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First Nations Women and Information and Communication Technologies

by

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Abstract

My thesis consists primarily of three articles I wrote or co-wrote for publication. They focus on the engagement by First Nations people in Canada with information and communication technologies. My first article develops a framework for engaging First Nations people in research. This article lays the foundation for the second article, an overview of the government policies and development of broadband video communication in First Nations communities. My third article is an analysis of online videos made by and about First Nations women. I argue that online video communication offers First Nations women the potential to represent themselves in ways that challenge traditional representations. My analysis provides insight into the ways First Nations women are currently using online videos in creative, but not necessarily critical, ways. My work suggests possibilities for enhancing the capacity of broadband video communication technologies for First Nations people's networking potential and for building a critical Indigenous public sphere nationally and globally.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Background

As a First Nations person, I have long been concerned with issues confronting First Nations people. The UNB M.Ed. program in Critical Studies provided me with the opportunity to focus on questions of social justice and oppression and First Nations people, especially First Nations women. My courses included: *Introduction to Critical Studies in Education, Feminist Theory and Education, The Politics of Literacies,* and *Anthropology of Literacy and Learning.* My papers for these courses focused on First Nations issues concerning women, education, media and film representation. During my studies, I began working with the National Research Council Institute for Information Technology (NRC-IIT), a research partner of UNB located on the UNB campus. I came to realize that my work experience with the NRC- IIT was similar to my M.Ed. research interests and studies on First Nations issues. I then decided to combine my work with the NRC-IIT with my M.Ed. thesis research.

The thesis is presented in the articles format, which includes three research articles for publication. My decision to submit the thesis using the articles format evolved from my part-time research work since 2005 with the NRC-IIT. My work with NRC-IIT initially involved information and communication technology with First Nations communities. That first project grew into a larger program of research. Through my work with NRC-IIT, I developed a research interest in information and communication technology and First Nations communities that evolved into my thesis. I describe that development below.

From January 2005 to March 2005 I worked with Susan O'Donnell as a part-time Analyst with NRC-IIT. Dr. O'Donnell is a Research Officer with the People-Centred Technologies group at NRC-IIT specializing in the social and communication aspects of information and communication technologies; she is also an Adjunct Professor in Sociology at UNB. My work during this initial employment with NRC-IIT involved participating and contributing to the Research on Information Communication Technology with Aboriginal Communities (RICTA) project - a SSHRC-funded research networking project that began in September 2004, with Dr. O'Donnell as the Principal Investigator. RICTA is a partnership that builds collaboration with First Nations communities, governments, and academic researchers that focuses on ICT research, building local Aboriginal research capacity, and building bridges between the above mentioned partners and funding institutes. During the project we organized a multi-site videoconference research meeting that linked approximately 50 RICTA members and guests in many locations in three different provinces. The RICTA meeting discussed the need for more involvement and collaboration with Aboriginal people to build trust, develop relations and real partnerships in the research process. As part of this project and from our mutual interest, Dr. O'Donnell and I began developing a paper that would focus on some issues surrounding research involving Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples. A main component of the paper was to look at the best ways to engage First Nations people in research. The paper was presented at the Canadian Communication Association annual conference in London, Ontario in June 2005, and the Community Informatics Research Network conference in Cape Town, South Africa in September 2005.

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From January to March 2006, I worked again with Dr. O'Donnell as a part-time analyst with the NRC-IIT. The focus of this work was to develop a background research paper for the VIDEOCOM project. The VIDEOCOM research, funded by SSHRC, explores how two First Nations organizations are using video communications to support community development in First Nations communities. Our background paper focused on broadband video communication technology in First Nations communities. The paper was presented at the Canadian Communication Association annual conference in Toronto, Ontario in June 2006.

In August 2006, I worked with Dr. O'Donnell on the VIDEOCOM project. The work involves two First Nations organization partners: K-Net, Keewaytinook Okimakanak in Sioux Lookout, Ontario, and the Atlantic Canada's First Nation Helpdesk in Membertou First Nations, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. My work includes participation in regular meetings by videoconference with the partners and participating with data collection and analysis. I traveled with Dr. O'Donnell to Membertou First Nations in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, to conduct fieldwork (in-depth interviews) with key informants. The VIDEOCOM project involves both videoconferencing and online video; my focus in this project has been to develop an analysis of online and streamed videos included on these First Nations partners' web sites. From October to December 2006, I conducted a content analysis of a sample of these videos. From this work I became interested in the representation and participation of First Nations women in online video technology and decided to focus on this topic for my third research paper for my Masters' thesis. I have submitted the paper for peer-review to the International Communication Association (ICA). If the paper is accepted, I will present it at the ICA 2008 conference in Montreal. After feedback from reviewers and conference

participants, I will revise it for submission to the academic journal, *New Media &*
Society.

Research Questions

The articles presented in this thesis address the following research questions:

- What are ethical ways to engage First Nations communities in research?

- What is the situation of broadband video communications research in First Nations communities?

- How are First Nations women represented in online videos?

Research Themes

The three articles in this thesis each include a brief review of the literature on their specific topics. In this chapter I provide an overview of four theoretical themes uniting the articles: First Nations, race, gender and representation; developing an Aboriginal public sphere and critical media literacy; Canadian "digital divide" policy and ideology; and First Nations communities, media and technology.

First Nations, race, gender, and representation

Critical theory examines the dynamics of power and the creation of inequality based on constructs of class, gender, and "race", and how ideologies and social institutions support this social construction (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Critical theory seeks to understand how social constructions shape and dominate our perspectives. Kincheloe & McLaren utilize Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which

suggests that certain institutions in society such as the media are used to reinforce power dynamics or social constructions as a way to gain acceptance by society.

One facet of critical theory examines colonialist ideology or colonialist discourse, which reflects the perspective of the colonizers through language that often embodies assumptions of superiority over people indigenous to the lands they sought to colonize (Tyson, 1999). This colonialist ideology and discourse is reflected in the historical writings that portray negative representations of First Nations people, specifically First Nations women. Stevenson (1999) suggests that missionaries used negative representations of First Nations women to justify their practices of assimilation. Further, the status and role of First Nations women have been undermined since the time of contact with the colonizers, missionaries and government authorities, both colonial and early Canadian. The practices were supported through various government policies such as the Indian Act. McGillivray & Comaskey (1999) suggest that colonialist ideology creates a power dynamic that results in domination and is reflected in relationships of abuse, which have since become prevalent among First Nations people. Further, these abusive behaviours have had an impact on First Nations women's autonomy and role within their communities, and reflect Western colonial practices.

Valaskakis (1993) emphasizes the struggle over representation of First Nations people and the appropriation of their culture by non-First Nations people. How First Nations communities are represented and who is representing them is the focal point of the struggle. Valaskakis further suggests that the representation of First Nations people tends to draw from past and "ideology" of what is perceived to be the "real" First Nations people by the mainstream. It is this type of misrepresentation of First Nations people that focuses away from the real experience and realities of today's First Nations

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communities by looking at what she describes as stereotypical or superficial issues such as "political correctness and censorship" (p. 2). This takes away from a deeper analysis of the issues around power and the positioning of First Nations people as "other" which excludes or marginalizes them from mainstream society based on "race", gender or class.

Feminist theory is another facet of critical theory. Feminist writers have moved in the direction of raising questions about the marginalization and representation of women. Valaskakis (1993), states that issues of difference, in terms of "race" and class, must be taken into account regarding women of color. Tyson (1999) suggests that patriarchal ideology defines women in one of two ways, either good or bad, 'the madonna' or 'the whore', depending on how she accepts the gender constructs of a patriarchal society. Patriarchal ideology also influences how First Nations women are portrayed. However, there is a difference. First Nations women not only face gender oppression but also are further oppressed by racism. Tyson (1999) refers to this in the discussion on multicultural feminism where African American and Black feminists have brought attention to the limitations of mainstream feminism, most specifically how it has historically essentialized all women's experiences of oppression by patriarchy without taking into consideration the experience of women also oppressed by racism.

Media representation has an impact on the way we perceive the world. Kellner & Share (2005) suggest that mainstream media representations depict dominant groups favorably while disadvantaging other groups in society. Large media corporations play a role in controlling and creating these socially constructed representations that depict such messages as natural. These representations vary over time to reflect the different or changing political and economic goals or agendas of the dominant culture. Rakow &

Wackwitz (2004) posit that feminist communication theory helps to recognize the various issues relating to "the complexity of reality, representation, ideology, and politics" (p. 181). They further suggest that despite inroads made by some feminist scholars into media and communication technologies, most of the research still largely reflects mainstream dominant ideologies. Kellner & Share (2005) recognize the extensive impact of various media such as the Internet in the construction and understanding of our world to the point that we are unaware of how we are educated by the media because "its pedagogy is frequently invisible and unconscious" (p. 372).

Developing an Aboriginal public sphere and critical media literacy

Jurgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere ([1962] 1989) has become central to the field of media and communications. Public sphere theory is used by researchers to explain how public opinion is formed. According to Habermas a single public sphere exists where all citizens can participate as equals and have an opportunity to access and deliberate about issues that concern the public. Public sphere theory has been debated and deconstructed by many theorists. Miller (2004) suggests that, to date, no national public sphere has been functioning anywhere in the world and that media, both print and electronic, have controls and parameters over what they present to the public, even public opinion polls. Fraser (1992) discusses an alternative concept of public sphere that has relevance to present capitalist societies and democracy. This would include: the need to eliminate inequalities based on race, class, gender and other inequalities, as well as the need for multiple publics or "subaltern counterpublics" (p. 123), rather than a single public sphere where dominant groups would be at an advantage. Finally, she suggests that the inclusion of "the private" needs to be brought to these public spheres for

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deliberation. Fraser's and Miller's approach or concept for an alternative public sphere can provide a framework for developing a First Nations or Aboriginal public sphere, which would allow for First Nations women to represent themselves and their issues. Avison & Meadows (2000) suggest that an Aboriginal public sphere allows for the engagement of Aboriginal people in areas that concern them which have been absent from mainstream media. It is an avenue that allows for them to discuss, debate, and represent their own realities and experiences. The concept of an Aboriginal public sphere can have implications for communication technology use by First Nations groups. Communication technologies have the capacity to provide alternate avenues for communicating and information sharing via emails, chats, webcams, videoconferences, and online videos.

Online videos can provide an alternative public sphere for First Nations women to represent themselves, share information, educate and deliberate on the issues relevant to their daily lives. A step in this direction would demand some knowledge and training in communication technologies as well as knowledge and training that would assist in the examination and critical analysis of how and why various mainstream media maintain power imbalances in society.

Kellner & Share (2005) describe critical media literacy as an approach that builds the skills required to understand, recognize and analyse mainstream media's socially constructed representations, messages, values and stereotypes, and to resist and challenge them constructively. It would encourage disadvantaged or marginalized groups to deconstruct representations and to possibly create their own representations through alternate media sources or an alternate public sphere such as the Internet and "to use the media as modes of self-expression and social activism" (p. 372).

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Canadian "Digital Divide" policy and ideology

In recent years, politics and the economy have driven the expansion of broadband infrastructure and access to broadband Internet across Canada to bridge the "digital divide" (Birdsall 2000, p. 1) among disadvantaged groups and to further the concept of "Connecting Canadians" (Birdsall 2000, p. 6). Many of these, political and economic motivations are explored by Birdsall (2000), Clement and Shade (1998), Gurstein (2003) and Rideout (2000). Based on the ideology of free market access to Internet infrastructure and technology, this approach gained acceptance and was supported by Canadian government agencies that resulted in the development of the Information Highway Advisory Council with members from ICT industries and Industry Canada. The free market concept created a competitive environment to attract the private sector while the concept of "Connecting Canadians", supported by government, ensured a large consumer base for the industries.

With the free market ensuring competition among the private sector ICT industries there was an assumption that broadband services would be affordable and accessible to all Canadians. However, with few government regulations in place, the private sector set the parameters for access to those consumers who could afford the services. The division over access or the "digital divide" became and continues to be an issue in Canada. The debate, as Birdsall (2000) suggests, will likely shift from the idea of eliminating the divide to how large or small it should be, a shift resulting from no clear definition of universal access and little public policy supporting it.

Despite the growing rate of access to broadband infrastructure and technology, concerns still surround issues such as access "for what", "for whom", and "for what purpose" (Clement and Shade, 1998). Another key concern is the effective use of ICT by

marginal groups to assist in community and economic development, as well as health, social and cultural initiatives (Gurstein, 2003). Further, access to create and produce information on the Internet by marginal groups may not be realized if access remains simply access to a passive consumer base (Gurstein, 2003).

First Nations communities, media and technology

First Nations people produce and consume various media technologies. This includes print media, television or broadcasting, e.g., the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network, and other communication technologies such as participatory video, webcams and Internet technology capacity in First Nations communities. The discussion of this final research theme will briefly review research on the engagement of First Nations and women with these technologies.

<u>Newspaper or print media technology</u>

Avison & Meadows (2000) posit that mainstream communication media has largely ignored the representation of Aboriginal groups in Canada, misrepresented their issues, or provided stereotypical coverage. With the aid of federal funding, Aboriginal people in Canada established their own print media to offset the mainstream media's coverage, or lack of, Aboriginal issues.

The print media evolved among Aboriginal groups in Canada as an avenue to address stereotypes and misrepresentation and vocalize their political, social and cultural concerns (Avison & Meadows 2000). It began as a response by many Aboriginal groups to the lack of Aboriginal voice or opinion in mainstream media and as an avenue to challenge and address topical issues in a public forum, such as the 1969 "Canadian White Paper" (Statement of Government of Canada on Indian Policy, 1969). Aboriginal

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print media provides an alternate to the mainstream media form that has largely dismissed Aboriginal voice and culture and often maintains or reinforces stereotypes, racism, practices of assimilation and colonialism.

Although other media forms such as broadcasting and the Internet are the main source of media communication used by Aboriginal groups today, the use of print media technology started the movement towards "using media as a tool"(Avison & Meadows 2000, P. 1) to challenge and address issues concerning First Nations people. Although there has been research on Aboriginal newspaper or print media, it has not to date raised any issues specifically concerning First Nations women.

Broadcasting, film and television

Baltruschat (2004) outlines the development of Aboriginal broadcasting, film and television. In Canada there has been an increase in Aboriginal specific films and television production largely due to the creation of the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN). Prior to this, access and dissemination of Aboriginal material for public broadcast has been minimal, if available on mainstream media at all. Similar to print media technology access, mentioned previously, Aboriginal groups or producers sought alternative avenues to distribute their First Nations productions.

Broadcasting, similar to print media, was considered an opportunity to resist assimilation practices by Aboriginal groups in Canada from its beginnings with the Alberta Native Communication Society in the 1960s (Baltruschat, 2004). Since then other initiatives involving broadcasting and programming have been developed in the North, dealing specifically with language and culture preservation and leading to the creation of the Inuit Broadcasting Corporation in 1981. Due to dissatisfaction with current delivery providers (Cancom and CBC), discussions began among Aboriginal

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broadcasting groups and government, eventually resulting in the creation of Television

Northern Canada in 1991. From 1997 to 1999, Television Northern Canada extended its

audience to cover all of Canada and its Aboriginal peoples through the development of

the Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network. The process required presentations to

Aboriginal communities and proposals and applications to Canadian Radio-television

and Telecommunications Commission to establish and licence this new Aboriginal

television network.

APTN provides Aboriginal people with an opportunity to represent themselves

and the issues that concern them, that would otherwise get misrepresented or not get

aired on mainstream broadcast media. "First Nations languages, culture and ideas can

now be mediated and distributed to communities in Canada" (Baltruschat, p. 1, 2004). It

also allows for the Canadian mainstream public to get a glimpse into the lives and

realities of Aboriginal people (Baltruschat, 2004). She also mentions that Aboriginal

people who produce or document their culture have recognized the risk of their culture

being appropriated by non-First Nations as a result of their documentaries being

broadcast on networks including APTN, which is offered globally.

Further, many challenges have been recognized since the development and

evolution of the APTN. Baltruschat (2004) suggests that these came mainly with the

influence of mainstream media style productions, structuring and marketing of the

programs and operations of the network. This has been recognized in some of the types

of programs or films aired to capture the interest of mainstream audiences. Also, the

program structure is a duplication of mainstream media programming structure with its

focus on hourly programming.

Baltruschat (2004) touches on the possibilities of video as a new and more accessible media through which Aboriginal people can represent themselves. She provides an example of a video based on an Inuit legend using storytelling and digital technology. She further states that this type of media technology may influence a new field in filmmaking among Aboriginal people. Similar to the literature on newspaper and print media, the literature on broadcasting, film and television does raise issues concerning Aboriginal people. However, it does not specifically mention issues regarding First Nations women despite the growing number of First Nations women filmmakers in Canada.

Participatory video

The literature for participatory video is explored in Chapter 4, i.e., my third article, "Representation and Participation of First Nations Women in Online Videos." This article includes a review of the following authors: Bery (2003), Dudley (2003), Kindon (2003), Rieken et al. (2006), and S. A.White (2003). These authors describe participatory video as a tool and process that can be utilized in a research context to encourage the engagement, dialogue and real partnership of all stakeholders involved in the research process. Participatory video provides an avenue that gives voice to those who have been marginalized and provides a means for people to tell their stories and represent their own realities.

Internet webcams

Webcams (web cameras) are cameras attached to computers that can broadcast live or recorded images on the Internet to a global audience. M. White (2003) discusses the use of webcams operated by women. She challenges some of the literature that suggests that webcams contribute to the negative representations of women as objects of

the male gaze. White suggests the webcams operated by women can provide avenues that allow women to represent themselves, their values and interests. White supports the use of webcams in addressing issues that concern women, the representation of women, and the importance of women's control over the camera. However, White provides examples in which women allow viewing into their personal domains. In my view, these are not convincing examples of how webcams can challenge power and control, allowing for empowerment for women and raise the question of why women would engage in this form of exploitation. Using the webcam to network with other women or raise awareness of issues of importance to women that challenge power structures and the marginalization of women makes more sense to me than intrusion into women's personal lives. There are some benefits to using this technology, but careful consideration ought to be given to the way it is being used so that it does not support the continued oppression of women. Further, First Nations women can utilize this tool as a means of communicating and networking with other women to challenge or raise issues of mutual interest and concern. Webcams are a means of easy, affordable visual communication with others that may be otherwise unavailable.

<u>Broadband video technology</u>

Broadband video technology includes some of the newest technologies discussed in this review: videoconferencing, multi-site videoconferencing and online videos. With the growth in the use of broadband video technology by First Nations people there has also been an increase in research and literature on technology and Indigenous peoples. The literature on broadband video technology is diverse. However, there is very little research concerning technology and Indigenous women and, more specifically, First Nations women in Canada. Further, there is no literature specifically on how First

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Nations women are, or could be, using broadband video communication to represent themselves and their lives.

My thesis makes a significant contribution to this emerging research area. With the growth of technology in First Nations communities across Canada there is a need to understand women's involvement in and contributions to broadband video communication technology, in particular online video. Since online video is now considered a means of active participation, it is important to understand how First Nations women are participating in online video communication and how they are represented, or represent themselves, through the use of these specific technologies.

Overview of Articles

This section provides an overview of the three articles for my thesis.

Article 1: Engaging First Nations Communities in Research

The first article is co-authored by Sonja Perley and Susan O'Donnell, led by Perley. The article highlights some of the main issues surrounding research involving Indigenous people along with an overview of the current literature on Indigenous research and ethical approaches to research respecting Indigenous people. This article addresses the research question: What are ethical ways to engage First Nations people in research?

Indigenous peoples often view mainstream research negatively, as a present day colonizing practice. Many Indigenous scholars have become more actively involved in research as a result of this historically oppressive relationship with Western mainstream research practices. They have been described as "research, which from an Indigenous perspectives 'steals' knowledge from others and then uses it to benefit the people who

'stole' it" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p. 57). Indigenous peoples have become more vocal in their concerns over inaccuracies, lack of representation, consultation, and collaboration, the desecration of cultural artifacts, burial sites and remains, and the appropriation and ownership over cultural ceremonies, and oral traditions just to name a few. As a result, many Indigenous communities and groups have developed, or are in the processes of developing, guidelines for researchers interested in writing about and with Indigenous peoples and their culture.

Mihesuah (1993) provides one of the earliest examples of ethical guidelines for researchers conducting research with Indigenous peoples. These guidelines depart from the traditional academic research process by providing Indigenous people the opportunity to become more involved with the research from the beginning. Inherent in these guidelines is the process of relationship-building between the researcher and the Indigenous community as well as collaboration in the development and conduct of the research project. Other areas lacking in mainstream approaches to research, included in Mihesuah's guidelines, are the process of asking the permission of the Indigenous leaders or communities to conduct the research as well as an opportunity for reciprocity with the Indigenous community for partaking and providing information for the research.

Other Indigenous scholars have also challenged and critiqued mainstream processes of conducting research and writing about Indigenous peoples. In Mihesuah (1998) Indigenous scholars, primarily from the United States, discuss the ethics of previous research and writing on Indigenous people. These scholars further examine alternative approaches to research and writing on Indigenous people by non-Indigenous researchers.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) elaborates on the struggle between the Western research paradigm and Indigenous perspectives. Also discussed is an approach to research that incorporates Indigenous peoples' input in setting the parameters and priorities of the research, as well as creating a framework that places the research in a political, historical and cultural context that includes Indigenous perspectives. Chrisjohn (2006) at a meeting on research ethics at St. Thomas University, in Fredericton, New Brunswick, presented *"Truth and Accuracy in Research: An Issue of Ethics"* a First Nations perspective on research with Aboriginal peoples in Canada. And across Canada, researchers, government bodies and Aboriginal groups are in the process of developing guidelines for researching Aboriginal issues. Currently there are two documents or approaches to research with Aboriginal people that have been largely accepted and used by non First Nations researchers in Canada: Section 6 in the Tri-Council policy and OCAP-ownership, control, access and possession.

The Tri-Council policy (1997) was developed by three government bodies (NSERC, SSHRC and CIHR) to provide mandatory guidelines for university and government researchers conducting ethical research with humans. Research funded by any of these government bodies must be reviewed by a research ethics board, which uses the policy to assess the research plan. Section 6 of the Tri-Council policy is used by research ethics boards when reviewing proposals involving Aboriginal peoples. Section 6 is currently under review and it is expected that a more comprehensive policy for research with Aboriginal peoples will be implemented in the near future. The second significant Canadian document related to research with Aboriginal people is OCAP, developed primarily by the National Aboriginal Health Organization largely from an Aboriginal perspective. OCAP includes many of the values that Aboriginal people

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consider significant to research involving Aboriginal people. Some of these values include developing trust, empowerment and capacity of the Aboriginal people and the community involved in the research; the research must also have significance or relevance to the people being researched (Schnarch, 2004).

Based on the literature reviewed, Dr. O'Donnell and I developed a set of guidelines for engaging First Nations people in research. These guidelines incorporate elements of the guidelines from Mihesuah (1993), OCAP and Section 6 of the Tri-Council policy as well as analyses developed by Mihesuah (1998), Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and other Indigenous scholars, leaders and communities. Our aim was to present guidelines that are culturally appropriate, sensitive and relevant to the people and community involved in the research. The guidelines address the following areas: building a relationship, partnership and collaboration with First Nations; developing First Nations' priorities for research; developing non-First Nations researchers' self-awareness of their epistemological assumptions and privileged locations; integrating the political, socio-economic and historical contexts of the research; and expanding the borders of the researchers' academic discipline, methodologies and theories.

Article 2: Broadband Video Communication Research in First Nations Communities

This article is co-authored by Perley & O'Donnell, with Perley as lead author. It provides an overview of the strategies and policies developed and implemented for broadband infrastructure technology, access and use among First Nations communities and organizations in Canada as well as video communication access and use within these communities and organizations. This article addresses the research question: What is the situation of broadband video communication research in First Nations communities?

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Although broadband infrastructure and use has been expanding in the areas of telehealth and distance education, broadband video communication remains largely underdeveloped among First Nations communities. There are possible opportunities for researchers to explore the potential for broadband video communication among First Nations communities and organizations in Canada. However, before any research projects can be conducted with First Nations communities, non-First Nations researchers must consider how their work will respect and benefit First Nations people. This paper concludes with a discussion around some of the potential challenges and suggests some avenues to move ahead.

As a result of colonization and assimilation practices, First Nations people are among the most disadvantaged populations in Canada. There is no question that First Nations people have not had the same opportunities as mainstream Canadians to advance and build their capacity in ICT for their communities or organizations. As a result, they are among the groups considered to be experiencing the "digital divide" (Birdsall, 2000, p. 1) in Canada. However, with the Canadian government's push towards "Connecting Canadians" (Birdsall, 2000, p. 6) and bridging the "digital divide" financial resources have been provided through various government departments and agencies, such as Industry Canada, Health Canada, Heritage Canada and Human Resources and Social Development, to aid First Nations communities in developing research or strategies related to broadband infrastructure and technology. In addition, consultations have taken place with First Nations to look at ways to develop the capacity for broadband infrastructure and ICT in First Nations communities across Canada. This consultation process was held in 2004-5 through the *Aboriginal Voice*, a project by the

Crossing Boundaries National Council. The reports from these consultations discuss the many challenges, as well as the benefits, of ICT for First Nations communities.

Other First Nations organizations, such as the Assembly of First Nations, the Atlantic Policy Congress, and the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly (British Columbia) have recognized the need to address the "digital divide" among First Nations people and communities. From the financial resources provided by the government agencies these organizations have developed strategies and plans for implementing broadband infrastructure and building ICT capacity among First Nations communities in Canada.

Despite the consultation, funding remains an issue of concern among First Nations leaders. The Canadian government has not developed a clear policy on broadband in First Nations communities, and the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has not developed broadband as a program area.

Nevertheless, many First Nations communities and organizations across Canada have built capacity among their communities to utilize broadband technology and deliver services such as telehealth and distance education; the First Nations in Northern Ontario have broadened their capacity in the field of broadband video communication through services delivered by Keewaytinook Okimakanak (a non-political Chiefs' Council in Northern Ontario).

Across Canada, other First Nations groups have recognized the benefits of broadband and developed their capacity in broadband video communication technologies mainly for the delivery of distance education. The *First Nations SchoolNet* program with its six regional management organizations across Canada is an example of

how broadband video communication has been utilized to provide videoconferencing for education to First Nations in their service areas.

Although broadband video communication is underdeveloped among First Nations across Canada, for various reasons such as the lack of sufficient funding, access, and technical capacity to develop and maintain the technology, many First Nations communities have recognized the potential benefits of broadband video communication, as well as the many challenges. So, there are potential research opportunities to explore broadband video communication with First Nations communities, as long as there is a process that allows for respect, collaboration and sensitivity by the researcher and the research project and does not further entrench historical practices of assimilation and cultural genocide.

The guidelines developed in the first article "Engaging First Nations Communities in Research," are used in this second article to frame a discussion on engaging First Nations in research on broadband video communication.

Article 3: Representation and Participation of First Nations Women in Online Videos

The article is authored by Perley. It includes a literature review as well as original research. I compiled the literature review, defined the research approach and the research questions, conducted the research and analysis and wrote the article. The article addresses the research question: How are First Nations women represented in online videos?

The literature, reviewed, in this article suggest that access to technology can improve the lives of First Nations women. Access to the Internet can provide an avenue for improving education, communication, networking, health, employment opportunities

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and resources. Since online technology is being made more readily available, so are opportunities linked with this technology.

The representation and participation of First Nations women in online video technology is the focus of this research. It explores the representation of First Nations women in online videos from two First Nations organization websites (K-Net and Atlantic Canada's First Nation Helpdesk) and individual First Nations videos from the two regional areas serviced by K-Net (Northern Ontario) and the Atlantic First Nation Helpdesk (Atlantic Canada) as well videos developed by First Nations on the YouTube website.

The research methodology involves an analysis of online videos from three websites: K-Net, Atlantic First Nation Helpdesk & YouTube. I selected three videos from 213 online videos I found on these websites, specific to the geographical locations of the First Nations in Northern Ontario and Eastern Canada: "North America's Next Top Indian Model", "The People vs Mary Moses", and "The K-Net Story – Sandra, Lac Seul First Nation and Joanne, Windigo First Nations Council". The article describes how I conducted the research and analyzed the videos from a critical feminist perspective. I explored the representation of women in each video, analyzing their image, positioning, and the relationship of power in the visual and spoken text. The analysis is categorized into four main components: video, image, voice or script, and resistance.

In this introductory chapter I have described the background to my research, followed by my research questions, research themes and an overview of the articles. The next chapters consist of the three articles followed by a concluding chapter.

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Chapter 2

Engaging First Nations Communities in Research

Abstract

In this article we explore ethical ways to engage First Nations communities in collaborative research projects. We apply this knowledge to RICTA, a new Canadian network of research on information and communication technologies with Aboriginal communities. We begin with Mihesuah's (1993) guidelines as a reference for developing our own starting point towards developing appropriate methodologies for the specific cultural, geographic, socio-economic and political realities of First Nations communities. The paper concludes with our own reflections on what this knowledge means for our research with First Nations people in the province of New Brunswick.

Introduction

RICTA – Research on ICT with Aboriginal Communities – is a new national cluster of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers working with Aboriginal communities. As researchers connected with RICTA, we see opportunities for First Nations in New Brunswick to get involved with research on ICT and education, health, economic development, and culture and language. The lead author Sonja Perley is a First Nations woman from the Tobique First Nations community in New Brunswick and a graduate student at the University of New Brunswick. Co-author Susan O'Donnell is a Senior Research Officer with the People-Centred Technologies group at NRC-IIT specializing in the social and communication aspects of information and communication technologies; she is also an Adjunct Professor in Sociology at UNB. This article grew

from the recognition that to develop collaborative research projects – involving Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers based in academic and government research institutions and First Nations community representatives and community-based researchers – we needed to start by developing some methodologies for moving forward. We wanted to challenge the traditional ways of doing research with First Nations by attempting to decolonize research and shift away from the traditional Western mainstream research paradigm to one that Tuhiwai Smith (1999) describes as an alternate approach. In this alternative approach, First Nations people set the research priorities and provide a framework for the research ethics, responsibility and methods; as well, the assumptions of Western knowledge of Indigenous peoples are challenged and resisted by giving voice and testimony to their experiences and providing alternative knowledges and ways of knowing.

New Brunswick First Nations

There are fifteen First Nations communities in the province of New Brunswick, with two distinct Native affiliations, Maliseet and Mi'kmaq. The six Maliseet Nation communities are located along the St. John River or Wolastoq in the Maliseet language, which passes through the province of New Brunswick. This river has traditionally been the main source of survival for the Maliseet people who in Maliseet are traditionally called Wolastoqewiyik, meaning "people of the River" (Perley, 1992). Traditional locations were along the river and eventually became settlement communities for the Maliseet people during the time of European contact and the later imposition of the reservation system by the colonial government. The Mi'kmaq Nation communities in New Brunswick are largely located along the coastal regions of the province and have

lived traditionally off the ocean's abundant food source within and along the coastal waters.

Overall, both Native groups moved around the traditional territory for hunting, fishing and gathering of food supplies, Maliseet and Mi'kmaq Nations continue to hold strong ties with the land, the inherent rights of First Peoples, and supported by the "Peace and Friendship Treaty" with the crown.

Conducting Research on First Nations Issues

First Nations people have had and continue to have a historically oppressed relationship with Western mainstream research practices which has contributed to the assimilation, exploitation, destruction and cultural genocide of First Nations people, their language and their culture. Therefore, First Nations peoples are more actively involved in raising concerns over Western mainstream research practises as well as developing guidelines and protocols for researchers interested in any research with First Nations people and culture. During the past decade there has been a shift towards a new research paradigm in which First Nations communities are more actively involved in setting the priorities and parameters and in the development and conduct of research.

Among the earliest indications of this paradigm shift are guidelines developed by Devon Mihesuah, an American scholar and member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Her "guidelines for institutions with scholars who conduct research on American Indians" (Mihesuah, 1993) were developed in response to the fact that most non-Aboriginal researchers use their data collected from American Indians for their own gain – for tenure, promotion, grants, marketability and prestige – while giving nothing in

return to their subjects of study, and that others assume paternalistic approaches to this research. Many of Mihesuah's 10 guidelines are still relevant today:

- Only the First Nations community/ elected political and religious leadership should review and approve the research proposal

- Research should remain sensitive to the economic, social, physical, psychological, religious, and general welfare of the individuals and cultures being studied

- Researchers who are preparing grant applications to conduct research with Aboriginal peoples should be prepared to spend months, if not a year, to allow the participants to thoroughly understand every aspect of the study

- Reseachers should use caution when using cameras and tape recorders

- Informants should be given fair and appropriate return

- The anticipated consequences of the research should be communicated to individuals and groups that will be affected

- Every attempt should be made to cooperate with the current host society

- Physical anthropologists, archaeologists, and other researchers wishing to desecrate Indian burials in order to study remains and funerary objects should obtain permission to do so from tribes

- Results of the study should be reviewed by the tribes/ elected representatives and religious leaders

- Researchers must follow the guidelines for each new project

A follow up to Mihesuah's research guidelines was her book with contributions from other First Nations scholars, primarily from the United States, which focused on

researching First Nations people, their culture and history (Mihesuah, 1998). Many of the authors brought attention to the limitations and ethical issues of some previous research especially historical research and writing about First Nations by scholars who were non-First Nations (Deloria, 1998; Fixico, 1998; Mihesuah, 1998; Miller, 1998; Swisher, 1998; Whitt, 1998; Wilson, 1998).

History has not been the only discipline viewed as challenging and problematic in its research, writing and portrayal of First Nations people. Many First Nations groups as well as some of the First Nations scholars who contributed to Mihesuah's book have written about such issues found within many academic fields and disciplines. Anthropology, education, as well as literature, media and the new field of Native Studies have been shown to perpetuate negative imagery and inaccuracies in the research, writing and portrayal of First Nations people (Allen, 1998; Champagne, 1998; Cook-Lynn, 1998; Swisher, 1998; Whitt, 1998; Wilson, 1998a). Contributions from the authors in this book have provided significant insight into the many challenges that First Nations people and First Nations scholars are addressing in the United States in the area of researching and writing about First Nations people and communities.

Decolonizing Methodologies by Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) addresses the Western research paradigm and its application to Indigenous groups, universally. Tuhiwai Smith "identifies research as a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other" (p. 2). She challenges the current Western paradigm of research and argues for Indigenous people and Indigenous researchers setting the parameters and priorities of the research, its ethics, responsibilities and methodology. She further provides an avenue "to address social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization

and social justice" (p. 4), and means through which research can be placed and analyzed within a broader historical, political and cultural context or perspective.

In Canada, First Nations people and the mainstream research community have likewise been developing their understanding of how research with Aboriginal peoples should be conducted. The Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies published ethical principles for the conduct of research in the North in 1982 (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Research, 1988) and the Inuit Circumpolar conference published principles and elements for a comprehensive Arctic policy in 1995 (Masuzumi and Quirk, 1995). In 1993, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) – the largest inquiry to date on the situation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada – published ethical guidelines for research (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993). In 1996, guidelines for entry into an Aboriginal community were developed for community health and nursing researchers working with Dene communities (Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef and Rutherford, 1996) and the Canadian Archaeological Association published a statement of principles for ethical conduct pertaining to Aboriginal peoples (Canadian Archaeological Association, 1996). In 2004, the First Nations University of Canada, the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina published a joint report that highlighted the characteristics of this new paradigm (Ermine, Sinclair and Jeffrey, 2004).

In 2003, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) – one of the primary funders of First Nations research - published the results of its "Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples" (McNaughton and Rock, 2003). The SSHRC consultation is important because it was the largest consultation about social sciences and humanities on Aboriginal issues (McNaughton and Rock, 2003). The

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report discussed the new research paradigm that is evolving and outlined how SSHRC could initiate programs in Aboriginal research.

Currently, the two most significant documents or approaches guiding research on Aboriginal issues in Canada are the Tri-Council policy on ethical conduct for research involving humans (Tri-Council, 1997), Section 6, and the analysis of OCAP – ownership, control, access and possession or self-determination applied to research (Schnarch, 2004). The Tri-Council policy was developed by the three Canadian government funding councils for research: SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR. The policy is significant because every Canadian researcher intending to collect data on humans must have their research plans subjected to review by research ethics boards (REBs). REBs use the Tri-Council policy to assess the research plans decide whether the research can go ahead and how the plans should be modified. Section 6 of the Tri-Council policy, Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples, is not a well-developed policy or theory but rather a brief statement of introduction followed by a short bullet-point list of good practices that researchers should consider. The statement in Section 6 acknowledges that there has been limited involvement and consultation with Aboriginal groups in Canada in the development of section 6 of the Tri-Council Policy; it does not address the considerable concerns of Aboriginal peoples regarding research involving Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The second approach – OCAP – is significant because it is the first document/theoretical approach to how research with First Nations communities should be conducted, developed by First Nations people. OCAP, a response to the role of knowledge production in reproducing colonial relations, "has become a rallying cry to many First Nations and should be a wake-up call for researchers" (Schnarch, 2004, p.

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80). From a First Nations perspective, the benefits of OCAP include rebuilding trust, improving research quality and relevance, decreasing bias, and developing capacity and empowerment to make change in First Nations communities.

Towards a Methodology for Engaging New Brunswick First Nations in Research

The literature introduced above is guiding our thinking about a methodology for engaging New Brunswick First Nations in ICT research. The discussion that follows is our starting point for how we intend to approach this research. Although the province of New Brunswick is the focus of our current thinking, this methodology may also be relevant for Indigenous peoples or communities in other provinces and territories. We expect that our methodology will develop and expand in the future. The five themes below can be considered the foundation for developing any research project.

<u>Building a relationship, partnerships and collaborations with First Nations</u>

A relationship based on mutual trust and respect will require a new research paradigm in which First Nations and researchers are partners sharing power so there can be true collaboration between equals. This can help set the framework that would provide an opportunity to challenge the traditional ways of doing research with First Nations by attempting to decolonize research and shift away from the traditional Western mainstream research paradigm. It would also open the door for an approach where Western ways of knowing and the assumptions of Western knowledge are challenged and resisted by First Nations people.

Wilson (1998a) encourages the building of relationships and trust between non-First Nations researchers and First Nations people which will benefit both parties in that

the First Nations people will have the opportunity provide their perspectives and the non-Aboriginal researcher will have the approval of the First Nations community. She notes, however, that the researcher needs to understand that relationship building is a lengthy process and may take extensive involvement of the researcher to understand the historical relations of the community and be accepted by the people. Wilson stresses the need for more collaboration between non-First Nations researchers and First Nations people regarding their history for a more balanced representation, interpretation and portrayal of their history. This, she suggests, can be in many different forms from building relationships with some of the First Nations people being researched, talking to elders in order to gain better understanding of information and its accuracy, as well giving the First Nations people the opportunity to comment on the research and writing as it is being developed.

Fixico (1998) stresses the importance of developing ethics and responsibility in the research, writing and teaching of First Nations history. This will help to ensure sensitivity to the information provided as well as how it is written, and it will provide an opportunity for First Nations perspectives and accounts of their history. Further, building a trusting and respectful relationship with First Nations people is crucial to the development of ethical guidelines and responsibilities in First Nations historical research.

The Tri-Council policy (1997), Section 6 notes that researchers have not always conducted research with Aboriginal communities in a respectful way. The policy recommends that researchers involved with Aboriginal communities: conceptualize and conduct research with Aboriginal groups as a partnership; consult members of the group who have relevant expertise; involve the group in the design of the project; provide the

group with information about protection of the group's cultural estate and other property, the availability of a preliminary report for comment, the potential employment by researchers of community members, researchers' willingness to cooperate with community institutions, and to deposit data, working papers and related materials in an agreed-upon repository; acknowledge in the publication of the research results the various viewpoints of the community on the topics researched; and afford the community an opportunity to react and respond to the research findings before the completion of the final report, in the final report or even in all relevant publications.

The SSHRC report (McNaughton and Rock, 12003) underlines the importance of equity as a common denominator. It highlights the paradigm shift occurring in how Aboriginal research is understood. Partnership is a key theme. Several models of partnership are proposed, including an extension of a peer-review system with Aboriginal educators and community members reviewing and recommending applications for funding by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people doing research on Aboriginal issues. Another model is a partnership of joint exploration, using the Gus-wen-tah or Two Row Wampum treaty for Haudenosaunee and European relations. The SSHRC report highlights one of the main challenges facing partnerships: ensuring that enough time and resources are provided to allow Aboriginal systems of knowledge to develop a stronger footing (McNaughton & Rock, 2003).

Schnarch (2004) goes much further, describing many instances of researchers not building relationships with First Nations. In response, many Aboriginal community members are saying "we've been researched to death" (p. 82). The OCAP approach instead encourages First Nations to refuse to work with researchers who do not respect the ability of communities to do their own research. OCAP suggests that First Nations

contract, rather than partner with, researchers. "The contract involves the purchase of services and makes clear the lines of accountability" (p. 90). OCAP - ownership, control, access and possession – principles state that First Nations communities own information collectively, that First Nations have a right to control all aspects of research and information management of a research project from inception to completion, that First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves no matter where it is held, and that First Nations can assert and protect ownership of data.

Developing First Nations' priorities for research

In the colonial and Western research paradigm, non-First Nations and institutional researchers set the priorities and boundaries for research. First Nations' priorities were not heard or respected and First Nations researchers and their contributions were not valued. Developing First Nations' priorities for research includes respect and recognition of First Nations researchers and their existing priorities. However, it goes further than this to include developing research methodologies that encourage First Nations to articulate their own research agenda.

Mihesuah (1998) states that although there has been progress in the writing and researching of First Nations people including First Nations women by non-First Nations scholars, there still remains inaccuracies and lack of First Nations representation. By not utilizing First Nations voices and bridging the past with the present, non-First Nations scholars provide only one perspective on the history of First Nations people. Therefore, it is important for First Nations people to "be writing history in the first place" (p. 37).

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes that Indigenous groups are now starting to get involved in rewriting their history and incorporate their perspectives into these accounts.

"It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore spirit" (p. 28). This, she claims, is very different from the traditional Western approach to research of First Nations history by non-First Nations researchers.

Swisher (1998) emphasizes in her article the need for First Nations people to have the authority and control to carry out the research and writing regarding First Nations education. Despite the efforts of non-First Nations researchers who use methods that try to capture the voice and perspectives of First Nations people, their research and writing is still from the perspective of the Western mainstream society. Often "what is missing is the passion from within and the authority to ask new and different questions based on histories and experiences as Indigenous people" (p.193). The capacity of First Nations researchers to carry out their own research needs to be recognized. Swisher provides the example of the "National Dialogue Project on American Indian Education", developed and completed by First Nations people, and the First Nations staff and students of the Native Studies program wrote the report. As well, other First Nations scholars have the capacity to conduct the research and writing which will provide the voice, sensitivity and holistic approach that are needed for accuracy in the perspective, portrayal and realities of First Nations people. Further, Swisher writes "it is more than different ways of knowing; it is knowing that what we think is grounded in principles of sovereignty and self-determination and that it has credibility" (p.193).

Canada's Tri-Council policy (1997), Section 6 recommends that researchers involved with Aboriginal communities: examine how the research may be shaped to address the needs and concerns of the group; and make best efforts to ensure that the emphasis of the research, and the ways chosen to conduct it, respect the many

viewpoints of different segments of the group. In contrast, the OCAP approach

(Schnarch, 2004) prioritizes First Nations researchers and research by First Nations

communities; there is little room for non-Aboriginal researchers in the OCAP model.

OCAP insists on the right of First Nations people to determine their research priorities

independently of outside researchers.

Developing non-First Nations researchers self-awareness of their epistemological assumptions and privileged locations

All researchers need to be aware of their own biases and assumptions and their

privileged position in society, and how that privilege contributes to unequal power

relations among different groups and cultures in society and shapes research priorities.

Historically, non-Aboriginal researchers have contributed to the destruction of First

Nations by writing them out of history or providing only one version of history. This has

led to the devaluing the knowledge and culture of First Nations peoples and a loss of

many of their traditional ways, contributing to the practice of assimilation and cultural

genocide. In order to not perpetuate that imbalance of power, non-Aboriginal researchers

working with First Nations people need to examine their own place within these unequal

power relations and question why they are conducting this kind of research.

The research and writing by non-First Nations scholars have been largely

developed from a patriarchal or Western feminist perspective (Mihesuah, 1998). First

Nations people judged by these Western standards do not reflect the complexity or

reality of the First Nations people and their culture, rather the biases of the non-

Aboriginal researchers.

Whitt's (1998) article "Cultural Imperialism and the Marketing of Native

America" has important implications for research and writing about First Nations

people. The challenge of ownership and academic freedom for the information, research and copyright of aspects of First Nations culture, spirituality, arts, music and so on, has been debated and continues to be debated as more First Nations people are voicing disapproval over this exploitation and appropriation of their culture by non-First Nations people. Whitt explains this as cultural imperialism that "whether or not it is conscious and intentional, it serves to extend the political power, secure the social control, and further the economic profit of the dominant culture" (p. 140). This would be extended to non-Aboriginal academic researchers who use the argument of "academic freedom" to seek knowledge and truth but also to ensure that the information collected and written about is copyrighted and used to enhance one's standing, promotion and position in the Western academic institutions. Whitt writes:

> "They attempt to dictate the terms of the debate by focusing attention on issues of freedom of speech and thought and deflecting it from the active commercial exploitation and the historical realities of power that condition current dominant/indigenous relations" (p. 146).

Although Champagne (1998) argues that both First Nations and non-First Nations scholars are entitled to study and research First Nations people, he does stress that often the non-First Nations scholar's reliance on Western standards, theories and analysis has led to incorrect interpretations with little emphasis on the cultural aspects of the First Nations group. A First Nations researcher may be more aware of specific issues that need research and analysis, and have access to information and relationships with First Nations. However, being a First Nations researcher without the experience, skills and values that will insure sensitivity and accuracy to the research and writing of First Nations people is also not acceptable. He furthered emphasized the need for ethics and

guidelines in the research and writing of First Nations people and noted that more First Nations groups are requesting some reciprocity for the information or access to information they provide. So, researchers should seek approval or inform the First Nations group of their research interest and if it is not acceptable to the First Nations community it should not proceed (Champagne, 1998).

First Nations scholars in the field of Native studies often have different perspectives and values than non- Aboriginal scholars in other academic disciplines, and the contributions made by First Nations scholars in this field are not as valued as with other disciplines (Champagne, 1998). Since First Nations scholars are few they have a minority voice in addressing their concerns if they are given a voice at all. Dabulkis-Hunter (2002) studied how White writers "explore" Native issues, knowledge and experiences. They concluded that until non-Native researchers begin to examine their own privilege and their assumptions about who is the expert and who is the object of study, Native people and their communities will continue to be harmed and practices of cultural genocide will be maintained.

Integrating the political, socio-economic and historical contexts of the research

Any research topic involving First Nations people – including ICT research – cannot be understood outside of the historical, political and socio-economic relations, past and present, of First Nations people. Compared to mainstream Canada, First Nations communities experience power and resource imbalances in education, health, economic development, language and culture, and many other areas. These relations are a direct result of the long history of exploitation of First Nations people that has characterized Canadian society.

Although Mihesuah (1998) focuses primarily on First Nations women, she stresses the need to have a holistic approach in the development of First Nations history which involves bridging the past with the present as well as understanding the complexity of First Nations people, especially the women, from their own perspectives.

Miller (1998) focuses on the research and writing approaches to First Nations history by non-First Nations historians. The sources or accounts used in their research often consists of written documents developed by non-First Nations people with little consultation, or collaboration and sometimes no contact with the First Nations group whose ancestors are written about. As a result, many First Nations people have challenged the accuracy of the information and the representation of their ancestors in these published texts while at the same time non-First Nations history committees have awarded prizes for their works. The Tri-Council policy (1997), Section 6 recommends that researchers involved with Aboriginal communities respect the culture, traditions and knowledge of the Aboriginal group.

Expanding the borders of the researchers' academic discipline, methodologies and theories

One single approach to research with First Nations people is not enough. In order to understand the complexity and dynamics in any area of First Nations research – whether history, education, anthropology, ICT or any other discipline – researchers need to be open to crossing the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines as well as looking at other perspectives and sources of knowledge.

As First Nations scholars have emphasized the need for more accurate and sensitive means to researching First Nations people and to the importance of capturing their voice, perspectives and realities, a multidisciplinary approach may be of benefit to

those scholars and First Nations groups who have challenged the traditional methods of researching and writing about First Nations people. Not only will such an approach use a cross-disciplinary process but may also open the door for new questions, deeper analysis of Indigenous issues, the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, the valuing of Indigenous knowledge, oral tradition and creation of new concepts and knowledge.

Using a cross-disciplinary approach in research with First Nations people could open the doors to various research methods and tools as well as various types of information to get a more accurate and respectful portrayal of First Nations history. To some degree the cross-disciplinary concept is already being practiced, as with ethnohistory which combines history and anthropology (Fixico, 1998). Although it may be argued that a cross-disciplinary approach is yet another Western mainstream concept with its standards and theories from the same Western academic disciplines, it still holds possibilities for engaging other methods of inquiry, embracing different knowledges and giving voice to those groups that are normally silenced. The writing and research of First Nations history has largely been defined by non-First Nations scholars and has therefore set the boundaries on the process and methods for information collection and the types of information used in the research.

However, the multidisciplinary approach, as with any research approach with Indigenous peoples, needs to be decolonized. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains that decolonization of Western approaches to research and writing "is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (p. 39).

Wilson (1998b) challenges the traditional methods of researching and writing history by supporting the use of oral tradition as a source that not only enhances the

history but also fills in gaps that are normally left out of the history of First Nations people. Through the utilization of oral traditions, First Nations peoples'perspectives are included, allowing for a "focus from the 'Indian atrocities', which are provided in rich detail in histories by non-Indian scholars, to 'white atrocities' and Indian courage" (p. 34-35). Further, Wilson argues researchers need to explore various sources of information that extends beyond the borders defined in the field of history and the role as "validators or verifiers of stories" (p. 35).

The teaching, researching and writing of information that may be sacred to some First Nations groups is an area of struggle for some First Nations scholars (Allen, 1998). Allen notes her own ethical dilemma in her capacity as a Native Studies instructor and as a First Nations person as she is confronted with the issue. She further challenges the utilization of oral tradition as a source used for research and writing as it may go against the moral and ethical values of the First Nations group and the keeping sacred of information around ceremonies, folklore and myths. This to some degree conflicts with the point made by Wilson (1998b) who supports the use of oral tradition as a means for presenting a First Nations perspective in the research and writing of First Nations history.

Moving Forward

We close this paper with personal reflections about questions that the research has raised for us, and where we see the challenges for moving forward.

Sonja: As a First Nations researcher there are many benefits as well as disadvantages when researching and writing about and for First Nations people especially among my own people and within my own community. Many questions

come to mind as I reflect on Mihesuah's guidelines and the themes that were revealed through the literature review on First Nations or Indigenous research and writing. I have questions around my values as a First Nations person and the concern I have for my community and the well-being of my people. So, any type of research would need to be sensitive to the concerns and issues of my community and should be given top priority. As I make my way along this path as a First Nations woman and researcher I recognize the many conflicts both internal and external that I will face along the way and there will be many more that I am not yet aware of. Perhaps my starting point has always been to take pride in being a Maliseet or Wolastoq woman from the Tobique First Nations and to stay grounded in the values that support my people.

Susan: One of the most important questions raised for me in the research is how I can both respect the concept of OCAP and also develop my research relationships and work with First Nations communities on ICT research. I see the next step for me as developing more self-awareness of my own history and perspectives and understanding why I am engaged in this type of research, what I have to offer and what I have to learn. One promising way forward is looking at the points of solidarity and commonalities between my own history and perspective and those of the First Nations people with whom I am developing research relationships. I will never be an "insider" to First Nations but I can share common experiences and visions for the future. For example, as a dual Irish and Canadian citizen I have an understanding of how colonialism led to the cultural genocide of both my Irish ancestors and First Nations in Canada. I also believe that my understanding of gender issues and my experiences as a woman living in patriarchal societies gives me some common ground with First Nations women. I also

share a strong interest in how ICT can facilitate social inclusion and cohesion and how research on this can happen.

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Chapter 3

Broadband Video Communications Research with First Nations Communities

Abstract

This paper provides an overview of policies and strategies for broadband infrastructure and access, and broadband video communication development and use in First Nations communities in Canada. The research conducted to date on broadband video in Aboriginal communities has focused almost exclusively on evaluations of distance education and telehealth applications. There has been little research on other kinds of applications. The authors discuss opportunities for researchers to investigate and explore future possibilities for broadband video communication for First Nations communities across Canada. Before First Nations communities develop broadband video communication applications, however, concrete community-specific planning and development that looks at the needs, priorities, and long-term goals of the community and its members as determined by First Nations people, must be fully addressed.

Background: Canadian "Digital Divide" Policy and Ideology

In recent years there has been a push by the Canadian government and its agencies toward increasing access to broadband Internet and bridging the "digital divide" (Birdsall, 2000, p. 1) experienced by disadvantaged groups. The digital divide is conceived as the gap in Internet access and information and communication technology (ICT) use among different social groups and geographical regions (Birdsall, 2000).

Researchers have explored the economic and political motivations for making the digital divide an issue in Canada (Birdsall, 2000; Clement and Shade, 1998;

Gurstein, 2003; Rideout, 2000). Before this gap was fully conceived, an ideology gained acceptance that emphasized a free market concept of allocation of Internet infrastructure and information technology. This was in contrast to the notion of universal access to telecommunication infrastructure and services that Canadians have long embraced as a core national value. In the early 1990s, the Information Highway Advisory Council, with membership consisting of ICT industry representatives and spear-headed by Industry Canada, recommended that the federal government create a competitive environment fostering consumer-driven development of Internet services. Further, government ICT policy pushed the concept of "Connecting Canadians" (Birdsall, 2000, p.6) to ensure a large consumer base that would attract private sector funding to build the infrastructure for broadband Internet, thus creating an economic boost.

Government left broadband development in the hands of the market, assuming that a free market economy based on competition would make accessibility easier and more affordable. However, with information considered a commodity and with no real government regulations around connectivity or access, the private sector set the standard for broadband access to those consumers who can afford it. The idea of a division based on those who have access and those who do not was recognized in the 1990s. Birdsall (2000) suggests that the debate on the digital divide will continue but will likely shift from the elimination of the digital divide to merely defining "only how large or small it should be," resulting from a lack of a clear definition of what universal access means and how public policy can achieve this in Canada.

Further, the questions around access for what, for whom and for what purpose remain a fundamental issue (Clement and Shade, 1998). Discussion of access to broadband has largely revolved around infrastructure and access to consume content

produced by commercial organizations. This discussion has largely ignored the developments of strategies for effective use of ICT by marginalized groups in order "to support local economic development, social justice and political empowerment; ensuring local access to education and health services; enabling local control of information production and distribution; and, ensuring the survival and continuing vitality of indigenous cultures" (Gurstein, 2003, p. 7). If access remains as "simply access" to "passive consumers" (p. 8) then real opportunities will remain in the hands of a select few who provide the services and design and produce the information on the Internet, while the marginalized groups continue to be at a disadvantage economically, socially and politically.

Policies and Strategies for Broadband Infrastructure and Access in First Nations Communities

Aboriginal people throughout Canada have historically been at a disadvantage compared to other Canadians due to the effects of colonization and assimilation practices by the colonial powers. These effects "continue to resonate in the present and the harm done in the past continues to manifest intergenerationally in the present" (Wesley-Esquimaux and Smolewski, 2004, p. 5). The federal government's market-driven policies for broadband Internet encourage access to ICT by those who have the financial means to afford it, consequently Aboriginal groups in Canada are among those on the wrong side of the digital divide.

With the emphasis now on ICT as a means to elevate social conditions, empower marginalized groups and increase potential for economic opportunities (Clement and Shade, 1998; Gurstein, 2003), First Nations communities attempted to access the

financial resources provided by the government to start developing strategies for accessing and using broadband Internet.

To date, the federal government has engaged in consultations and meetings about broadband access with Aboriginal groups and stakeholders, but there remains no clear coherent government policy on broadband technology and Aboriginal communities. Until very recently, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) – the federal government department with primary responsibility for First Nations issues – did not develop broadband as a program area and thus did not fund broadband or ICT development in First Nations communities. However, Industry Canada has taken the clear lead with funded programs such as *Brand*, *First Nations Schoolnet* and the *Community Access Program* in First Nation communities. Health Canada, Heritage Canada, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, and Justice Canada are among the other federal departments involved in funding programs related to broadband in First Nations communities. In early 2006, INAC announced a new program to develop an "Aboriginal Single Window" on the web to deliver services to First Nations and other Aboriginal communities in Canada.

In 2004-2005, *Aboriginal Voice*, a project of the Crossing Boundaries National Council, was engaged in consultations about ICT with Aboriginal peoples across Canada. The focus of the project was to provide a means by which Aboriginal people would provide input and create awareness of the unique issues, challenges and opportunities of Aboriginal peoples concerning ICT. Aboriginal Voice resulted in reports outlining the feedback from the roundtable dialogues with Aboriginal people, as well as publications that discuss the benefits and challenges of ICT in Aboriginal

communities and concerns about the "digital divide" among Aboriginal communities (Crossing Boundaries National Council, 2006).

Some First Nations organizations and communities across Canada have used the financial resources offered by the federal government to develop plans for implementing and accessing broadband infrastructure. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN), a national group representing First Nations people in Canada, has moved forward on a mandate to address the digital divide among First Nations communities and has adopted resolutions concerning broadband access by all First Nations. Aside from access to broadband, the AFN has highlighted the need for continued funding in order to sustain and maintain broadband technology once access has been delivered in First Nations communities (Assembly of First Nations, 2001).

The Atlantic Policy Congress (2002) report "An Atlantic First Nations Information Communications Technology Vision and Strategy" provides an excellent overview of a comprehensive plan for developing an ICT agenda for the Atlantic First Nations communities. Based on roundtable dialogues with key players from First Nations, government, private sector and educational institutions, the recommendations reflect a holistic approach to developing an ICT plan that not only takes into account the needs and priorities of the First Nations communities but also looks at ICT implementation as determined by the community and essential to the community plans. One recommendation is for a structure that would "provide guidance and help to mobilize and coordinate capacity" (p. 7) for training staff at the community level. Further, the overall strategy promoted in this document also suggests that it could be "tailored to the different starting points within individual communities, with collaboration among First Nations at a regional level (as) a key principle" (p. 7). This

strategy is suggested to be adaptable to all the First Nations in the Atlantic Provinces. However the APC plan has not received the resources necessary to proceed.

The First Nation Technology Council in British Colombia was established in 2003, by the First Nations Summit Chiefs in Assembly in response to the recognized need determined by the First Nations communities to address and develop the technological capacity and skills among their community members. The FNTC mandate was to develop a plan that would look at infrastructure development, access, skill development and technical support. Funding was sought from both Federal and Provincial government sources. The FNTC website (www.fntc.info) provides a comprehensive list of services including but not limited to their strategic plan, policies, handbooks, and other resources that may be useful for other First Nations communities in their planning for broadband infrastructure development, access and use.

Broadband Video Communication Development and Use in First Nations

To date, policy and program initiatives to develop broadband infrastructure and capacity in First Nations communities have not made the distinction between "high speed Internet" and broadband capable of sustaining real-time audio and video communication. Alberta, British Columbia and New Brunswick have broadband infrastructure development programs to extend high-speed Internet to all First Nations communities in these provinces, and high speed Internet is also available in many First Nations communities in other provinces and territories. However, although high speed Internet allows faster email or Web browsing capabilities, it does not guarantee the quality of service required for reliable broadband video communication.

In contrast, broadband that allows reliable video communication – including video chat, multi-site videoconferencing, video podcasting and streaming videos on the Web – offers more potential for First Nations to achieve their social, economic, cultural and political aspirations. Video communication on broadband can be used not only for distance learning and telehealth but also for delivering government services (including Aboriginal government), delivering community news and information, increasing the participation of Aboriginal and other citizens in a range of social, economic, political and cultural activities, and sharing and promoting common perspectives.

Currently, the use of broadband video communication varies among First Nations people. Variables include the availability of broadband infrastructure, technical and financial capacity to use broadband video, knowledge about and capacity to act on opportunities, and others. Although using broadband for video communication remains underdeveloped in First Nations communities as a whole, successful initiatives have been underway for many years, particularly in the areas of distance education and telehealth applications.

Leading the field in broadband video communication by and for First Nations is Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO), a non-political Chiefs Council in Northern Ontario (www.knet.ca/info.html). The KO division K-Net provides web, Internet, satellite and videoconferencing services and infrastructure to remote communities in Northern Ontario. K-Net has an ongoing relationship with Industry Canada. As Industry Canada's Aboriginal Smart Community, K-Net is recognized internationally as a leader in Aboriginal ICT and connectivity. K-Net works with the FedNor, BRAND, SITT, SchoolNet, and CAP programs and other partners to provide community broadband connectivity solutions using public resources available from Telesat Canada.

Distance education is a relatively developed area for broadband video communication by and for First Nations. *First Nations SchoolNet* is a sophisticated user and promoter of videoconferencing for education. The six First Nations SchoolNet regional management organizations (RMOs) across Canada are working in their particular regions to advance broadband infrastructure and applications in First Nations schools and communities. Videoconferencing is now recognized as an important component for supporting the required type of broadband infrastructure required in these communities. As such, the RMOs in the Atlantic, Quebec and Saskatchewan and Alberta regions are now expanding their services to include their own videoconferencing bridging hardware and support. The six RMOs are:

- Atlantic Canada First Nations Helpdesk (Sydney, Nova Scotia)
- The First Nations Education Council (CEPN-FNEC, Wendake, Quebec)
- Keewaytinook Okimakanak (K-Net, Balmertown, Ontario)
- Keewatin Tribal Council (Thompson, Manitoba)
- Keewatin Career Development Corporation (KCDC, La Ronge, Sask)
- First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC, Vancouver, BC)

Many educational projects using broadband video have been developed by and with First Nations. The *Keewaytinook Internet High School* (http://kihs.knet.ca/) is the first private secondary school in Ontario to offer accredited courses using broadband Internet. KiHS was created for youth living in small isolated First Nations communities in Ontario who previously had to leave home to attend high school. *Music Grid*, an innovative project using broadband video communication for teaching music, is used with pupils in Kangiqsualujjuaq (northern Quebec) and Iqualuit (Nunavut). The Adult Education department of the Cree School Board teaches adult upgrading classes at the secondary level via videoconference to three First Nations communities in Northern

Quebec. A number of Canadian universities use videoconferencing for distance nursing education in First Nations communities.

Telehealth is another area where broadband video communication is relatively developed. Many hospitals, universities and medical centres across Canada use broadband video for telehealth applications in First Nations communities. KO Telehealth (KoTH) links patients in 24 remote and isolated communities in the Sioux Lookout zone with physicians and specialists in Winnipeg, Thunder Bay and southern Ontario. Its services have been expanding to include tele-psychiatry and tele-radiology. KoTH is the only telehealth network in Canada managed and operated by Aboriginal people.

Where the broadband infrastructure is available, some Aboriginal people – especially young people – are exploring the entertainment and personal educational possibilities of video through applications and devices such as video iPods, webcasting videos (music videos), video games, and video cell phones. However broadband video content made by and for First Nations - for games, iPods, webcasts and so on – remains very limited. The Aboriginal Peoples' Television Network (APTN) streams several promotional videos from its website (www.aptn.ca) but has not made its programs available online. Some websites by First Nations individuals and organizations have entertainment and personal education videos available for viewing or downloading (see, for example, Cal Kenny's site (http://calkenny.myknet.org/). A number of projects are in development. The *Aboriginal Cultures and Traditions Storytelling* website (http://cado.ayn.ca/index.asp) has audio content only. The *I'powahsin Project* (http://www.ucalgary.ca/~jparker/I'powahsin/index.html) at the University of Calgary

and Red Crow College in Alberta is developing a portable *Game Boy* game to assist the teaching of the Blackfoot language.

Research and Approaches to Research on Broadband Video in First Nations

The research conducted to date on broadband video in Aboriginal communities has focused almost exclusively on evaluations of distance education and telehealth applications (see Aitkin et al., 2004; Bale et al., 2005; Care, 2001 and 2003; Downing, 2002; Elias et al, 2004; Fiser, 2004b; Keewaytinook Okimakanak, 2005; Masum, Spence and Brooks, 2005; Muttitt et al., 2004; Ramirez et al., 2004). These have primarily been positive evaluations.

Aside from education and health applications, there has been little research on broadband video. Fiser (2004a) has been investigating broadband and community economic development in the KO communities. Ferreira et al. (2004, 2004a) have been exploring participatory video and policy development.

A significant development in 2004 was the establishment of the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Research Institute (KORI) by the KO Tribal Council. KORI conducts research on the use of ICT for the advancement of Aboriginal issues and facilitates connections between researchers working in this area and KO communities. KORI was one of the founders of RICTA, a network of researchers working on ICT research with Aboriginal communities (Kenny, Walmark and O'Donnell, 2005; Walmark, O'Donnell and Beaton, 2005).

We have articulated some approaches to doing research with Aboriginal peoples that are also relevant to research on broadband video communication research (Perley and O'Donnell, 2005). Our five suggested approaches to research are:

- Building a relationship, partnerships and collaborations with First Nations

- Developing First Nations' priorities for research

- Developing non-First Nations researchers' self-awareness of their epistemological assumptions and privileged

- Integrating the political, socio-economic and historical contexts of the research

- Expanding the borders of the researchers' academic discipline, methodologies and theories

Below we discuss these five approaches in the context of conducting research on broadband video communication.

Building a relationship, partnerships and collaborations with First Nations

Building a relationship based on mutual trust and respect is a vital first step before any attempt can be made to conduct research with First Nations people. There has been a long history of discontent with non-First Nations researchers among First Nations people. Historical oppressive Western mainstream research practices have contributed to the assimilation, destruction and cultural genocide of First Nations people, their language and their culture. Therefore, it is most important that researchers are aware of the role that research has played in the history of colonization and assimilation practices that have had and continue to have devastating impacts on First Nations people.

In essence research with First Nations people must involve collaboration with First Nations people to understand their priorities and needs for research. Researchers must be upfront with their motives and clarify their reasons for wanting to undertake a specific research project with First Nations people. Ultimately, it would be in the best

interest of both parties to come together to reach a common agenda or goal for research that will encompass the researchers' and First Nation's priorities in order to avoid the perpetuation of historical practices.

It should be noted that despite some commonalities among Aboriginal people such as colonization and oppression, Aboriginal people are very diverse. With this in mind it should also be noted that First Nations communities are at different levels, economically, socially, politically and technologically. Researchers should be aware of these differences and take them into account when researching broadband video with First Nations communities. Further, researchers may need to assess the level of awareness of broadband technology and the differences between the technologies and capabilities. While some First Nations communities are at an advanced level of technology implementation and services provided, such as KO, who have developed partnerships for technology development and are ready to enter into new agreements for research on broadband video communication, there are still many First Nations who are not. Therefore, it would seem that there are different categories of technological levels and capacity within First Nations necessitating different starting points in research. However, the priority for both categories would be to develop a common agenda for research. To do this would involve partnership and dialogue with First Nations people who are interested in community development initiatives to promote local capacity and community empowerment.

Developing First Nations' priorities for research

Along with developing partnerships and collaboration with First Nations in research it is also important to identify and dialogue around the First Nations

communities priorities. Researchers can assist a First Nations community in developing

and organizing their priorities as long as they do not try to impose their personal

research agendas on the First Nations communities. The final decision about the research

agenda or whether the community participates should ultimately be in the hands of the

First Nations community members.

Community collaboration through forum dialogues with community members

would help ensure that the community is informed about the research. Such forums

would provide feedback to both the researchers and the community leaders, as to the

priorities and needs of the community and what is in the best interest of the community.

It would be through collaborative efforts such as community forums that the researcher

should state the motives behind the research. If there is a commercial aspect linked to

the research, the community can decide on the extent of their involvement in the

research and how the community would directly benefit from it. There should be some

form of reciprocity to the First Nations community that provided the information for the

research project.

The ultimate goal of broadband video research with First Nations communities

should be to provide the necessary tools to use the technology as they see fit in their

communities. Further, it should ultimately assist the community in building the capacity

to use technology as an instrument to self-determination.

Developing non-First Nations researchers self-awareness of their epistemological assumptions and privileged locations

"The craft of research begins with a desire to search for truth, illuminate

knowledge and improve quality of live" (Kenny et al., 2004, p. 3). If this is the goal of

research then a vital process in research would call for researchers to reflect around self-

awareness and how their culture, education and privilege have shaped their biases, motives and perspectives. This would help in their understanding and sensitivity of how race, class, and gender, has privileged a few while marginalizing many, including First Nations people. If research is the desire to search for truth then it is important to question what constitutes truth and whose knowledge is being accepted and privileged.

It should be further understood that only certain knowledge and information developed by the privileged has been valued, taught and accepted in the Western education system. Indigenous knowledge has been silenced. Indigenous scholars are challenging the assumptions within Western academic research and writing by shifting to a new paradigm that stresses the need for more "Indigenous people and Indigenous researchers setting the parameters and priorities of the research, its ethics, responsibilities and methodology" (Perley and O'Donnell, 2005, p. 6).

Integrating the political, socio-economic and historical contexts of the research

First Nations communities experience power and resource imbalances that have developed during centuries of exploitation and neglect of First Nations people by mainstream Canadian society. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) found that the Canadian government has not honoured historical agreements made with Aboriginal peoples. Instead, it has replaced the historical agreements with policies aimed at removing Aboriginal peoples from their traditional lands, suppressing Aboriginal nations and their governments, undermining Aboriginal cultures and stifling Aboriginal identity. Research on broadband video in First Nations needs to take into account this

historical context and the resulting political and socio-economic realities experienced by First Nations today.

Some key challenges associated with this historical context include the low levels of formal educational achievement and the relative lack of skills that are necessary to develop ICT and broadband video communication across First Nations populations. Few First Nations people are actively participating in ICT and broadband video research and development today. Given that First Nations' voices are largely absent from discussions and developments related to broadband video, researchers have a particular obligation to seek out First Nations voices – for example the leaders involved in the First Nations SchoolNet program – to ensure these views and the wider political, socio-economic and historical contexts are integrated into the research.

Expanding the borders of the researchers' academic discipline, methodologies and theories

Researchers working on broadband video in First Nations communities must be open to crossing the traditional Western boundaries of their academic disciplines. A number of researchers have generated research within their specific disciplines – such as broadband policy, broadband infrastructure, participatory video in First Nations communities and so on. Research innovation will require genuine collaboration with Aboriginal communities and developing research approaches that incorporate many different and divergent perspectives.

Broadband video in First Nations communities is a prime area for multi-disciplinary research. It encompasses engineering and computer sciences – for designing and developing software and hardware applications and broadband infrastructure – as

well as social sciences and humanities disciplines that focus on the broader political, socio-economic, cultural and historical contexts of the First Nations people involved in the research. A considerable challenge is that technology research and development, including information technology such as broadband video, has traditionally involved engineers and computer scientists who have limited knowledge and understanding of the broader social contexts of First Nations people's lives. The research infrastructure in Canada is rigidly separated between "hard" scientists developing technology and "soft" scientists researching human and social contexts. The main Canadian research funding bodies – NSERC (for physical sciences) and SSHRC (for social sciences) and CIHR (for health research) – do not have mechanisms to encourage working together on technology and social science research teams. In addition, although participatory research with First Nations is encouraged in many SSHRC and CIHR disciplines, it is not required, and within the NSERC disciplines of software and hardware engineering and computer science it is virtually unknown.

Challenges for Research and Development

Clearly there are many opportunities for researchers to investigate and explore the possibilities of broadband video communication for First Nations communities across Canada. However, researchers working on these projects in First Nations communities will face a number of challenges.

First Nations people have many concerns about the well-being of their communities including land, housing, poverty, education, health and economic development. Understandably, broadband Internet is not a top priority for First Nations leaders. If broadband is to have a positive impact on First Nations communities

collaborative efforts will be required involving all the stakeholders, especially the members of the community targeted for broadband infrastructure.

Similarly, broadband video communication technology is also not a priority for First Nations communities. The equipment needed for broadband video communication is more costly and moving to implementing high-end technology such as video communication applications requires significant investment in infrastructure, equipment and maintenance. Very few Aboriginal communities have the resources necessary to implement and maintain broadband video communication.

Across Canada, broadband infrastructure that can support video communication is located primarily in urban centers. The infrastructure is underdeveloped in rural and remote areas, which ultimately discriminates against the Aboriginal communities largely located in these areas. Broadband infrastructure development is largely market-driven. Rural and remote First Nations communities with small populations are not a priority for commercial broadband service providers, and First Nations communities themselves do not have the financial resources to allocate to broadband infrastructure. One promising initiative is the recent CRTC decision that directed commercial telecommunications companies to make provisions in rural and remote areas – this initiative is in the early development stage at the time of writing.

For those Aboriginal communities closer to urban centers or those with broadband service, the cost of broadband service is often too great for many community residents. The cost of broadband is a challenge shared with other low-income communities; it is not a priority in many low-income households because of other more pressing basic needs.

Opportunities are limited for training in ICT within or near Aboriginal communities, and where training is available it usually covers only the basic computer applications or software. Further, individuals taking part in this training are often staff members or those at a higher academic level thus maintaining the gap in the digital divide within Aboriginal communities. Given that basic ICT training is limited in many Aboriginal communities, the high-end training to use, maintain and upgrade video communication technology is not available to the community residents.

Many of these challenges go back to the need for a comprehensive planning strategy developed by or in collaboration with a First Nations community. Aside from distance education and telehealth, the other applications and advantages of broadband video for Aboriginal communities are not very clear. A better and more thorough understanding of the direct benefits of investing in broadband technology needs to be considered and addressed at the local community level. Even with the widely published and accepted view that ICT can be empowering for marginalized groups or communities, it is not necessarily a given end result. Without considering the material circumstances of First Nations people's lives, such as land, water, housing, education, and poverty, and the strategies to address them at the local grass-roots level, broadband video communication research or development projects will not provide any real positive impact on a First Nations community.

A communication development strategy that includes community participation that not only stresses access to ICT but also, "the knowledge, skills, and supportive organizational and social structures to make effective use of that access and that e-technology to enable social and community objectives" (Gurstein, 2003, p. 9) might be a beneficial approach for First Nations communities.

This can only be achieved through community member involvement in the strategies that affect their community and personal well-being. The communication strategy can be incorporated or in line with community development initiatives, with possibilities for researchers taking on the role of providing assistance in assessment and evaluation of what technologies may be appropriate and effective for First Nations communities. Participatory action research may be the best approach for researchers involved with broadband video research with First Nations communities to ensure that community members are involved in all aspects of the research (Gurstein, 2003).

First Nations people want to bridge not only the digital divide but also the other social divides that set them at a disadvantage in Canada. Broadband access and ICT is not the answer but rather an instrument that may, if properly implemented, help First Nations people but only after other social, economic and political conditions are recognized and resolved appropriately for the benefit of First Nations people.

Providing broadband access in some of these environments without any real consideration of the social, political and economic conditions or effective leadership may lead to more discontent in a First Nations community. Without understanding the overall history of First Nations and the environment in which First Nations people live, plans forged by the Government without appropriate collaboration with community members are set for failure. This has been played over and over again. Governments take charge, set a plan, consult with First Nations after the agenda is set, provide inadequate financial assistance to gain cooperation with leadership, and attempt to implement a plan that has no membership cooperation or collaboration. Who benefits from this approach? The Government will take credit for assisting First Nations, First Nations leaders will have access to financial resources, and those on the top end of the

First Nations community hierarchy will benefit, thus resulting in very few First Nations

people actually benefiting from the Government's initiative.

Another challenge for researchers is ensuring that ethical concerns have been

addressed. In Canada, all research involving contact with humans must undergo an

ethics review that follows the guidelines in the Tri-Council Policy for Ethical Research

Involving Humans (TCPS). Section 6 of the TCPS, which covers research involving

Aboriginal peoples, provides a brief introduction followed by a short list of suggestions

for good practices that researchers should consider. Section 6 is currently being re-

drafted to include more comprehensive guidelines for researchers. Collaborations and

dialogue with Aboriginal people are underway to revise Section 6 to take into account

the various concerns around research for Aboriginal people, such as the valuing and

incorporating of Indigenous knowledge in research. Researchers need to recognize that

First Nations people have a lot to offer in terms of different understandings of

technology; the development and contribution of First Nations people's knowledge

needs to frame the research.

Currently the Canadian Institutes for Health Research (CIHR) offer the most

comprehensive guidelines available to researchers doing research with First Nations

people. The guidelines are available on the web at:

http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29339.html. The draft guidelines states that: researchers

must comply with the expectations and protocols of First Nations regarding traditional

or sacred knowledge; First Nations retain the rights to their knowledge, cultural practices

and traditions shared with the researchers; First Nations should be offered the option of a

participatory research approach; that research must be of mutual benefit to the

community and researchers; researchers should support the development of education,

research and training (including training in research ethics) for Aboriginal peoples and communities; researchers should make the best effort to translate publications or reports into the language of the community; and First Nations have rights to control and determine their proprietary interests in the collection, use, storage and potential future use of data. Related concerns that researchers need to familiarize themselves with are outlined in the OCAP principles (Schnarch, 2004).

Moving Forward

First Nations in Canada have increased their demands to address the information and communication technology (ICT) gap or the "digital divide" in and among First Nations communities. First Nations leaders have recognized this divide as a significant barrier to possibly reducing or overcoming many economic, social and educational challenges that hinder First Nations people and their communities from participating in the growing global economy.

Before First Nations communities can incorporate a broadband infrastructure, concrete First Nations community-specific planning and development that looks at the needs, priorities, and long-term goals of the community and its members must be fully addressed. Since many First Nations communities are at different stages in addressing the various social, economic, education and political issues, it is important that planning for broadband development be addressed at the local community level rather that at a regional or national level.

Broadband research can provide the necessary information on the pros and cons of broadband video communication development as it relates to the community development plans of a specific First Nations community. The linking of broadband

research and assessment with a community's development plans, as a collaboration effort between the researcher and the community, would provide for a more meaningful approach for the First Nations community, possibly leading to more realistic and practical recommendations. Other areas that have potential for broadband research include community assessments of ICT (skills, awareness, use, capacity, resources etc.), assessing the potential and opportunities for First Nations women, youth, elders, persons with disabilities, the impact on tourism and economic development, and the assessment and evaluation of educational training, health, and cultural preservation. Ethical issues around research with First Nations people ought to be a major consideration in the development of any type of research project. Researchers must be aware of the ethical guidelines and protocols in research as well as those that are specific to the First Nations communities being considered for the research.

Researchers must have a thorough understanding of the research concerns of and the specific challenges facing First Nations people before introducing the idea of broadband video communication to a community. Broadband video communication can have a positive impact on marginalized groups or communities, as evidenced by the positive assessments of distance education and telehealth initiatives. However, before any real positive change or impact can be seen, the material circumstances of First Nations people and their communities must be changed.

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Chapter 4

Representation and Participation of First Nations Women in Online Videos[1]

Abstract

With the rise in websites for video sharing on the Internet and the increase in resources to create and upload videos, there is potential for First Nations women to make use of this alternate public sphere for representing issues they cannot normally address through mainstream media. A critical analysis of the representation and participation of First Nations women in online videos provides some insight into how First Nations women are currently using new information and communication technologies to question and challenge mainstream media assumptions and representations of First Nations women. The paper explores the potential of online videos produced by First Nations women to provide an alternate public sphere to represent themselves and their perspectives and promote social change.

Introduction

> From the first arrival of missionaries in our lands the status and autonomy of First Nations women was attacked. When colonial authorities, later the Federal Government of Canada, assumed authority over First Nations Peoples the attack on First Nations women was institutionalized. (Stevenson, p. 74, 1999)

The representation and participation of First Nations women in online videos is the focus of this research paper. Since the time of contact with the Europeans to the present day, First Nations people have been living under and resisting the oppressive

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[1] *Online videos* are videos available for viewing on the internet. *First Nations* is a term commonly used in Canada when referring to Indigenous peoples of this land who are not Inuit or Métis.

legislation and policies imposed on them by the colonial and Canadian government; Legislation such as the *1876 Indian Act,* has governed and continues to govern all aspects of a First Nations person's life in Canada (Miller, 2000, RCAP, 1996). The historical impact of colonization and the imposition of a colonial government and its legislation have resulted in the near destruction of the cultures and lifestyles of First Nations people in Canada, especially First Nations women.

Most mainstream media contains biased or one-sided information with many inaccuracies and misrepresentations of First Nations people. As a means of creating awareness of their realities, First Nations people have produced various types of alternate media such as newspapers, radio, and television. With the increasing availability of information and communication technologies, First Nations people are also increasing their use of these technologies in their communities, including the streaming of online videos on the Internet.

With the rise in websites for video sharing on the Internet and the increasing access to resources to create and upload videos, there is potential for First Nations people to make use of this type of media technology as an alternate public sphere for representing issues they can not normally address through mainstream media. Further, First Nations women also have the means and are now utilizing online videos for their specific use. A critical analysis of the representation and participation of First Nations women in online videos provide some insight into the ways in which First Nations women are currently using new information and communication technologies. A critical analysis of online videos in this paper reveals the underlying mainstream assumptions regarding the representation and stereotypical portrayals of First Nations women. The

paper explores the potential of online videos by and for First Nations women to represent themselves and their perspectives.

The online videos analyzed in this paper were found through a search of three websites. The analysis is drawn from themes identified in a literature review on race, gender, and representation, as well as media communication, public sphere and participatory video use. A qualitative analysis illustrates the current use of online videos with First Nations women as participants. It explores the image, positioning and voice of the women in the video as well as the context of each video in terms of its political, historical and social implications in reference to representation of First Nations women. Finally, the discussion explores the potential for online videos as an avenue for First Nations women to represent themselves and their perspectives as a type of alternate public sphere to promote social change.

Racialization, Gender and Representation

A review of the literature specific to critical/feminist theory provides a framework for analyzing how First Nations people, especially First Nations women, are represented in online videos. The literature also points to how media technology such as online videos has the capacity to assist First Nations women in challenging mainstream assumptions and misrepresentations, thereby having an impact on public perception and effecting social change.

Critical theory looks at understanding the dynamics of power and the creation of inequality based on dimensions such as class, gender, and racialization, and how ideologies and social institutions support this social construction (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Critical theory also seeks to understand how social constructions shape

and dominate our perspectives. In their analysis of critical theory, Kincheloe & McLaren (1994) utilize Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which suggests that certain institutions in society such as media, religion, schools and others reinforce power dynamics or social constructions as a way to maintain dominance in society.

Colonialist ideology and colonialist discourse reflect the perspective of the colonizers through the language used which often refers to their assumption of superiority to people indigenous to the lands they sought to colonize (Tyson, 1999). This colonialist ideology and discourse is reflected in the historical writings that portray negative stereotypes about First Nations people, especially First Nations women, stereotypes which served many functions for the colonizers. Stevenson (1999) states that missionaries used the negative representations and conditions of First Nations women to justify the religious practice of assimilation. Further, since the time of contact with colonial and early Canadians colonizers, missionaries and government authorities, the status and role of First Nations women have been undermined and supported through various government policies such as the *Indian Act*. The impact of this assault has resonated in all aspects of First Nations women's lives, from community membership, status as a First Nations person, property ownership and community politics to violence and poverty. Colonialist ideology is not a thing of the past but has manifested itself and resonated in all areas and aspects of society and the lives of Indigenous people, although it may not always be easily recognizable. The stereotypical portrayal of Indigenous people, especially Indigenous women, in various forms of media including literature, academic research texts, newspapers, children's books, movies, and videos, is a testament to the dominance of colonialist ideology. McGillivray & Comaskey (1999) state that colonialist ideology creates a power dynamic that results in domination and is

reflected in relationships of abuse in First Nations communities. Colonialist ideology has destroyed First Nations women's autonomy and role within their communities, making them dependants of their male relatives, a reflection of Western colonial society.

Valaskakis (1993) emphasizes the struggle over the representation of First Nations people and the appropriation of their culture by non-First Nations people. She further points out that the representation of First Nations people tends to draw from past images and ideologies of First Nations people. This type of misrepresentation of First Nations people moves the focus away from the experiences and material realities of today's First Nations people. It takes away from a deeper analysis of the issues around power and the positioning of First Nations people as "other" which marginalizes them from mainstream society.

In a review of feminist theory, Tyson (1999) states that the male experience has been the benchmark by which all human experience has been and is judged. This universality of male experience has largely dismissed women's experiences. Feminist writers have explored the issues of marginalization and the representation of women (Valaskakis, 1993). Tyson (1999) states that patriarchal ideology defines women in one of two ways, either good or bad, 'the Madonna' or 'the whore', depending on how she accepts the gender roles constructed by a patriarchal society. Patriarchal ideology also influences how First Nations women were and are portrayed. First Nations women face not only gender oppression but also oppression based on racist ideology. Tyson (1999) highlights how African American and Black feminists have brought attention to the limitations of mainstream feminism, most specifically how it has largely ignored the experiences of women of color through the essentializing of all women's experiences of

oppression without taking into consideration the experience of women further oppressed by racism.

Early colonial society dichotomized the representation of First Nations women as either a princess or beast of burden (Mullings, 2004; Stevenson, 1999; Valaskakis, 1993). These representations have remained to the present day in written texts and visual images of First Nations women. Images depicting First Nations women can be seen in popular films, books for adults and children, and in other media forms. These representations, defined by White Western male standards, used the constructed patriarchal gender roles projected on White Western females as the benchmark through which First Nations women were judged and perceived (Stevenson, 1999; Valaskakis, 1993; Weedon, 1999).

Media representations have an impact on the way we perceive the world. Kellner and Share (2005) state that mainstream media representations depict dominant groups favourably, while disadvantaging other groups in society. This has been linked, although not exclusively, to a select few dominant groups, such as large media corporations. These representations vary over time to reflect the different or changing political and economic goals or agendas of the dominant culture (Rakow & Wackwitz, 2004). As well, the use of feminist communication theory helps to recognize the various issues relating to "the complexity of reality, representation, ideology, and politics" (p. 181). Kellner & Share (2005) state that there is an extensive impact from the various media such as the Internet in the construction and understanding of our world, to the point that we are unaware of how we are educated by the media because "its pedagogy is frequently invisible and unconscious" (p. 372).

Developing an Aboriginal Public Sphere and Critical Media Literacy

Jurgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere ([1962] 1989) has become central to the field of media and communications. Public sphere theory is used by researchers to explain how public opinion is formed. In Habermas' conception, a single public sphere exists where all citizens can participate as equals and have an opportunity to access and deliberate about issues of concern. Public sphere theory has been debated and deconstructed by many theorists. Fraser (1992) outlines an alternative concept of public sphere that has relevance to present capitalist societies and democracy.

Fraser examines the underlying assumptions of the public sphere described by Habermas and moves beyond this to suggest an alternative that would include the need to eliminate inequalities based on "race", class, gender and others, as well as the need for multiple publics or "subaltern counterpublics" (p. 123) rather than a single public sphere where dominant groups would be at an advantage. Finally, she states that "the private" needs to be brought to these public spheres for deliberation. Miller (2004) suggests a public sphere that includes small group discussions or deliberations on issues - via face to face communications or other types of telecommunications such as audio or videoconference – could then be expanded to a larger public sphere through a website for a wider audience. He suggests telecommunication for public sphere deliberations because its interactive communication "seems to have more in common with aspects of oral-centric cultures" (Miller, 2004, p. 11) as opposed to the one-way broadcast communication used by print media, radio and television.

Fraser's examination of Habermas's theory and the underlying assumptions of the public sphere resonate with critical theory concerns such as the limitations in present democracy and the power dynamics within society that create subordinates, i.e., groups oppressed and marginalized because of race, class, gender, sexuality and other dimensions of peoples lives. Fraser's and Miller's concept of an alternative public sphere can provide a framework for developing a First Nations or Aboriginal public sphere.

Avison & Meadows (2000) point out that an "Aboriginal public sphere" allows for the engagement of Aboriginal people in areas that concern them which have been absent from mainstream media. It is an avenue for First Nations people to discuss, debate, and represent their own realities and experiences. This concept of an Aboriginal public sphere can have implications for the use of communication technologies by First Nations groups. Communication technology has the capacity to provide alternate avenues for communicating and information sharing via emails, chats, webcams, videoconferences, and online videos.

Online videos can provide an alternative public sphere for First Nations women to represent themselves, share information, educate and deliberate on the issues concerning them. A step in this direction would demand some knowledge and training in communication technologies. However, knowledge and training should not be limited to technology learning alone. The incorporation of critical media literacy would assist in analyzing the mainstream media by exploiting power imbalances in society, and the marginalization and stereotyping of groups of people based for example on gender, "race", sexuality, and class.

Kellner & Share (2005) describe critical media literacy as an approach that would build the skills not only to understand, recognize and analyze mainstream media's socially constructed representations, messages, values and stereotypes but also to resist and challenge them constructively. It would encourage disadvantaged or marginalized groups to deconstruct misrepresentations and possibly to create their own representations through alternate media sources such as the Internet and "to use the media as modes of self-expression and social activism" (p. 372). Further, developing critical media literacy skills can assist those who use the Internet to examine mainstream media through a critical lens. The Internet can be used to publicly expose the power dynamics and inequalities in society as well as challenge the misconceptions, assumptions, and stereotypes of mainstream media representations.

Participatory Video and Online Videos

Communication technology such as participatory and online video has been used to give voice to individuals and groups, enabling people to discuss issues and tell their own stories in a public space (Bery, 2003; Dudley, 2003; Kindon, 2003; White, 2003) White (2003) describes this as "participatory communication" (p. 9), a process that involves dialogue and partnership between all stakeholders rather than a hierarchal relationship. Participatory communication can connect outside knowledge with Indigenous knowledge. People engage in a process of self-awareness of their situation and use this knowledge to transform or find ways to improve their lives through possible social action.

Kindon (2003) describes participatory video as a tool that can be utilized in research to help break down the power relationship between the researcher and the

research participants as long as the relationship has gone through a process of negotiation. She further describes the concept of *the gaze* within the context of geography research that traditionally tends to be a process of "looking at" rather "than alongside" (p. 143). This can also be true for research with Indigenous communities where the power relationship has historically been hierarchial. Kindon (2003) has attempted to challenge this imbalance of power in her research project using participatory videos with Maaori people.

Bery (2003) states that participatory video is a medium through which people can tell their stories in a relatively safe environment, and it can also lead to personal growth and social action. Bery charts different types of participation, linking each with the level of involvement of the local people in the process as well as the application of participatory video used for each type. Videos produced by individuals through a participatory process rather than from external influences can convey powerful messages that can empower the community to take action and make changes in their own lives. Using video to present injustice provides an avenue to challenge the power structures that have marginalized and isolated people (Dudley, 2003).

Bery (2003) points out that the mass media has influence over the story and therefore influences the audience's perception of stories, so the viewers need to become more aware of the context and background of the story and to ask critical questions rather than passively accept a story as truth. Although participatory video can offer an alternative message or representation to that found in mainstream media, it too must be looked at through a critical lens.

Some of the challenges to participatory video recognized by researchers include confidentiality, access, and ownership of the information (Kindon, 2003). Further,

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despite the potential of participatory video there remains the challenge of access to the communication technology as an avenue to share the video through the Internet where access maybe expensive, limited or non-existent (Perley & O'Donnell, 2006; White 2003b).

Rieken et al. (2006), in their participatory research project with First Nations youth on health and wellness, describe digital video production and process as a form of resistance. They state that "video is a language of transcendence" (p. 275) because it is an alternate form of literacy that may incorporate the experience and realities of those utilizing it better than the use of textual or written literacies predominately privileged by the mainstream educational system. They further state that the digital video process helps develop the critical skills necessary to challenge mainstream media. Rieken et al. further describe video as "a medium for connecting ideas with messages" (p. 277) and state that the students who participated in the research project "acted upon their ideas through the development of critical media literacy skills" (p. 277), in the process of creating, producing, presenting and sharing of their videos.

Participatory videos that engage the participatory communication process and incorporate critical media literacy have the capacity to raise First Nations women's awareness of their realities and experiences, challenge misconception and misrepresentations found in mainstream media, engage with a global audience and promote social change. Online video provides an avenue for First Nations women to bring forward their own voices and perspectives and to effectively represent themselves as never before on a global scale.

Research Methodology

For this research I conducted a critical/feminist analysis of three online videos. To select the videos, I conducted a search of videos relating to First Nations in two regions of Canada (Northern Ontario and Atlantic Canada) and from three websites, (K-Net, Atlantic Canada's First Nations Helpdesk and YouTube). K-Net and the Atlantic Canada's First Nation Helpdesk are both First Nations organizations providing broadband services to the First Nations communities in their respective regions of Northern Ontario and Atlantic Canada. YouTube is the most popular online video sharing website. I searched for all the videos from both the K-Net and Atlantic Helpdesk websites. To find the relevant videos on the YouTube website I used keywords specific to First Nations and the appropriate geographic regions, including the state of Maine, US, which has historical and geographical links with Atlantic Canada. From this overall search I found 213 videos from the three websites. The three videos for this analysis were selected based on my perceived impression of First Nations content within the video, participation by female actors and the context of the video.

The qualitative method involved an in-depth analysis of each video from a critical/feminist theoretical perspective. I based my analysis on the literature review, which raised issues significant to First Nations women's representation in media (Bery, 2003; Dudley, 2003; Kindon, 2003; Rieken et al., 2006; White, 2003). The analysis is also rooted in my personal experience as a First Nations woman who is aware of many of the issues that challenge First Nations women. However, I do not make any claims to authority or to speak for all First Nations women in this research article. In my analysis I explore the representation of First Nations women in each video through an analysis of their image, positioning, and power relationship in both the visual representation and the

text. I organize my findings into the following categories: Video, image, voice or script and resistance.

The category **video** describes the actual context of the video in respect to its political, historical, cultural and social aspects, as well as the concept being deployed in the video. It also includes the placement of the video on the website i.e., where it was stored.

The category **image** describes the visual positioning of women and the extent to which they appear in the video. It also describes how First Nations women are depicted with respect to their political, historical, cultural and social contexts.

The category **voice** describes the extent to which First Nations women speak in the video and what the women say, especially about the political, historical, cultural and social contexts of their lives.

The last category **resistance** describes the overall political / power struggles evident in the context of the video. This includes the attitudes, values, lifestyles, worldviews, assumptions, myths or stereotypes being maintained, reinforced or challenged.

Description of the Online Videos for the Qualitative Analysis

The first video that I selected for the qualitative analysis is *North America's Next Top Indian Model,* available on the YouTube website http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Nishnawbe. The video is a satire of the show "America's Next Top Model" from the Nishnawbe or Indian perspective.

The second video is *The People vs Mary Moses*, available on the Atlantic First Nation Help Desk website http://firstnationhelp.com/fasd/fasdvideo.php. This is an

educational video based on a play highlighting the effects of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The actors include of First Nations youth from the Atlantic Canada region.

The third video is *The K-Net Story – Sandra, Lac Seul First Nation and Joanne, Windigo First Nations Council* (the names of the women in the video have been changed to protect their privacy) available on the K-Net website http://www.knet.ca/ under the title Smart Keewaytinook Okimakanak and Smart Communities. This is a video of an interview with two women who are involved with and contribute to the K-Net communities.

Research Findings of the Video Analysis

North America's Next Top Indian Model

The video begins with images of First Nations people while First Nations and traditional chanting provides background music. The first image shows a landscape scene with teepees. Another image shows a caricature of a First Nations woman with a childlike face wearing a short tight dress that emphasizes her adult curves and legs. She is also holding an apple outwards as if giving it to someone, bringing to mind the temptation of the Biblical Eve. There is also a picture of a First Nations warrior wearing traditional First Nations dress holding an American flag in front of a Dream Catcher symbol. Other images in the video include First Nations women in sexualized poses and silhouetted of women's bodies.

North America's Next Top Indian Model is described on YouTube as a satire from a First Nations or Nishnawbe perspective of the television program "America's Next Top Model". The video is a re-enactment of the TV program with three models, a host and three judges. The setting is an office or classroom environment with furniture in

the room arranged in a panel for the judges to sit and view the models, while the host

stands in front of the judges speaking with each actor-model in turn. The judges make

comments to each of the models based on their performance during the staged

competition. Throughout the video various traditional First Nations type symbols are

used to portray First Nations culture, such as eagles, feathers, and braids, as well as

symbolic traditional First Nations type names.

There is no specific emphasis on the judge's appearance in the video, however

all three judges are women and have character names that are associated with First

Nations traditional-type names such as Cheyenne "Tight-Braids", Katherine "Soaring-

Eagle" and Paula "Talking-Duck". The judges are positioned in a panel seating

arrangement behind a long table towards the back of the room. The host "Shaneeka"

appears in front of the judges; the camera is focused primarily on her with the judges in

the background. She is wearing First Nations style jewellery and regalia with her hair in

braids with leather fringes tied to them.

The three models are shown in a photo competition which displays them posing

in various nature type settings that include symbolic displays often stereotypically

associated with First Nations culture. "Lisa" poses next to an eagle, "Katie" poses with a

stoic look on her face wearing her hair in braids, "Corel" is depicted in an erotic pose

hugging a tree. There is an over-emphasis in the video linking nature with First Nations

women.

The script emphasizes historical and present mainstream stereotypes typically

associated with First Nations people, to stress the point of the video. Some of the words

include are "stoic", "braids", "fried bread", and "pensive". As well, character names for

the judges typify names linking First Nations with aspects of nature, animals or traditional cultural symbols.

The host Shaneeka does most of the talking as she engages with both the judges and models. The judges make comments in turn to each of the models on their participation during the competitions. The models do not say much in return other than acting passively nodding and accepting the critics. However, at the end of the video, the model Coral who lost the competition and was asked to leave, makes an angry comment to the camera about the host and says she would "show them", be back next year and would be displayed on billboards.

The video is an overly dramatic satire that emphasizes the typical stereotypes associated with First Nations people. The video directly challenges these stereotypes by making a parody of a popular TV program "America's Next Top Model" to show not only the ridiculous nature of these stereotypes but also the negative stereotypes of First Nations women. These stereotypes depict them as exotic, wild, overtly and overly sexual. The video overtly exposes the way First Nations people are portrayed in popular mainstream media such as magazines (which rarely have images of First Nations and when they do it is stereotypical), advertisements, newspapers, TV, books and movies.

The People vs Mary Moses

The video is an educational resource that highlights fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and effects (FASD). A First Nations youth drama group, who participate as actors in the video, also developed the video.

The primary character, Mary, is on trial for negligence as a result of drinking alcohol during her pregnancy 30 years ago, causing the baby to be identified as having

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fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). The video begins with a scene depicting Mary getting into the passenger side of a car with a song playing in the background. The image changes to a courtroom setting where the remainder of the video takes place. Several actors in the video play roles such as a judge, prosecutor, translator, doctor and the audience in the mock courtroom.

The introduction shows Mary getting into a car. The car drives through a town and reaches a building where Mary steps out of the car and enters a building. The image changes to a courtroom type setting. Mary is positioned at a front table before a judge indicating the defendant's location. She is dressed casually in a shirt and jeans. The judge is played by a boy who sits at the front of the courtroom dressed in a legal robe. A boy wearing the top part of a police uniform plays a court constable and a girl wearing a legal robe plays a prosecutor. Other actors include two girls who play a doctor and a translator for Mary. They are dressed more formally indicating a professional appearance. There are several boys and girls in an audience sitting behind the prosecutor and defendant's table.

Other visual effects include puppet dramas and graphic-type visuals. One of the puppet dramas shows Mary at a party drinking alcohol. Another visual image is a graphic display outlining a pregnant woman drinking. Another actor shown through a TV screen set up as a teleconference link, plays Mary's son the child identified as having FASD.

The visual images change throughout the video as the story goes through the motions of a court trial. Although Mary seems to be the main character in the play, the camera does not focus on her entirely throughout the video.

After an introductory song the video moves to the courtroom setting. Mary the mother on trial declines a defense council to represent herself. Mary speaks throughout the video in her Mi'kmaq First Nations language. Another actor acts as her translator after she speaks. Mary speaks frequently. She responds to questions, asks questions, gives a witness testimony to the prosecutor and provides a closing statement in her defense. Other women in the video include the prosecutor, doctor and a translator for Mary. They speak occasionally but do not have a primary role in the video.

This video highlights concerns from alcohol consumption during pregnancy. It implements various styles of visual effects throughout, including puppet dramas and other creative graphic visual displays. It also sheds light on other issues important to First Nations people such as the use of native First Nations language and the need for more sensitivity in formal institutions settings toward those unfamiliar with them. This is indicated in the sections of the video when Mary speaks in her Mi'kmaq language as well as when she is asked to stand as a witness. She accepts as long as she can remain sitting where she was rather than being displayed on the witness stand.

The video does raise important issues. However, it takes an individual blame the victim approach. It may also leave the impression that alcohol consumption during pregnancy is only a problem in First Nations communities. The video missed an opportunity to highlight the historical oppression of First Nations people and some of its long-term and intergenerational effects on First Nations people including alcoholism and substance abuse. Rather than individualizing the problem of alcohol, the video could have brought attention to these issues to help viewers who have no familiarity with First Nations people and the history of colonization and the oppression they face.

The K-Net Story – Sandra, Lac Seul First Nation and Joanne, Windigo First Nations Council

The video takes place in the kitchen of a home. It is not apparent whose home it is or if it takes place in a First Nations community. Although the website states many people were involved in the creation of the K-Net story, the purpose of the video is not readily apparent. The specific topic of the video is unclear, and the focus moves from topic to topic with no consistent flow. The video concludes with the topic of technology use in First Nations communities. Two women participate in the video but it is not stated how or why they were chosen to participate.

The image posted on the website for this video is in color but the video itself is in black and white. It is not apparent if more than one camera is used but there are several angle shots throughout the video with occasional close-ups of one woman who does the talking throughout the video. The video pauses or breaks occasionally throughout with the subject of discussion changing or occasionally causing an abrupt break in the woman's dialogue. This may indicate editing of the video.

Two women are seated at a kitchen table set with coffee cups and food. The camera is focused primarily on both of them. Both woman are dressed informally and appear to be relaxed and comfortable in this surrounding. The other people are, for most of the video, out of the camera's view. On a couple of occasions a girl makes an appearance by sitting on one woman's lap. Occasionally, we hear a man's voice in the background. A man appears towards the end of the video talking to one of the women and later talking to the young girl.

One woman (Sandra) does the talking while the other woman (Joanne) sits beside her and engages by listening and looking at Sandra speaking. The women are the

central focus as the camera is angled almost entirely on them throughout. The angle does adjust occasionally to focus on Sandra then readjusts to include both women. Sandra's attention is not on the camera but on someone who does not appear in the video.

Sandra provides her own perspective in the video. She shares her knowledge and experience of her First Nations culture as she discusses the impact of imposed residential schooling on First Nations people, resulting in the loss of culture, language and parenting skills. It is apparent Sandra is a professional person who works with her community and other First Nations. It is also apparent that she is a resource person in the community as she discusses participating in, as well as providing training for, community members through the use of ICT. She also discusses the benefits of technology and its capacity to assist and benefit First Nations communities.

Joanne the other woman in the video does not talk but engages throughout by listening and looking at Sandra as she is speaking, providing support to Sandra. It is not clear if she was actively encouraged to talk during the video, even though the camera was focused on both women during most of the video.

Sandra speaks from her knowledge and personal experience about the loss of culture and the impact this has had on her own life and that of other First Nations people. She discusses the avenues she has sought to help herself and others deal with the effects of oppression. She describes the use of technologies such as the Internet to find educational resources for herself and others, the use of videoconferences for training and workshops, and website development as a source for networking and sharing with other First Nations communities as beneficial ways to help improve First Nations communities. She adapts to the technology and the resources but also makes them appropriate to her culture and useful to her community members.

Sandra challenges the stereotypes of First Nations women often found in popular movies as silent, passive and part of the background scenery or landscape. When they do have a voice in mainstream media, they usually only portray one of two roles: a beast of burden or an exotic princess. These roles clearly do not show the complexity, reality and extent of First Nations women's roles in their communities as demonstrated by Sandra in this video. Sandra expresses knowledge of her culture and the impacts of colonization and oppression gained through her academic education as well as her personal experience and position in her community.

Discussion and Conclusions

Each of the three online videos analyzed in this paper demonstrate the different styles and ways First Nations women are currently using online videos to make a point, educate, challenge and resist mainstream assumptions and misconceptions regarding First Nations people. Each video provides a unique style. The first video is a re-enactment of a popular television program that uses humour and satire to expose the outrageous stereotypes of First Nations people. The second video is an educational resource presented in a drama style, with First Nations youth creating and acting in the drama. This drama style video is a creative way to introduce and educate on a serious topic as well as keep the audience entertained and engaged in the video. The third video is presented in an interview style but without the interviewer and interview questions apparent in the video. It focuses primarily on the women in the video, giving complete attention to them and their perspectives.

The video "North America's Next Top Indian Model" presents a creative alternative in challenging and exposing mainstream stereotypes and racism in relation to

First Nations people, especially First Nations women. It further challenges the mainstream perspectives and portrayals of women in the media and television by presenting an alternative perspective of the television program "America's Next Top Model". Through satire and the perspective of these First Nations women, the video challenges the way females and their body images are exploited through mainstream media as well as the outrageous stereotypes associated with First Nations people.

The video "The People vs Mary Moses" could be considered to be a helpful resource to understanding FASD. It also provides a sensitive and creative way to raise this issue among First Nations people. It incorporates the native Mi'kmaq language and challenges mainstream institutions such as the judicial system from a First Nations perspective. However the video does not provide an understanding of the historical impacts related to alcohol and substance abuse among First Nations people. A brief and general overview of the historical implications would improve awareness and address misconceptions around First Nations people especially for an audience that is not familiar with their history of oppression.

The video "The K-Net Story – Sandra, Lac Seul First Nation and Joanne, Windigo First Nations Council" provides an insight into the issues First Nations people are dealing with and the ways they are addressing and challenging them, especially through the use of technology. It not only provides a First Nations perspective but also provides a First Nations woman's perspective on the issues important to them. The video does raise many important issues for First Nations people. However, it only touches on each of them briefly. It is apparent that the women in the video have a wealth of knowledge that could be shared with other First Nations women but the context of this video does not seem to be directed towards this. Many of the issues that the woman in

the video raised could be explored through the production of a series of several online videos produced by these and other First Nations women to share their stories, perspectives and the ways they confront, challenge and address these issues, with other Indigenous women globally.

The potential for online videos to make a difference is greatly increasing as more people are using websites to upload videos and exchanges ideas about them. The YouTube website is gaining extensive popularity, and YouTube videos are being broadcast regularly on mainstream television news such as CNN, showing just how popular this new medium is. YouTube is easily accessible to view videos or upload a personal video as well. Online videos can be viewed globally by those who have access to Internet technology. They are an avenue for education on the realities of First Nations people in Canada as well as other Indigenous groups around the world and for informing the public from a grass-roots perspective that may otherwise not be available through mainstream media.

Access to video technology and the Internet are making it more possible for the everyday person to view or share information on events or issues that in the past have not been made public. If this type of technology had been available during specific First Nations events in the past, it could have made the public aware of the historical issues and the realities of First Nations people in Canada. One example is the event in Quebec in 1990, often referred to as the "Oka crisis" where a confrontation between the First Nations people at Kanehsatake and the nearby community of Oka took place over First Nations traditional land territory being developed into a golf course by non-First Nations people (Roth, 1992). Another example is the fishing confrontation in New Brunswick when First Nations people (Mi'kmaq and Maliseet people) challenged the Canadian

government and the provincial government's authority and control over fishing rights. The creation of online videos by First Nations people about these events would have provided these First Nations with the opportunity to present to the public their own perspectives rather than relying on mainstream media sources.

Online videos have the capacity to demonstrate the reality of First Nations people today, such as the living conditions in the many communities with contaminated water. They also have the potential to capture the stories of the elders and residential school survivors in order to preserve our culture and history from a First Nations perspective. Online videos combine both voice and image in a form of technology that has the capacity to be distributed globally. As public awareness is created through the distribution of online video-sharing globally, it would also provide an avenue that can aid in movement towards social action.

There are other potential benefits of online videos for First Nations women in Canada as well as for Indigenous women globally. First Nations women who live in remote or rural communities can connect to resources that they may otherwise not have access to locally, including educational videos made available on websites such as K-Net or Atlantic First Nations Helpdesk. It would also be possible for them to access information or create awareness with other indigenous women's groups globally through the development of videos and sharing them online.

Online videos can create awareness of First Nations women's issues that are not discussed through mainstream media. They provide a way to take social action by distributing messages globally on issues such as the large number of Aboriginal women murdered or missing in Canada – an issue that has not been a priority in the Canadian justice system. Another event that could have benefited from online video technology

was when First Nations women from the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick challenged the discriminatory section 12(1)(b) of the *Indian Act,* the First Nations leadership in their community, the national First Nations leadership in Canada, and the federal government. Online videos created by these First Nations women could have sent a message widely and powerfully about the discrimination and violence these women were facing.

Moreover, issues that First Nations women are challenging now have the potential to reach a wider audience as never before. First Nations women producing and disseminating their own online videos would capture their own perspectives much better than a reporter from the outside writing for the mainstream media. Online videos have the potential to reach an audience that does not always tap into the mainstream media, since the Internet is being accessed at a greater rate and sites such as YouTube are being visited on a large scale, globally. This type of technology can be utilized now by First Nations women who are trying to send a message and gain support, for women's issues; for example, raising awareness about how the Canadian government's discriminatory legislation is penalizing First Nations women who challenged the *Indian Act* and gained their status back from Bill-C 31 but whose grandchildren are not entitled to First Nations status. Online videos can create a message concerning many of these issues for the public and seek alternative avenues to assist in action being taken to support these women.

Online videos are an alternate avenue of representation by First Nations people and especially First Nations women because they allow easy access to technology that can be used to create or produce videos that mean something to them. First Nations women can challenge the mainstream representation by voicing their own reality and

experiences through sharing an online video, as demonstrated by the video "North American Next Top Indian Model". They can share their stories, educate their audience and have an impact on how a mainstream audience views First Nations people.

Online videos have the potential to contribute or create an alternative or Aboriginal public sphere if First Nations women or Indigenous women start developing or creating videos and sites for video sharing that are specific to their concerns. Video-sharing websites have the potential to link various video resources in one location where women can access and distribute videos. Development in this area by Aboriginal organizations would allow for Indigenous people as well as the general public to access information on Indigenous issues and provide a way for them to organize around issues, take action and inform others of what is going on.

Building critical media literacy skills provides the essential tools to challenge the authority of all media, including, online videos and questions the assumption that it represents reality and accurately portrays or represents others. First Nations women using critical media literacy skills to create online videos and distribute them in an alternative or Aboriginal public sphere challenges mainstream media information and provides information from an Aboriginal women's perspective that would otherwise not be available to the mainstream public. Video-sharing online for public access challenges the authority of what is made public for viewing. No longer can issues be hidden or presented from only one perspective. It creates an avenue that would bring forth the voices and images that are normally invisible as well as the reality of their experiences that could have an impact on public perception.

The use of online video is in its infancy and First Nations women are beginning to realize the powerful potential of this new visual media. Future research should focus

on how First Nations women are tapping into this potential to attempt to create new

possibilities for themselves as individuals and as a collective force that can shape a new

reality for First Nations people in Canada.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

The presentation of my thesis in an articles format, evolved from my part-time research work with the National Research Council Institute for Information Technology (NRC-IIT). My work with NRC-IIT initially involved information and communication technology with First Nations communities. That first project grew into a larger program of research. Through this work with NRC-IIT, I developed a research interest in information and communication technology and First Nations communities that evolved into my thesis.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview to and background of my research interest in information and communication technology with First Nations people. I outlined the main research questions pertaining to each of the articles and provided an overview of four theoretical themes uniting the articles: First Nations, "race", gender and representation; developing an Aboriginal public sphere and critical media literacy; Canadian "digital divide" policy and ideology; and First Nations communities, media and technology. I concluded the chapter with a brief overview of each article.

The second chapter of my thesis consists of the article "*Engaging First Nations Communities in Research*" by Perley and O'Donnell. This article explores the research question: What are the ethical ways to engage First Nations people in research? In this article we reviewed literature by Indigenous scholars on ethical approaches to research with First Nations people. It drew attention to research that challenges mainstream research practices – practices that have often resulted in the assimilation, exploitation,

destruction and cultural genocide of First Nations people, their language and culture. This article explored potential guidelines for research with First Nations people, which attempt to shift the historically oppressive relationship with Western mainstream research practices.

The article "*Broadband Video Communication Research in First Nations Communities*" by Perley and O'Donnell is the third chapter of my thesis. The article addresses the research question: What is the situation of broadband video communication research in First Nations communities? The article builds from the previous article on ethical approaches to engaging First Nations communities in research. However, it specifically explores the potential for researching aspects of broadband communication technologies in First Nations communities in Canada.

The fourth chapter consists of the article *"Representation and Participation of First Nations Women in Online Videos"* by Perley. It addresses the research question: How are First Nations women represented in online videos? I provide a critical analysis of the representation and participation of First Nations women in online videos as well as some insights into how First Nations women are using new information and communication technologies. I further explore the potential of online videos produced by First Nations women to provide an alternate public sphere to represent themselves and their perspectives and promote social change.

Challenges for Research

With respect to First Nations and broadband video communication, a number of challenges must be examined before any research in this area should be considered. Researchers must be aware that community leaders may not give priority to technology

due to other issues facing the community and its members' well-being. The cost of access and maintaining the technology may also be a hindering factor preventing leaders from considering broadband technology. Further, access to broadband may not even be available in the local area, or the financial resources needed to develop the infrastructure in a remote location may be lacking. Moreover, community members, especially elders, may not be familiar with the technology and may not understand the possible benefits to their community or may be very familiar and knowledgeable but see problems that non-First Nations people may not recognize. Indeed, First Nations households may not be able to afford the cost of broadband technology given that they may have other pressing needs.

These are only a few of the possible challenges that researchers may encounter in the process of developing and engaging First Nations in research on broadband video communication. Collaboration with the First Nations community may help address some of the challenges and determine if research in this area is feasible. The First Nations community must be fully engaged in discussions with the researcher and may recognize the need to develop their own research priorities regarding broadband video communication and its benefits. Comprehensive community plans must be considered to help the community decide on the best approach forward with broadband video communication.

Mainstream media without input from First Nations people often contains very limited or one-sided information with many inaccuracies or misrepresentations. As a means of creating awareness of their realities and challenge mainstream media stereotypes, First Nations people have produced from their perspectives alternate media such as newspapers, radio, and television. With the increasing availability of

information and communication technologies, First Nations people are also increasing

their use of these technologies in their communities. One technology they have been

using is video on the Internet. This has specific potential for First Nations women as

discussed in the article *"Representation and Participation of First Nations Women in*

Online Videos".

Challenges in research and video development with First Nations women include

the previously mentioned issues regarding broadband video communication research.

Dialogue and developing awareness of the possibilities and potential in broadband video

communication technologies such as online video with First Nations women are

essential steps to determine if online videos should be a significant component of the

research project. Also, collaboration and real partnership throughout the research

process are necessary to identify, incorporate and maintain the priorities of the First

Nations women involved in the research project.

However, as I have illustrated, broadband video technologies can also be used as

a tool of oppression, even when taking up by First Nations people. It is important to use

technology to contextualize issues for First Nations people in a historical context in

order to avoid and individualistic blame the victim approach. Further to this, there is a

need to ensure that critical literacy skills become an important aspect of the research

process to challenge all media including online media and Indigenous media messages

regarding First Nations women. The application of critical literacy to broadband video

technologies suggest possibilities for enhancing the capacity of the technologies for

Indigenous peoples' networking potential and building a critical Indigenous public

sphere nationally and globally.

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