pp. 36-41). The artist depicts 17 people, both male and female, working as police, firefighters, dentists, bakers, teachers, nurses, and doctors. All seventeen people are portrayed as White identities (Fadiman, 1974, pp. 36-41).

White dominance in visual texts continued into the 1980s, although it was met with much more resistance. In the 1986 book, *Where Did You Get Your Moccasins?*, all individuals are equally advantaged as students are shown in collaboration with one another in this visual text (Wheeler & Bekkering, pp. 10-11). There appears to be a balance of power and mutual respect during this moment of learning. Inuit people are advantaged and are given a voice on the front cover of the 1985 book, *Very Last First Time* (Andrews & Wallace). While there is evidence of Western knowledges, as proven by the small plane in the sky, I do not see any characters besides

a smiling Inuit girl in nature.

In the visual text in the 1985 children's book, *Indians of the Plains*, twenty-four Aboriginal people are shown standing in a semi-circle, observing two Aboriginal males fighting (Bains & Baxter, pp. 26-27). The message in the visual text is that in the absence of White characters, a group of Aboriginal peoples derived amusement by gathering and observing a physical fight between two of their own peoples. The Aboriginal peoples wear European clothing and religious symbols, showing Colonial control, while they witness the brutality of the brawl amongst their own people, positioning them as "uncivilized" and lacking in power.

White people are placed in a privileged position on the front cover of the 1987 book, *Death of the Iron Horse* (Goble). Illustrator Goble created a steam engine powered by a White male. The Aboriginal man chasing alongside the train on horseback is disadvantaged as the viewer is positioned to see him as the aggressor, while the White man is in a position of power. Aboriginal peoples portrayed as the aggressor with respect to White characters is a common theme in other visual texts as well. In the non-mainstream 1985 book, *Pocahontas*, the visual text showed a role reversal in dominance as three Aboriginal males are behind and seem to be pushing a White European male, "Captain Smith." One Aboriginal male is depicted holding the European male's arm (Santrey & Wenzel, p. 19). The text seems to be positioning the viewer to see the aggressive way that the Aboriginal males hold and push the European male. This reversal in dominance makes me question if there might be other visual texts with this theme. In the mainstream 1995 book, *Disney's Pocahontas*, a visual text displayed very similar content as the artist is positioning the viewer to sympathize with the White man as he is outnumbered and in pain (Korman & Williams, p. 19). White identities are advantaged since the point of view of

Indigenous peoples is not being represented. The question of who is powerful and who is powerless arises when considering visual texts where Aboriginal peoples are portrayed as aggressors imposing pain on White characters.

Power struggles continued in the visual texts of the 1990s and 2000s. The front cover of the 1992 book, *Encounter*, is a prime example of the continued presence of White dominance (Yolen & Shannon, front cover). A White explorer stands tall with clouds surrounding him. He wears a flowing cloak, rich garments, and looks down at a small, young, naked Aboriginal boy, who stares up from below, facing away from the viewer. The illustrator positions viewers to see the White explorer as dominant and the Aboriginal boy as inferior, as indicated by proportion, attire, colour choice, and position. The gigantic explorer is depicted as heroic, and the young boy stares up in awe. The boy is tiny, over-powered, and weak as the White explorer is large in proportion and his size takes up most of the image. Meanings can be derived from this text that the White man is advantaged and his voice is being heard. Aboriginal peoples are powerless and vulnerable by the choices made for the portrayal of this scene (Yolen & Shannon, 1992, front cover).

An uncommon balance of power appears in the visual text explored in the 2000 book, *The Golden Dollar: Legend of Sacagawea* (Fernandez, McIntyre, & Davis, p. 11). The illustrator took a positive stance by showing all people at the same height and size, all with mutually positive expressions. The Aboriginal woman holds her baby on her back very close to the White males (Fernandez, McIntyre, & Davis, 2000, p. 11). Assumptions may be made about a common friendliness and trust among characters, and the proximity between the baby and White males shows that both Aboriginal parents feel it is a comfortable and safe atmosphere. Mutual respect

between Aboriginal and White identities is shown in this visual text and there is no evidence of European or White dominance, but instead an even balance of power.

A reversal of the White dominance common in most visual texts occurs in the 2008 children's book, *Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws: The Voyageurs*, which shows a dominance or superiority of Aboriginal peoples (Meyer & Solomon, p. 16). The visual text portrays the White "bandits" as the "bad guys," positioning viewers to observe Aboriginal peoples as superior, while White men are shown as thieves and angry. The illustrator's stance seems to indicate that Aboriginal characters are outsmarting White characters and are engaged in positions of power.

Aboriginal peoples continue to be advantaged in the visual text in the 2000 book, *Sacagawea: Lewis and Clark's Shoshone Guide* (Robertson & Thompson, pp. 15-16). The positive expressions of the Shoshone couple depicted and the harmonious serenity of visual text are met with an absence of any non-Aboriginal identities. This places the Shoshone male and female at the centre in a positive position of power in this calm, serene environment. An overall sense of calm is portrayed as an Aboriginal character trait in the visual text found in the 2006 book, *Secret of the Dance* (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, p. 4). Six people stand in a kitchen: five Aboriginal family members and one White male "Indian Agent". The Aboriginal adult male looks healthy and happy as he talks to the White man who appears to be balding, fat, discontent, and uptight. The artist seems to be positioning the viewer to witness the anger and hostility of the White male met by the calm, content expression of the Aboriginal adult male (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, 2006, p. 4). Aboriginal peoples are advantaged by this visual text as it shows an Aboriginal person as powerful and confident, while White people are disadvantaged by the negative

portrayal of the angry White male.

The balance of power portrayed in the collection of visual texts differed from decade to decade. The visual texts from both the 1960s and 1970s showed evidence of an overall dominance of White power and privilege. Although some texts from the 1970s began to show an absence of non-Aboriginal identities, illustrators continued to visually show the perspective of White people, particularly males. White points of view label Aboriginal identities as “the other.” The visual texts of the 1980s continued to demonstrate an absence of non-Aboriginal identities, but some of these visual texts disadvantage Aboriginal peoples as they show European influences through clothing and religious symbols, as well as a lack of civility as evidenced by the actions or events engaged in by Aboriginal peoples, such as brawling. Other visual texts label Aboriginal peoples as the aggressors, harming White characters. These negative portrayals of Aboriginal dominance do not allow for Aboriginal voices to be heard and may still send meanings of White power and privilege as viewers will sympathize with White people in vulnerable circumstances. In the 1990s and 2000s, power struggles persisted with some visual texts showing White dominance, others showing an even balance of power, and some showing Aboriginal dominance. This shift in power from visual texts predominantly putting White people in positions of power in the 1960s and 1970s to some resistance in the 1980s and the eventual push for Aboriginal dominance in the 2000s reflects years of resisting Aboriginal oppression, longstanding in history.

Portrayal of Indigenous Knowledges

The portrayal of Indigenous knowledges was a component in some visual texts examined in this study. A connectedness with nature and the earth is central to Indigenous knowledges.

One of the commonalities for some of the visual texts explored was the use of earth tones and colours found in nature such as greens, blues, browns, and tans. These were used in a number of books from the more recent decades including *Indians of the Plains* from 1985 (Bains & Baxter, pp. 26-27), *Little Firefly: An Algonquin Legend* from 1990 (Cohlene & Reasoner, pp. 10-11), *The Golden Dollar: Legend of Sacagawea* from 2000 (Fernandez, McIntyre, & Davis, p. 11), *As Long as the Rivers Flow* from 2002 (Loyie, Brissenden, & Holmlund, p. 3), and *Brother Bear* from 2003 (Marsoli, pp. 24-25).

In the 1969 children's book, *How Summer Came to Canada*, the artist used mixed media (mixed methods and materials) to create a collage of a realistic scene, which was then photographed (Cleaver & Toye, pp. 22-23). Pine tree needles, birch bark, and other elements from the natural world were used as medium in this book to make representation blend with reality. The teepees were made with birch bark, while the natural setting includes a large yellow sun, white snowy mountains, and several pine trees made with actual pine branches. Aboriginal peoples are advantaged by how Indigenous knowledges are represented since the visual text has an immediate connectedness with nature. This unique blending of nature and art is in line with Battiste's (2005b) description of Indigenous knowledges as an intimate "directness with nature" (p. 130). A question that came to mind was, "Were these found materials in nature or did the artist tear them from the earth?" It is important that these items were utilized in a way that preserves nature and the dignity of Indigenous knowledges.

Some visual texts failed to show dignified representations of Indigenous knowledges. In the 1966 book, *Come Over to My House*, a cartoon white igloo takes the form of a dome with a small tunnel, with blocks of ice indicated by black lines (LeSieg & Erdoes, p. 4). The visual text

in the 1972 book, *A Color Picture Dictionary for Children: H to M*, shows two triangular teepees, one bright yellow and the other bright blue, with two red buffalos running behind them (Wright & Low, p. 184). Published in 1973, *Indian Bunny* shows a plump, yellow bunny standing on its hind legs next to a laced drum and looking up at a yellow moon with three, five-pointed yellow stars around it (Bornstein, front cover). While such simplistic cartoons may be seen as cute and do show symbols of Indigenous knowledge, such representations are reminiscent of tokenism, and may lead to stereotyping, which is ultimately inaccurate and harmful.

Indigenous knowledges were apparent and intricately woven into some visual texts, particularly in the 1971 book, *Annie and the Old One* (Miles & Parnall, pp. 16-17). In it, the visual texts are colourless, with simple lines showing a coyote and bird depicted in a unified, spiritual mass in the desert sky. The simplistic nature and ornate beauty of the drawing sheds light on exactly what the artist intended for the viewer to focus on, the Navajo peoples and knowledges. The spiritual mass of combined living creatures holds meanings centred on spirituality, a connectedness to the earth, sky, and living creatures, family, and love. Upon further exploration, the following verbal text accompanies this visual text, “Your grandmother is one of those who live in harmony with all nature - with earth, coyote, birds in the sky. They know more than many will ever learn” (Miles & Parnall, 1971, p. 16). This verbal text quotation speaks to the connection between verbal and visual texts and in both forms of text, the recognition of Indigenous knowledges. This aligns with Battiste's (2005b) criteria for Indigenous knowledges, inclusive of Indigenous “kinship with the spirit forces of the earth” (p. 128).

Similar subject matter is portrayed in a very different way in the 1988 children’s picture

book, *A Promise is a Promise* (Munsch, Kusugak, & Krykorka, pp. 12-13). A young Inuit girl is surrounded by blue faced "Qallupilluit" with waving hair, feathers, hands with long fingers and long fingernails and two skulls. All are enclosing around the young, frowning Inuit girl. The artist takes the stance that the Qallupilluit are something to be feared. This visual text is similar to the one in *Annie and the Old One* since they both show young girls observing spirit-like masses, but the spirit form in *A Promise is a Promise* is viewed in a negative way by the main character, whereas the characters are inspired and in "awe" of the spirit formation in *Annie and the Old One*. A third visual text contains spirit-like forms in the 2000 book, *Sky Sisters*, that may advantage those who appreciate Indigenous knowledges or Anishinawbe Ojibway culture, beliefs, or stories (Bourdeau Waboose & Deines, pp. 26-27). The night sky is drawn with thousands of stars and the Northern Lights are painted with bright colours in the sky, while two figures, "Sky Spirits," can be seen within the Northern Lights holding hands and dancing. Similar to *Annie and the Old One*, the artist took the stance that nature is a thing of beauty and Indigenous knowledge is valuable and awe inspiring. The message in this story is that the two young Ojibway sisters, who make snow angels beneath the "Sky Spirits," are interconnected with nature, but make up a tiny piece of the larger puzzle. The three visual texts that show spirit formations were published in the 1970s, 1980s, and 2000s, showing a recurring presence of spirituality in nature, embracing this area of Indigenous knowledges across time.

Several of the visual texts showed active Aboriginal communities at work or play. These representations displayed several different forms of Indigenous knowledges. In the 1977 book, *North American Indians*, the scene is set outside in an Onondagan village (Gorsline & Gorsline, pp. 8-9). There is a long house depicted with a wooden fence behind it. A second wooden house

is in the process of being built. A fire is shown with a pot hanging above the flames. A rabbit and three fish hang off of a wooden stick. Fields and water are shown in the distance. Twenty-two Onondagan villagers are shown in action, all doing something, from building a wooden house to making moccasins. One man walks, carrying a killed deer over his shoulders. A baby hangs in a papoose on a tree (Gorsline & Gorsline, 1977, pp. 8-9). By observing this painted illustration, the viewer is shown that this particular village was a functioning, happy one. The community was supportive, embraced Indigenous knowledges, and life looks enjoyable. I do not see much evidence of Eurocentrism.

In contrast, the visual texts on the front cover of the 2005 non-fiction book, *North American Indian*, include six photographs of items that may have been made or used in a village such as the Onondagan one previously described, including a canoe, a leather bracelet, a basket full of coloured corn, a teepee, and a wooden circular carving with several faces carved and painted (Murdoch). One must remain mindful that these “broad categories and classification systems that control and represent Indigenous symbols, objects, and knowledge...separate, distinguish among, and categorize Indigenous symbols and objects according to a mainstream system without regard to their relationship and use in distinct Indigenous cultures” (Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2007, p. 9). The artifacts shown together on the front cover of *North American Indian* (Murdoch, 2005) may be from differing times or various tribes, but because they are photographed and grouped together, viewers may accept them as combined forms of Indigenous knowledges. Critical visual literacy practice equips viewers with the ability to deconstruct collaged combinations, such as this one, from sterile museum-like artifacts to reveal each individual photo’s origins, histories and connections to Indigenous knowledges.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The exploration of the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges in visual texts from children's picture books published between the 1960s and 2000s raises many questions and issues. Social changes over the span of the 1960s and through the decades to 2010 are showcased in the selection of visual texts and will be discussed. Furthermore, this discussion will focus on the continuity and changes in visual texts found in children's books published within these decades.

The progression of social consciousness in visual texts over time

As the visual text in each children's book is, in part, a product of its time of publication, viewers lay witness to the political, economical, and social shifts in society and broader culture through the ages. The way in which these changes impact children's literature and visual texts within children's picture books may emulate institutional and individual mindsets of each respective decade.

Racial inequality is of prime concern in the visual texts from the 1960s and 1970s. White power and privilege were observed in several of the visual texts as White characters outnumbered Aboriginal characters. Most visual texts displayed White points of view, labeling Aboriginal peoples as inferior and "the other" as seen in visual texts from the 1966 book, *Come Over to My House* (LeSieg & Erdoes, p. 4), and the 1974 text, *The People and Places Book* (Fadiman, pp. 56-57), which both showcase White characters' perspectives of Aboriginal peoples.

At the time, there were very few or minimal representations of Aboriginal peoples or

other minority groups in children's picture books. The visual representations of these minorities that did appear were presented in an inferior way. The efforts of Martin Luther King Junior and the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-1960s in the United States raised the consciousness of North Americans with regards to racial prejudice and discrimination. During this period there was an emergence of marginalized groups standing up for their rights and civil liberties in pursuit of equity. One of the earliest children's picture books to feature a Black main character was *Snowy Day*, published in 1962 (Keats). It was recognized a year later with the Caldecott Honor for illustrations. However, as more books with Black characters were published, not all visual texts advantaged Black people or portrayed them in just ways. Allen (1996) writes:

Traditional representations of Blacks in children's literature and educational media have been characterized by omission or exaggeration. This pattern of selective tradition of domination and subordination of Blacks in children's literature favours the perspectives and world views of the dominant social group, and tends to focus on exotic, sensational or negative representations, based on the persistent and pervasive use of over generalizations, distortions, misconceptions, misrepresentations, stereotypes and demeaning views of Blacks. (p. 151)

Despite the fact that other non-White identities were beginning to appear in children's literature, there were still no Aboriginal children's picture books with positive representations, as evidenced by the discriminatory 1960s visual texts from the data set. Aboriginal peoples were commonly portrayed from the distant past as bare chested, red or vibrant orange in colour, with angry or stern expressions, engaged in barbaric or savage-like behaviour. As issues of racial discrimination and prejudice came to the forefront of society with freedom marches and civil

rights events and advocacies, the changing trends in society were mirrored in visual texts from the 1970s and the transformation in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Racist material and White dominance was still found in visual texts from the 1970s, but a few examples of resistance appeared, such as with the 1971 book, *Annie and the Old One* (Miles & Parnall, pp. 16-17).

In the 1980s, the viewer began to see contemporary Aboriginal characters portrayed in ways that moved away from racist practices, fully clothed, smiling with expressive eyes, engaged in activities that embraced Indigenous knowledges. In 1996, Allen writes “in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of multicultural children’s picture books available that depict characters of various racial and ethnic backgrounds” (p. 147). While this was true of children’s picture books with Aboriginal content in the 1990s and 2000s, books published during this time that were mainstream film adaptations still resorted back to portraying Aboriginal peoples and knowledges in inaccurate, demeaning, and generalized ways that negatively disadvantaged Aboriginal peoples.

By the 2000s, the viewer began to see transformation toward improvement in the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples with respect to their physical appearances and engagement in activities, placing them in positive environments inclusive of Indigenous knowledges. The viewer began to see Aboriginal peoples in contemporary settings. Along with this, Western influence is evident.

Over the five decades of this study, racism was exemplified in the visual texts in numerous ways. “Racism is frequently manifested as processes of exclusion, subordination, marginalization, bias, and discriminations” (Kanu, 2011, p. 48). All of these processes were visually apparent in the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples in the visual texts.

Gender inequality is another concern in visual texts. In the 1960s, I saw very few Aboriginal women and a dominance of men in the children's picture books. The Second Wave "Women's movement...sprang to life in the 1960s and 1970s" (Backhouse, 1992, p. 9). The treatment of Aboriginal women in visual texts similarly changed and evolved over the decades. Women and girls began to appear more frequently, although their roles often remained subordinate, as exemplified by the visual text from the 1990 book, *Little Firefly: An Algonquian Legend* (Cohlene & Reasoner, pp. 10-11) and the 1992 book, *The Rough-Face Girl* (Martin & Shannon, front cover). Dixon (2012) reminds us: "Patriarchy and colonialism are leading contributors to the oppression of Native American women" (p. 35). This may be one of the reasons why the viewer has yet to see Aboriginal women portrayed as heroines or in positions of power in visual texts.

The portrayal of Aboriginal peoples in visual texts underwent dramatic changes from the 1960s to the 2000s. The 1960s portrayals showed wild savages, with spears and bows and arrows raised. Negative representations of Aboriginal peoples could possibly be attributed to the institutional injustices set out by the Canadian government. As previously stated, the last residential school did not close until 1996. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) report on Canadian residential schools explains:

The basic premise of resocialization, of the great transformation from 'savage' to 'civilized', was violent. "To kill the Indian in the child", the department aimed at severing the artery of culture that ran between generations and was the profound connection between parent and child sustaining family and community. (p. 349)

The forced separation of Aboriginal families may be part of the reason why I did not see

many examples in visual texts of Aboriginal peoples in family settings until the late 1990s. Negative portrayals eventually evolved to more fair and balanced images that showed some respect for Indigenous culture and heritage. The visual texts from the late 1990s and 2000s show Aboriginal children in caring, loving scenarios with family members. Families are shown eating dinner around the fire, playing outside with siblings while grandparents watch, or engaged in a moment of learning as an Aboriginal adult teaches a young child. The finest example of this dramatic change is the visual text found in the 2002 book, *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (Loyie, Briddenden, & Holmlund, p. 3), a true story about a boy who goes to a residential school. In the visual text, the love and pride of a Cree family is evident and there is no perception of inferiority. The need for healing with respect to the residential schools culminated on June 11, 2008, when Canadian Prime Minister Steven Harper formally apologized for residential schools, stating:

Two primary objectives of the residential schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption that Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, “to kill the Indian in the child.” Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country... We now recognize that it was wrong to separate children from rich and vibrant cultures and traditions, that it created a void in many lives and communities, and we apologize for having done this. (Kanu, 2011, p. 223)

Aboriginal peoples still have strained relationships with various governments. Recent demonstrations at Ipperwash and Caledonia, Ontario, and Oka, Quebec, and the more recent

“Idle No More” protest movement show a lack of trust in the government among Aboriginal peoples and a continuing belief that racism prevails today. Racism was certainly evident in the illustrations from the 1960s right through until the 2000s. However, there are some visual texts from books in the 2000s that demonstrate a sense of advocacy for Aboriginal rights, as was the case with the visual texts from *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (Loyie, Briddenden, & Holmlund, 2002, p. 3) and the 2006 book, *Secret of the Dance* (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, p. 4). In the 2000s, there are also examples of visual texts that show “rich and vibrant cultures and traditions,” as acknowledged by Prime Minister Harper. A fine example of this would be the 2008 book, *Neèko Nambe Ik'oo K'eezho: The Old Man with the Otter Medicine* (Blondin & Beaverho).

Critical Reflection of Researcher as Visual Text Analyzer and Analytic Auto-Ethnographer

My personal experiences taking on the role as the sole person responsible for the analysis of visual texts with an analytic auto-ethnographic framework has been challenging and rewarding. Throughout this process my intent was to deconstruct and reconstruct each visual text to ‘make the familiar strange’ and to allow readers to experience this process, along with me, through visual descriptions. I knew all along that this experience would shape my understanding of Indigenous issues, cultures, and ways of knowing. However, somewhat unexpectedly, this work became intertwined with my own sense of personhood. I have become extremely sensitive to the issues of oppression and discrimination surrounding Aboriginal peoples. I am bothered by the fact that these issues were unknown to me throughout my own schooling experiences prior to my post-secondary years. This is one of the reasons why I was happy to find positive material in the 2000s that sends messages about these sensitive topics through real lived experiences

documented in children's picture books, such as with the book *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (Loyie, Briddenden, & Holmlund, 2002).

Like looking into a mirror, my own sense making about the visual texts has been informed by my personal search for my own identity. While I am saddened that I do not know much about Indigenous knowledges or peoples from the Mi'kmaq culture firsthand, I feel a sense of "rediscovery" that has led me to this new and unknown territory and marks the beginning of making a positive difference. This is theorized by Dixon (2012) as Identity Theory that suggests that, "*Native Identity* can be considered as a constructivist view, as it reflects the social construction and reconstruction of Native identity" (p. 30).

It is my hope that this study, and others like it, will be beneficial for others who may be experiencing confusion, resentment, loss, or burying their feelings away. Confronting our own histories, no matter how lost or hidden, is so important to aid in preserving the past and brightening the future.

Scope and Limitations for the Study

Each visual text may be perceived differently by each viewer. By the same token, each illustrator brings his or her own bias. "The illustrations also reflect the ideologies, experience and background of the illustrators. Images tell more about the feelings and ideas of the artist or illustrator than about the lives of perspectives of the subject they represent" (Allen, 1996, p. 152). Although this may be true, it is likely that the thoughts and feelings of the artist or illustrator are shaped by the social constructs of the society in which they live. Therefore, the visual text would be a reflection of the ideas and attitudes of society.

The researcher as the sole text analyzer limited the study to an individual, subjective lens,

and this does not lend itself to multiple perspectives. Any researcher immersed in a project of this proportion lacks outside perspective. This can set in place limitations in regard to the analysis of results.

This study is limited within the boundaries of North America. While Indigenous peoples live all over the globe, the Aboriginal peoples of focus reside in Canada and the United States. The data set was restricted to books in the English language, although some of these books contained Aboriginal words, names, or translations.

Novels and other forms of literature, including textbooks and pictorial history books, were not utilized in this study. Other media forms of visual texts such as commercials, films, photographs, or other online materials were not included in the data set for this study. The scope of analysis was limited to elementary children's picture books. This allowed for a cross comparison through the decades of visual texts explored by viewers over the course of time.

Although my exploration of the visual texts was thorough, and points of analysis are reinforced by visual texts as proof of evidence, this study is limited by the collection of ten books for each decade. While this number of books over the course of the five decades adds up to a combined total of fifty, the findings may be suggestive of generalizations due to the sample size of only ten books. The breadth of books is miniscule in the broader picture. However, in keeping with the nature of qualitative work, unlike quantitative studies, this study showcases a specific selection analyzed through subjective experience.

Areas for Future Research

The topic of critical visual literacy provides a wealth of research opportunities. This specific visual extension of critical literacy is not a widely explored topic. More research is

essential in order to establish critical visual literacy as a topic in teacher education programs, professional development, and school curriculum documents. It is especially important for early childhood programs, as young children flourish with visual experiences, prior to mastering verbal capabilities.

Since this study was limited to English language books, there remains a need for an analysis of books published in North America in French, Spanish, and Aboriginal languages in order to compare the findings across different languages. Similarly, books strictly published by Aboriginal peoples should be explored. This would allow for an exploration and analysis of Aboriginal impressions of peoples and their own culture.

A subject of particular interest may be the analysis of the connections or disconnections between verbal and visual texts within various forms of media. Other questions that are pertinent to the analysis of books include, “Why do certain books appear and certain books do not appear?” “What are the publishing qualifications for books?” “Who is making the decisions to publish?” and “What informs the choices made?” Such questions stimulate research surrounding the origins of printed text. This work could also extend into the new capacities offered by the Internet, as online publications factor out much of the costs and may change the decision making process concerning books. This also sparks ideas about the future of books, and whether books that are printed and bound, like the ones that comprised the data set for this study, will become old ways of knowing and artifacts of the past. How might such evolution alter the way we explore text forms? The emergence of new methods of literature is an appropriate extension from the topic of verbal or visual texts in literature.

While this study centered around issues of race and racism as a particular social structure

which oppresses Aboriginal peoples, new critical visual literacy work could also focus on issues of gender and sexism, sexuality, age and ageism, social class, or any other issues faced by human beings which function to oppress and limit a person's freedom. Also, further research may focus on race and racism involving other marginalized groups, including Indigenous peoples on a more global scale. In such work, visual representations of peoples and knowledges may be taken into consideration.

In a continued effort to better the livelihood and educational experiences of Aboriginal peoples, further research on Aboriginal learners and their real, lived experiences inside and outside the classroom is sought after and encouraged.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study focused on representations of Aboriginal peoples in children's literature in relation to the relatively new practice of critical visual literacy education. Although education has long emphasized the importance of verbal text (Felten, 2008), visual and aesthetic representations are important cultural considerations today.

Critical visual literacy was at the heart of this study. As I engaged in the process of exploration of all fifty books from the data set, themes were uncovered, revealing consistencies and alterations in the visual texts from decade to decade. There was a transformation in the visual text portrayals of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges from the 1960s through to the 2000s. This transformation aligns with the social changes through this period.

This study was informed by my own experiences as a teacher and artist. I was mindful of my own experiences in the field of visual arts and this acted as an aid when approaching each visual text. The use of colour, shape, movement, and proportion spoke to my understanding of sensitive topics. I was conscious of the way a visual text can position the viewer.

As a teacher, I have formed a new understanding about the different sorts of difficulties students may experience with visual texts. Critical visual literacy may be associated with the sense of feeling "lost in translation." To explain, it is a difficult task to look at a visual text and then verbally reiterate not only what you are looking at, but to recognize and describe the stance an artist or illustrator is taking, what message is being sent, who is being advantaged and disadvantaged by the visual text, along with whose voice is being represented, misrepresented or not represented at all. Aside from this, exploring topics such as oppression, discrimination, or an

imbalance of power requires intensive engagement. This is one of the reasons why the critical visual literacy skills are so valuable to act as a formula for inquiry based deconstructive work inclusive of critical pedagogy (Appendix B).

“Our children are living in the most intensely stimulating period in the history of the earth” (Robinson, 2010, video file) where visual texts of many forms are witnessed by educators and students on a daily basis. These visual texts may perpetuate racism, stereotypes, and unjust biases. However, it is to be hoped that this study inspires and empowers students, educators, and scholars alike to be increasingly aware of the capacities of critical visual literacy practice, as well as their own learned capabilities. Both early and recent literature demonstrate the value in using critical visual skills, as with Friere’s (1973) concept of the subject through use of integration, and Newfield’s (2011) encouragement toward estrangement, critical distance, and reading *against* visual texts (p. 92).

Issues of race and racism have had a powerful presence in the portrayal of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges in visual texts found in children’s picture books published in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Children’s books, like other forms of media, are not only key in establishing people’s beliefs and attitudes about the world, but also function to support social reproduction and the inequities that exist because of it. The problem, as Kanu points out, is that, “race has been and remains a powerful ideology for legitimizing social and economic inequality between groups with different ancestries, national origins, and histories” (Kanu, 2011, p. 47). The visual texts from the 1960s to the 2000s showed a transformation from predominantly racist and biased images to some evidence of more socially conscious material. Positive portrayals of Aboriginal peoples and knowledges appeared in the 2000s. However, there are still negative

portrayals being published, and some books published decades ago are still widely available in and out of schools. Social injustices are unlikely to disappear any time soon, but this study was based on the belief that critical visual literacy education could be used to address social injustices and help facilitate more quickly the end of racism.

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APPENDIX A

CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS

Picture Books:

2000s

Sacagawea: Lewis and Clark's Shoshone Guide (Robertson & Thompson, 2000)

Sky Sisters (Bourdeau Waboose & Deines, 2000)

The Golden Dollar: Legend of Sacagawea (Fernandez, McIntyre, & Davis, 2000)

As Long as the Rivers Flow (Loyie, Brissenden, & Holmlund, 2002)

Disney's Brother Bear (Marsoli, 2003)

North American Indian (Murdoch, 2005)

Secret of the Dance (Spalding, Scow, & Gait, 2006)

Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws: The Voyageurs (Solomon & Meyer, 2008)

Neèko Nambe Ik'oo K'eezho: The Old Man with the Otter Medicine. (Blondin & Beaverho, 2008)

War of 1812: Western Hooves of Thunder (Misiak & Paterson, 2009)

1990s

Little Firefly: An Algonquian Legend (Cohlene & Reasoner, 1990)

Sky Dogs (Yolen & Moser, 1990)

Big Bird Visits Navajo Country (Alexander & Swanson, 1992)

Encounter (Yolen & Shannon, 1992)

The Rough-Face Girl (Martin & Shannon, 1992)

Powwow (Ancona, 1993)

Disney's Pocahontas (Korman & Williams, 1995)

Thunder from the Clear Sky (Sewall, 1995)

Walt Disney's Peter Pan (Coco & Dias, 1996)

Morning on the Lake (Bourdeau Waboose & Reczuch, 1997)

1980s

Indians of the Plains (Bains & Baxter, 1985)

Pocahontas (Santrey & Wenzel, 1985)

Very Last First Time (Andrews & Wallace, 1985)

Great Tales From Long Ago: Hiawatha (Wadsworth Longfellow & Molan, 1986)

Where Did You Get Your Moccasins? (Wheeler & Bekkering, 1986)

Death of the Iron Horse (Goble, 1987)

A Promise is a Promise (Munsch, Kusugak, & Krykorka, 1988)

How the Birch Tree Got Its Stripes (Littlechild, 1988)

A Girl from Cat River (Carpick, 1989)

Peter Pitseolak's Escape from Death (Pitseolak, 1989)

1970s

Indians: The First Americans (Martin & Frankenberg, 1970)

Annie and the Old One (Miles & Parnall, 1971)

A Color Picture Dictionary for Children: H to M (Wright & Low, 1972)

When Clay Sings (Baylor & Bahti, 1972)

Indian Bunny (Bornstein, 1973)

The Friendly Wolf (Goble & Goble, 1974)

The People and Places Book (Fadiman, 1974)

Three Little Indians (Stuart & Glanzman, 1974)

North American Indians (Gorsline & Gorsline, 1977)

The Fire Stealer (Cleaver, 1979)

1960s

Injun Summer (McCutcheon & Erikson, 1960)

Little Chief (Hoff, 1961)

The First Thanksgiving (Rogers, 1962)

Indian Children of America (Farquhar & Turkle, 1964)

Crazy Horse: Sioux Warrior (LaMonte Meadowcroft & Cary, 1965)

Indian Warriors and their Weapons (Hofsinde, 1965)

Come Over to My House (LeSieg & Erdoes, 1966)

My Indian Book (Grant & Merryweather, 1968)

Granny and the Indians (Parish & Turkle, 1969)

How Summer Came to Canada (Cleaver & Toye, 1969)

Appendix A References

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APPENDIX B

CRITICAL VISUAL LITERACY READING SKILLS

Students and teachers respond to texts in a critical manner by:

1. *Identify the stance that the author/illustrator is taking.*

What position is the text supporting?

How is the text positioning the viewer?

2. *What are the meanings or messages in the text?*

“There is no single correct meaning of a text” (Evans, 2007, p. 236).

What are the different meanings evoked by the text?

3. *Who is advantaged by the visual text?*

Who is disadvantaged by the visual text?

4. *Whose voice is being heard?*

Whose voice is not being heard?

Whose point of view is being represented?

Whose point of view is not represented?

5. *Who is present in this text?*

Who is absent from the text?

6. *What questions is the viewer left with?*

How did this text make the viewer feel?

VITA AUCTORIS

Patricia Dunn was born and raised in Niagara Falls, Canada, in a busy household with her three siblings, Sarah, Scott, and George, and loving parents, Bill and Margaret. In school, she took a great interest in Visual Arts, Model United Nations, and was president of the debate team. Patricia received the Ontario Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award and a Canadian Millennium Excellence Award for her work as Chair of the Niagara Falls Mayor's Youth Advisory Committee and her community activism and involvement.

Patricia earned a Bachelor of Arts in Visual Arts concurrently with a Bachelor of Education from the University of Windsor and an Early Childhood Education Diploma from St. Clair College. She loves working with children of all ages as an occasional elementary teacher. Her research is driven by her experiences teaching and learning from students and colleagues, as she advocates for all people to have a "voice" and a developed sense of critical consciousness that allows them to recognize and resist social inequities. She plans to continue her education and research surrounding Indigenous peoples and knowledges, in further pursuit of bettering the lives of Aboriginal peoples, including those who may be conflicted with a lost or disoriented sense of identity, similar to her own experiences.

She currently resides in Windsor, Ontario, with her partner, Gordon. In her spare time, Patricia enjoys painting, playing hockey and the violin.