PROTESTERS, ACTIVISTS OR LAND DEFENDERS? NARRATIVES AROUND INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE IN THE CANADIAN MEDIA

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED CBC ARTICLES ON CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS RESISTANCE

NOAH GODIN

Human Rights
Bachelor Thesis 15 Credits
Spring 2021: MR106L-11501
Supervisor: Inge Eriksson
Word Count: 13,165
Abstract

Indigenous autonomy, self-government and self-determination have historically been an area of conflict within the settler colonial state of Canada. This thesis aims to analyze critically the Canadian state’s alleged progressive nature in regard to nation-to-nation relations as well as the discourses that portray Canadian society as fostering Indigenous rights. Grounded in previous research and contextual background, this study uses the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to investigate how Canadian media produces and reproduces discourse around the issues connected with Indigenous resistance since the ‘Oka Crisis’ of 1990, based on the selected material published by The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. The findings illustrate that while liberal-influenced narratives have improved, significant identification of decolonization within Canada’s media was not found and the structures of settler colonialism remain largely unchanged.

Keywords: Canada, CBC, Discourse Historical Approach, Indigenous Resistance, Land Defenders, Settler Colonialism, UNDRIP
1. **INTRODUCTION**
1.1.– Research Problem
1.2.– Aim and research Questions
1.3.– Contribution
1.4. - Thesis Outline

2. **CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND**
2.1. – Colonization and Settler Colonialism
2.2.– Nation-to-Nation Relationship
2.3.– FPIC
2.4.– UNDRIP
2.5.– Indigenous Resistance and Land Defenders
2.6. – Oka
2.7. – Discourse on Oka

3. **PREVIOUS RESEARCH**
3.1.– Indigenous Resistance and Discourse
3.2.– Settler Colonialism
3.3.– The Status of Indigenous Rights in Canada and Canadian Legal Implementation

4. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**
4.1.– Postcolonialism
4.2.– Biopolitics
4.3.– Othering
4.4.– Representation

5. **METHODOLOGY**
5.1. - Discourse within CDA
5.2. - Critical Discourse Analysis & Wodak
5.3. - Discourse Historical Approach
5.4. - Selection of Material
5.4.1. - Selection of articles
5.5. - Analyzing Data
5.6. - Delimitations
5.7. - Limitations
5.8. - Role as a Researcher
5.9. - Ethical Considerations

6. **ANALYSIS**

6.1. – How are land defenders and Indigenous activists represented in the Canadian media?

6.1.1. – Discourse Immanent Critique

6.1.2. – Socio-Diagnostic Critique

6.1.3. – Prognostic Critique

6.2. – How is the issue of Indigenous Land Rights addressed?

6.2.1. – Discourse Immanent Critique

6.2.2. – Socio-Diagnostic Critique

6.2.3. – Prognostic Critique

7. **Conclusion**
1 – Introduction

Land Rights and sovereignty over colonized lands is at the center of concern for any colonized peoples, however this issue had not gained much formal international legal recognition until the second half of the 20th century. With the aftermath of the second world war, the dissolution of the League of Nations and the establishment of the United Nations, international legal instruments began making significant progress in the direction of human rights. Outlined in ILO convention 169, The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and others, Indigenous Land rights have become understood within the international legal gaze as vital to Indigenous Peoples identities and to their “right[s] to own, use, develop and control” such lands (Pentassuglia, 2011:167). Though within an international legal perspective, Indigenous Land rights appear to have an established body of jurisprudence supporting them, these rights are often critically debated in nation-states built on colonization and which continue to benefit off the same colonized lands in which these rights pertain to (Pentassuglia, 2011). One of the states where this issue occupies a prominent space in both public as well as academic discourse is Canada, where Indigenous autonomy, self-government and self-determination have historically been an area of conflict.

This thesis will therefore focus on the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Canada through a prism of the discourse on Indigenous resistance and land defenders - individuals and groups fighting to protect their lands. The mentioned discourse that is being produced, reproduced and sometimes contested by the Canadian media, in the case of this study, The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, will be analyzed with the use of the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) which allows Human Rights scholars to ground their research in contextual and theoretical background crucial to understanding the complexities of contemporary the social ramifications of colonization and modern settler colonial societies.

1.1 - Research Problem

Indigenous autonomy, self-government and self-determination have historically been an area of serious conflict within the settler colonial state of Canada. Throughout recent years these disputes have been vigorously debated. This particular thesis aims at understanding the developing portrayal of Indigenous rights, Indigenous forms of activism and Indigenous acts of resistance within the Canadian context. The colonial government continues to enact violence against Indigenous inhabitants in Canada and has been notably insufficient in its recognition
of Indigenous rights, claims to land and assertions of the failed duties of the Canadian state to respect treaties and agreements made between them.

The research problem of this study is therefore connected with the human rights of Indigenous Peoples in what is now known as Canada, colonial narratives in public discourse as well as the violence perpetrated against Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

On connection of this subject with the area of Human rights research: This research topic relates to human rights in a multiplicity of ways; the area of consideration covers Indigenous land rights, cultural rights, self-determination and self-government. The array of perspectives on the history of these developments should show past abuses, reactions, legal procedures as well as the discourse of settler narratives in regard to these human rights.

1.2 - Aim and Research Questions

This study aims to analyze the narratives pertaining to the acts of Indigenous resistance, to gain a better understanding of how societal views and perspectives regarding the subject of Indigenous rights/self-determination may have developed in the last 30 years since the ‘Oka crisis’ of 1990.

In order to investigate the extent of colonial narratives within the discourses presented by mainstream news, the proposed research questions focus on how the image of land defenders and Indigenous activists are constructed in articles surrounding the aforementioned historical and contemporary fights to assert their Indigenous rights. The choice to investigate this set of materials and cases will hopefully allow the researcher to present a critical analysis of the discourses regarding Indigenous Peoples in Canada and analyze the narratives that construct them.

The proposed central research question of this study is:

In what ways has the Canadian media produced and reproduced the discourse pertaining to land defenders and Indigenous activists, their rights and the legitimacy of their resistance within the settler-colonial state?

Together with the question above, the specific points of interest of this study will be explored:

a) How are land defenders and Indigenous activists represented in the Canadian media?

b) How is the issue of Indigenous Land Rights addressed?
1.3 - Contribution

The contribution of this study is located in the critical analysis of the Canadian state’s alleged progressive nature in regard to nation-to-nation relations as well as the discourses that portray Canadian society as fostering Indigenous rights. Through the thoughtfully selected material, this thesis intends to illuminate the realities of Canada’s relations with Indigenous activists by analyzing how contemporary discourse is constructed and presented. As the Canadian media and Canadian state try to create a more progressive image of their relationship with Indigenous Peoples, it is vital to look closely at these discourses in conjunction with the material realities of those affected by said discourses. Moreover, Indigenous studies can be considered an area of research that has been overlooked for decades, if not centuries, and only now begins to become a more prominent aspect of academic human rights discourse. Thus, it is the hope of the author that this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of Indigenous resistance that has not yet been exhausted within this context.

1.4 - Thesis Outline

In order to present a historically informed context that is crucial to understand the Canadian discourse regarding Indigenous resistance, this thesis will begin with a contextual background. In relation to human rights legislation, both the historical as well as the contemporary problematization of the discriminations facing Indigenous Peoples will be discussed. Then, the previous research together with a literature review of existing academic works pertaining to the subject will be presented. This section will serve the purpose of grounding the proposed research questions relating to Indigenous resistance, settler colonialism and land rights within the existing research. Next, building on the previous academic works and their relevance to the subject of this thesis, the theory chapter will aim to encompass crucial theoretical concepts that will be utilized when studying the analyzed material. The main theoretical concepts, such as Postcolonialism, biopolitics, othering and representation will be discussed together with their connection to the focus of this study. In the following section dedicated to methodology, the chosen method and arguments behind their selection will be showcased, as well as the delimitations and limitations of this thesis. This thesis adopts a constructivist approach and the main method utilized will be the Discourse Historical Approach. Last but not least, the analysis will be presented, with connection to the operationalized theories discussed in the previous sections. Finally, the conclusion of the findings together with potential areas of further research will be the concluding section of this study.
2 - Contextual Background

The contextual background presented in this section serves the purpose of establishing key facts and events that are crucial to the understanding of Indigenous resistance in Canada. This section begins with a brief description of the history of upper Turtle Island, now known as Canada, with special interest in regard to settler colonialism. Next, land rights together with international human rights legislation governing this issue will be discussed. Then Indigenous resistance, namely land defenders as well as the events of Oka in 1990 will conclude the contextual background.

2.1 - Colonization and Settler Colonialism

The main focus of this thesis, is the land presently known as Canada which has been inhabited by Indigenous Peoples for millennia before the arrival of Europeans. Due to the history of the Canadian state, colonialism plays a critical role in the description of its complicated relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

Colonialism can be described as a political-economic phenomenon of full or partial political control over another country, often connected with occupation through establishing settlements and economic exploitation. (Webster, Nowell and Magdoff, 2020). While scholars make a distinction between colonies for settlement and colonies for economic exploitation, this thesis will focus on the former, since the very foundation of the Canadian nation-state is directly built upon colonization and settler colonialism.

The purpose of settler-colonization is “the removal and erasure of Indigenous [P]eoples in order to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity” (Morris, 2019). Historically, the settler colonial project included the genocide of Indigenous Peoples in order to gain absolute control over the desired territory. The systemic destruction of Indigenous Peoples and culture, which main purpose was to ensure the privileges for the coming settlers, reflects directly in Canadian history, politics and legislation, such as the Indian Act of 1876 — which solidified the “long history of assimilation policies that intended to terminate the cultural, social, economic, and political distinctiveness of Aboriginal peoples by absorbing them into mainstream Canadian life and values” (Hanson, 2009a).

The uniqueness of settler colonialism lies in its longevity — while many nations subjugated to colonialism regained varying degrees of independence and sovereignty, Indigenous Peoples
subjected to nation-states built upon settler colonial projects such as Canada, Australia or the United States continue to experience the reality of exclusion and marginalization to this day.

2.2 – Nation-to-Nation Relationship

As will be examined in more detail in the Previous Research section, the state of Canada has made effort to address the relationship it has with Indigenous Peoples living throughout the territory. In 2017, the Prime Minister of Canada made a number of statements regarding this particular relationship. Notably among the comments made was “a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples, based on recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership” (Trudeau, 2017). However, the operationalization of this so-called nation-to-nation relationship has been subject to a wide range of criticism and furthermore, a coherent definition of what was meant by this statement has also been the subject of many activists and scholars. Throughout this examination of settler perception and representation of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, this thesis will aim to demonstrate a few select ways in which Canadian state relations with Indigenous Peoples do not reflect a genuine nation-to-nation relationship.

2.3 - FPIC

FPIC, otherwise known as Free, Prior, and Informed Consent or in some cases as will be explored later as Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation, refers to the set of obligations and duties actors such as companies, nation-states and industries are held to in regard to the use, extraction from or infrastructure built upon Indigenous Peoples Lands. It is eloquently described by Kathryn Tomilnson in the following quote:

“FPIC refers to a process whereby [I]ndigenous [P]eoples affected by a planned project have the free choice, based on sufficient and timely information, of whether and how a project occurs, according to their systems of customary decision-making. Indigenous [P]eoples’ representative organizations, as well as various United Nations (UN) agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have in recent years advocated for FPIC as a fundamental procedural requirement to effectively protect the human rights of [I]ndigenous [P]eoples and enable ‘self-determined development’ in the context of industrial projects – and, in particular, extractive industry projects – taking place in their lands.” (Tomlinson, 2019)

In recent decades, Indigenous Peoples across the globe have clashed with corporations and states in the assertion of their right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent. As described by the Columbia Center for Sustainable Investment, FPIC “is a decision-making right situated in the
broader pursuit of recognition and respect for [I]ndigenous territorial, cultural, and self-governance rights. In the context of extractive projects, FPIC requires governments to cede power to Indigenous populations over key decisions related to projects that would take place on [I]ndigenous [L]ands and/or affect [I]ndigenous rights” (Columbia Center for Sustainable Investment, 2020). This right holds relevancy to a variety of industries including “mining, forestry, oil, gas, water, or other proposed external activities that would affect [Indigenous] lands, territories, and natural resources” (Indigenous Rights and Resource Governance Research Group, n.d.).

2.4 - UNDRIP

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), was adopted by the United Nations in September of 2007. As an international legal instrument, it is particularly unique in that it was drafted over many years and prioritized Indigenous Peoples perspectives in the form of Indigenous advisors, working groups, organizations and representatives. The UNDRIP expressly states its protection of individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, however this particularly interesting area of investigation will not fit within the scope of this thesis. While keeping in mind that Indigenous Peoples have been fighting for their rights since European contact, this declaration originated from the 1982 UN Special Rapporteur of the Subcommission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities report that clearly identified “the systemic discrimination faced by Indigenous [P]eoples worldwide” (Hanson, 2009b). In 2007, the four non-signatory states consisted of New Zealand, Australia, the United States and Canada. It is worth mentioning that since 2007 Canada has made statements that endorsed the declaration both in 2010, 2016 and as recently as 2020, however the full legal implementation has not yet been actualized. Indigenous activists throughout the state have been heavily critical towards the Canadian state regarding its relation to the declaration - an aspect that will be explored in the previous research section. Overall, the UNDRIP plays a significant role in the protection of and fight towards Indigenous rights in Canada and abroad, it is an internationally recognized tool largely formulated by Indigenous Peoples that has the potential to help make astounding strides for Indigenous rights wherever it may be implemented adequately and with good faith.

2.5 - Indigenous Resistance and Land Defenders

Due to the focus of this study, the forms Indigenous resistance discussed here will be specifically connected with land defenders; in the background for many acts of Indigenous
resistance is the right to territory, which is based on Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Articles 3, 10, 25 and 26 of the UNDRIP; as well as the International Labour (ILO) Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (Amnesty International, 2016:4).

Land defenders can be defined as “individuals and groups who are fighting to protect their lands, their water supplies, a healthy living environment, and the self-determination of their communities” (Defend Land Defenders, 2021). Most often coming from Indigenous and Afro-descendent communities, they are engaged in lawful means and civil disobedience in order protect the Indigenous stewardship of the land, as well as pursue actions in support of Indigenous Peoples’ right of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (Defend Land Defenders, 2021).

Communities and groups who take direct action against violations of FPIC are often stigmatized and persecuted - according to Amnesty International’s research, human rights defenders who work to protect and promote the rights to territory, the environment experience high level of violence for their actions (Amnesty International, 2016:5). To illustrate this with concrete data, according to a report by Global Witness, more than 200 environmental activists and land defenders were murdered in 2019 alone (Yale 360, 2020).

In Canada, land protectors most notably organize around threats posed to sacred sites in Indigenous communities, Lands and Territories by unwanted developments, climate change and extractive industries (Seventh Generation Fund, 2017).

Among the various other forms of Indigenous resistance include the occupation of perceived settler spaces, marches, infrastructure blockades and mass marches; these tactics are visible in the Idle No More movement, actions in response to Missing and Murdered Indigenous Womxn, Girls and Two Spirited Peoples, as well as a long tradition of Land Back actions. A number of these movements and forms of resistance will be explored in later sections.

2.6 - Oka

The ‘Oka Crisis’ of 1990 is one of the most prominent acts of Indigenous resistance in contemporary Canadian history. This particular event can be used both as an example as well as a starting point for the conversation about land rights, land defenders and public perception of these acts of resistance. Therefore, due to the fact that it became a highly mediatized and
politicized case across Canada, this study will adopt it as a point of reference for the analysis of the discourse in question.

Known also as the Kanesatake Resistance or the Mohawk Resistance at Kanesatake, the ‘Oka crisis’ was perpetuated by the proposal of developments, including townhouses and a golf course, on unceded land in Kanesatake, near the Town of Oka, Quebec (Marshall, 2020). The disputed land included a sacred Mohawk burial ground. However, the dispute over the Mohawk land in this area had a long history before the protests against proposed developments erupted. As Marshall writes:

“The Mohawk had been pressing for recognition of their right to the land since 1761. Almost immediately after Britain conquered New France, the Mohawks of Kanesatake wrote to government officials in Britain. They described living under unfavourable rules that threatened their livelihood. (...) The Mohawk continued to contest their right to the land over the next 150 years; each attempt was rejected.” (2020).

The Indigenous Title to their ancestral lands, an inherent right recognized in common law, was asserted by the Mohawk People of Kahnawake, Kanesetake and Akwesasne in 1975. However, that claim was also rejected by the government.

As an answer to the proposed developments, on which the Indigenous Peoples were not consulted, Indigenous resistance took form in a 78-day standoff (11 July–26 September 1990) between land defenders, Quebec police, the RCMP and eventually the Canadian Armed Forces. (Marshall, 2020). One of the forms of the protest was erecting barricades on local and regional roads by land defenders and their supporters.

The public response to the substantial national and international media coverage was varied. Many of the local settler residents were angered because of the inconveniences brought by the protests, while others sympathized with land defenders which resulted in solidarity actions being organized across the country alongside other Indigenous Peoples in support of the Mohawk’s efforts (Marshall, 2020). As Marshall writes, the ‘Oka Crisis’ had a significant impact on the narratives around Indigenous resistance as well as further actions of land defenders in Canada and internationally:
“The Kanesatake Resistance inspired Indigenous [P]eoples across Canada to take action. For example, the resistance has been linked to the Idle No More movement, as well as demands for an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada. Some experts suggest that the resistance had an impact outside Canada as well.” (2020).

Given the importance of the consequences of the ‘Oka Crisis’ in Canada, in general and in perception of the actions of land defenders specifically, this thesis will aim to investigate the repercussions of the discourse around this event with connection to later acts of Indigenous resistance.

2.7 – Discourse on Oka

In Alexa Conradi’s Journal Article titled Uprising at Oka: A Place of Non-identification, she refers to an article “dedicated to military issues in Canada”, the author of said journal argues that the Canadian military’s’ “professionalism, superior army, and savvy media strategy” won a so-called ‘media battle’ for Canadians during the ‘Oka crisis’ (Conradi, 2009: 547). Conradi criticizes the author for various claims of the military’s’ alleged discipline, calm and “burden of peace” (Conradi, 2009: 548). Moreover, she criticizes the article for its portrayal of the Canadian military as dedicated to human rights and the concept commonly associated with the Canadian military of peacekeeping; finally, Conradi asserts that the intentions of the military confrontation with the Mohawks was not to keep peace, but to maintain order and the status quo (Conradi, 2009: 548-549). She explains that she refers to this particular article “because it presents us with just one of the many ways that individuals, institutions, and the state continue to shape values, meanings, embodiments, and practices in dealings with [I]ndigenous [P]eoples in Canada. It shows how little [I]ndigenous ways of knowing, embodiments, and practices shape and define Canadian policies and perspectives” (Conradi 2009: 549).

Corandi continues to counter the assertion made by the article, naming the Mohawks ‘illegitimate’, claiming to put women and children in danger as well as how the article in question poses doubts to the historical legitimacy of the Mohawk Land Defenders and their rights associated with the land. Furthermore, she casts a serious critical gaze at the authors’ use of the term ‘Warrior’, she claims the use of the term in the article “empties it of its context and historical baggage and situates it within a framework in which the military is using its power to contain the very culture usurped by the new usage. The word “warrior” is but a weak
translation of a word that emphasizes the spiritual and community responsibilities assigned to the “keepers of the peace” (Conradi, 2009: 549). Her criticism of the article ends with the claim of it being ethnocentric and rooted in a “sense of superiority” (Conradi, 2009: 549).

Moving forward Corandi turns towards the reception of these events more directly, she makes clear that the framing of the Mohawk’s fight for Land Rights in 1990 as a ‘crisis’ represents the assertions of rights in the territory as “momentary” which neglects a long and complex history of Indigenous resistance to developments on their lands and settler-colonialism more generally (Conradi, 2009: 553). She proceeds to discuss the perception, representations and discourses surrounding the Mohawks and the Warriors that are used to “undermine [their] legitimacy” such as illicit activities and tropes such as casinos and “cigarette-smuggling” (Conradi, 2009: 550). Moreover, Corandi explores the perception of the ‘Canadian multicultural state’ and how it is utilized in order to naturalize dominant norms while subordinating Indigenous Peoples (Conradi, 2009: 550). She continues by asserting that the “Mohawks challenged Canadian ways of knowing by performing their own rhetorical culture (…) Mohawks brought embodied, Indigenous selves to the public’s attention in ways that created a rhetoric of listening”. Essentially, as Corandi explains, this resistance moment problematized the overwhelming settler perspective of the Canadian state as liberal and multicultural which brought its inherent ideas of supremacy to the surface (Conradi, 2009: 552-553); Corandi encompasses this in a quote relating to the effects of the solidarity actions that sprung up across the country which “offered a significant challenge to most peoples’ conceptions of the justness of Canadian society” (Conradi, 2009: 554). Finally, she brings the situation to a focal point that appears to encompass a large sum of the opposing perspectives, in that the intentions of the Mohawks were to push for progress in the form of recognition and attention to Land Claims and nationhood whereas the government’s main prerogative was to “return to the pre-barricade situation and to avoid being accused of human rights violations in the international arena” (Conradi, 2009: 554).

Marc Grenier examines the ‘Oka Crises’ in an article published in 1994 regarding the daily issues of the Montreal Gazette; the significance of the paper being that of the largest English paper in proximity to the situation (Grenier, 1994: 313). Grenier specifically takes a look at the frequency at which the events were covered, in which sections of the paper as well as whether the headlines were conflict based, race based or contained symbols of aggression. Later he goes on to speculate on the patterns of media coverage frequency and infrequency; one possibility is what is referred to as the ‘audience thesis’ in which, quite simply, the consumers of the paper
were more interested in the ‘conflict’ itself, rather than the ‘pre-conflict’ rights-based narrative (Grenier, 1994: 327). The following possibility is what was referred to as the ‘activity thesis’, which correlates to the actual activity of the situation itself. However, Grenier identifies the issue of this thesis in that the negative coverage grouped First Nations activists as a homogeneous group, he goes on to say that First Nations Peoples “engage in a variety of activities at the community, provincial and national levels. These different kinds of activities were not adequately represented in sample newspaper coverage during the preblockade sample period. If anything, it is mainly certain types of [Mohawk] activities that received sample newspaper attention, namely internal discord, protest, crime and enmity in general” (Grenier, 1994: 328-329). Next identified was the organization thesis which is concerned with the organizational structures within a media institution which would imply that there is specifically some inherent bias within the organizational structures to negatively portray First Nations issues. Contrary to this thesis idea though, Grenier states that “this thesis tends to overlook the possible connections between the internal features of newspaper organizations and the structure of power relations in the broader society within which they operate” (Grenier, 1994: 331). Finally, Grenier’s final proposed argument, the ‘power structure thesis’, which is described by the author in “that newspapers are first and foremost business enterprises. As such, they are intimately connected in varied and sometimes complex ways to the structure of economic arrangements in the larger society” (Grenier, 1994: 331). Furthermore, he states “[i]t is well known that one selling technique traditionally employed by newspapers, although rarely fully appreciated as such by most mass media researchers in the social sciences (…), is the sensationalization of information. Perhaps there is no better example of the use of sensationalism in the sample newspaper coverage of the Oka dispute than the continual high profiled inclusion of symbols of aggression/violence (SAN) within photos alongside Oka related straight news stories” (Grenier, 1994: 333). Marc Grenier approaches the end of his article with the acknowledgment and reflection of discrimination, othering and neglect First Nations Peoples have experienced at the hands of Canadian institutions, “including mass media and all levels of government” to strongly lean towards “downright calumny than conscientious journalism” (Grenier, 1994: 334). He concludes that to consider the coverage of the 'Oka crises’ as “entertainment or the exercise of free speech or the provision of information to interested publics” as such would be naïve; implying a broader tradition of discriminatory perceptions and a distinct social hegemony at work (Grenier, 1994: 334).
3 - Previous Research

There exists a large quantity of previous research that engages with the colonial perspectives of the Canadian press in relation to Indigenous-centered disputes with the state. Moreover, a wide array of perspectives that deconstruct and analyze developments in Indigenous resistances from postcolonial perspective have been published in recent decades. The following sections will construct an adequate sample of such research that is necessary for the comprehension of the thesis and its final conclusions.

3.1 - Discourse and Indigenous Resistance

To initiate the examination of Canadian politics and its relation to Indigenous forms of resistance, “the myth of multiculturalism” is an adequate place to begin. The article *Multiculturalism, Colonialism and Racialization: Conceptual Starting Points* turns a critical gaze at the widely held presumption of Canada as a multicultural society. While the narrative of a multicultural society implies a “co-existence” between differing groups in the population, the article asserts that the narrative instead upholds “the cultural hegemony of the dominant cultural group” (Simpson, James & Mack, 2011: 289). Furthermore, the authors claim that this perspective avoids systemic racism and fails to question the perpetration of power imbalances through the means of institutions.

The following article, by Brenda L. Gunn, touches upon another pillar of the Canadian state’s political mandate concerning its relationship to Indigenous Peoples – reconciliation. Gunn maintains that the liberal conception of reconciliation is inherently flawed due to the fact that it does not allow for “any special or differential rights and privileges” thereby confining Indigenous rights to the “existing Canadian legal system” which prohibits rights rooted in Indigenous legal tradition. She refers to ILO conventions 107 and 169 in addition to the UNDRIP to argue in support of differential rights for Indigenous Peoples; the basis of these arguments is founded in the particular and differentiated adversities that have historic and contemporary ramifications for Indigenous communities (Gunn, 2017).

Jen Preston outlines the private-public relationships between the Canadian government and extraction industries while providing various instances in which state forces have labelled Indigenous activists as extremists, eco-terrorists and “savage warriors”. Preston situates her discussion in the fact that “[m]ovements asserting Indigenous sovereignty pose significant barriers to extractive industries working in settler colonial nation-states”, thereby providing
motive for the later mentioned forms of othering as well as state-sanctioned surveillance (Preston, 2013: 44).

Finally, to bring the topic to the contemporary discussion on Indigenous resistance, Adam J. Barker’s article on reflections of the Idle No More movement lays out a number of interesting observations in regard to settler identity and Indigenous activism “challenging Canadian sovereignty”. He describes the movement moment as opposition to colonization “and for the restoration of Indigenous nationhood and self-determination” (Barker, 2015: 57). Additionally, Barker details settler perspectives on Idle No More, particularly that the majority of Canadians opposed the movement, going as far as to target and violently attack activists. He also provides information relating to mainstream Canadian media and its portrayal of Indigenous Peoples through a colonial lens. Especially intriguing is the presentation of Kevin Bruyneel’s concept of the “third space” of sovereignty which is exercised through the means of “holding colonial systems to account… and also challenging those systems as unjust” (Barker, 2015: 46). It would seem that this is the direction in which current Indigenous activism and resistance is pushing towards.

In addition, Daniel Johnson makes a number of intriguing comments regarding the history of “Discourses of Savagism in Whitestream Media”, and states that the representation of Indigenous Peoples have always been distorted relating contemporary discourse back to “‘the imaginations of the invading European settler-colonists” (Johnson, 2011: 104). Furthermore, he cites the 1996 report by the ‘Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’, which describes the ways in which Indigenous Peoples in Canada are misrepresented through misinformation, generalizations and stereotyping which produces a Canadian citizenry that are largely ignorant to Indigenous Peoples and issues (Johnson, 2011: 105). Johnson turns to editor and author Elizabeth Cook-Lynn whom has coined the term ‘anti-Indianism’ which “rhetoric is a mechanism that attempts to denationalize and eradicate the political and cultural sovereignty of Indigenous [P]eoples and [N]ations” (Cook-Lynn in: Johnson, 2011: 110).

3.2 - Settler Colonialism

Postcolonial perspectives rely on historical contexts in order to position research in such a way that centers the on-going effects of colonization in the specific area of study; whether it be sociology, law, politics or any other relevant subject of relevance. Beginning with Genocide in Canada: A Rational View (2014), Christopher Powell and Julia Peristerakis make the argument that genocide is not limited to the physical destruction of human individuals. Their presentation
of the topic critically reflects upon traditional perspectives on genocide and situates itself by
steering the narrative away from the semantics of colonization and genocide, in order to
uncover the ways in which the destruction of Indigenous institutions has taken place. Powell
and Peristerakis make the claim that the combined effects of destruction can be understood as
a genocidal process, while maintaining that the individual components “would not qualify as
genocide if taken in isolation” (Powell & Peristerakis, 2014: 83). The authors refer back to
Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term genocide, in order to illustrate their claim that the
destruction of a groups’ institutions is ultimately a genocidal act that can hold the intent of
destroying said group. Val Napoleon in Extinction by Number: Colonialism Made Easy (2001),
also discusses the issues prevailing band councils and their inherent assimilatonist origins as
well as the political pacification that is tied to them.

Adopting a more theoretical approach to colonialism, in The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism:
Right Here, Right Now Morgensen introduces his article with the assertion that settler
colonialism must be theorized as biopower in order to move away from its naturalization. He
relies on settler colonial scholar Patrick Wolfe, Agamben and Foucault to further his point that
the biopolitics of settler colonialism aims at “producing life” through the means of
amalgamation into settler society. The second point central to his article is the particularly
colonial nature of liberalism in settler nations which operates as a paternalistic force aimed at
absorbing Indigenous Peoples into its social body (Morgensen, 2011). Drawing on similar
concepts, Rene Dietrich views the biopolitical tool of racialization inherent to the
depoliticization of Indigenous Peoples. He makes the argument that in settler societies such
racialized populations are depoliticized through one of two means; either by destruction of their
lifeways or by assimilation and management. Both, he argues, limit sovereignty and self-
determination in pursuit of othering and thereby dominating Indigenous Peoples. In doing so,
biopower is exercised in order to naturalize the dominant settler political system in what
Dietrich calls the “invisibilized norm of politics” (Dietrich, 2018: 3). Rene Dietrich also argues
that the act of naturalizing settler politics distorts both the history of colonial violence as well
as the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the state which forces any aspects of
Indigeneity into the category of other. This act of othering asserts an authority that allows for
Canada’s settler-colonial neoliberalism to commodify Indigenous Peoples and Lands to
“become subjected to the indifferent logics of exchange value and market-driven capital”, as
Dietrich explains with reference to scholar Leigh Boucher (Dietrich, 2018: 7)
3.3 – The Status of Indigenous Rights in Canada and Canadian Legal Implementation

*Political Genocide: Killing Nations through Legislation and Slow-Moving Poison* (Ladner, 2014) turns directly to the topic of political genocide and its contemporary effects in what is now known as Canada. The author, Kiera L. Ladner, describes how the Indian Act, often referred to as “Legislated Colonialism” or “Legislated Discrimination”, stripped First Nations communities of sovereignty, nationhood and Indigenous institutions. She details how the forced implementation of band councils naturalized the Eurocentric form of politics which effectively aimed at the delegitimization of Indigenous political systems (Ladner, 2014).

Gordon Christie, in his article *Law, Theory and Aboriginal Peoples*, he defines his position through a well-established argument that condemns the “liberalization of Aboriginal society”. After detailing the effects of liberalization, he turns to the theoretical dimensions of autonomy, self-definition and, effectively, self-determination. Christie argues that through liberalization Indigenous Peoples experience the imposition of a “legal regime” that threatens self-definition and a “loss of self” (Christie, 2003: 98). This process may be read as a form of ethnocide.

Christie, in another article, makes tremendous effort to explain the value of Traditional Knowledges and culture. He describes differing, between settler and non-settler, perspectives on property and control with the intention to propose the regulation of Indigenous cultural property by those to which the property belongs. This discussion stems from the international conversation regarding special protections allotted for Indigenous culture by Indigenous Peoples, as such special aspects of culture directly relate to self-identity (Christie, 1998).

The third and final article penned by Gordon Christie is concerned with cultural revitalization. He asserts that cultural revitalization is at the core of efforts for self-determination, self-identification and self-definition. Moreover, one could make the argument based on Christie’s article that it is, in fact, a powerful form of resistance to the settler-colonial state to reassert these rights; this is supported in how he describes the “Crown’s” reaction to Indigenous self-determination, which is “to tame it (...) through replacement with such notions as “self-government” (Christie 2017:20).

Napoleon continues the conversation on self-determination by adding that a more in-depth conceptual understanding of individual self-determination would benefit discussions regarding
collective self-determination. She positions her perspective poignantly with Indigenous women in mind and centers a feminist lens to the issue of self-determination (Napoleon, 2005).

Tara Ward’s text pertaining to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) defines the principle and moves on to problematize the various understanding of it; most notably in the Canadian context. FPIC is rooted in self-determination and is touched upon in the ICCPR, ICESCR, UNDRIP, CERD and a few ILO conventions. Ward describes the Canadian state’s hesitancy to fully inscribe FPIC into its legislative body and outlines the various ways in which Canadian law seems to prioritize domestic legal norms over international ones. Overall, as FPIC is not yet a legal obligation under most circumstances, Ward makes strong arguments for the acceptance of its legal norm in the Canadian legal context and claims that in any perception of FPIC, consultation practices should at the least be undertaken in good faith which is illustrated in the quote “FPIC and other participation rights are not merely administrative processes, but are an exercise in and expression of the right to self-determination” (Ward, 2011: 55).

Finally, Brenda L. Gunn in her article on the implementation of the UNDRIP within the Canadian legal context describes the Canadian state’s relation to the declaration as an aspirational guide rather than a legal norm to be implemented. She goes on to quote Canada’s official reservations to the declaration and further demonstrates the Canadian states’ political aversions to the UNDRIP. Lastly, Gunn also discusses a particularly interesting ideological obstacle of the Canadian state in regard to the perception of Indigenous Rights as a sort of “special treatment”. As noted earlier in this review the international legal conversation regarding specialized Indigenous Rights is founded in the unique adversities experienced by colonized peoples; it would seem that the liberalization of Canada’s political relationship to Indigenous Peoples in what is now known as Canada is demonstrated here in the material reality of law and quite contrary to the liberal presentation of reconciliation (Gunn, 2013).
4 - Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial and decolonial theories will allow the researcher to challenge the dominant discourses in Canada as well as allow the researcher to grasp the perspectives in which these human rights are founded within. The opportunity to deconstruct settler colonial news sources or political discourse will provide the means to analyze settler perspectives and any potential trends, patterns or areas that require improvement for any truly decolonial progress in an undoubtedly colonial state. The theories this researcher has chosen will act as a litmus test in regard to the progress by the Canadian state and will ideally demonstrate if any substantial push forward to more equal Indigenous-to-state relations have taken place in the last three decades or if it has simply been a political narrative to present as more dedicated to Indigenous relations.

4.1 – Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism, occasionally misunderstood as “proceeding-colonialism”, is an interdisciplinary “range of ideas, theories, and indeed, theorists”, with this in mind there seems to be limited consensus on a definition of the term as a theory among scholars (Roy, 2008). Therefore, to locate myself within this field of research I will not attempt to form a definition of this area of academic research, but rather how as a researcher I relate to and position my study within the field. Otherwise, the utilization of postcolonial theory within this thesis is largely present within the selection of sources, scholars and academics that specialize in various areas of political, legal and social studies whom utilize postcolonialism in a framework that aims to decolonized the settler nation-state of Canada. Furthermore, the methodology chosen for this research is one that heavily relies on history and as postcolonialism can be understood as a critical theory rooted in theories of history to inform contemporary facets of society in context of this study, this choice of methodology acts as an ongoing dialogue between the theory and the methodology itself.

4.2 – Biopolitics

Biopower is a concept developed my Michel Foucault that aimed to describe a developing form of power in the 17th and 18th centuries; this power is concerned with “the processes of life” such as birth rate, death rate, fertility, reproduction and more. However, according to Professor Scott Morgensen, the defining characteristics of Foucault’s conception of biopower were evident far earlier, notably in the colonial endeavors and genocidal practices in the so-called
Americas. (Morgensen, 2011:56). Biopower is described by Foucault as a way to control populations rather than individuals and this control can be understood as a cyclical progression of power structures in the fact that the control is at first connected with the power of one group over another and that the institutions propagating this power relation “also act[s] as factors of segregation and social hierarchization (...) guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony” (Foucault 1978, p.141). Foucault’s presentation of biopower takes a turn into what he calls the ‘normalizing society’, in which the power structures inherent to the administration of biopower accepts and justifies the violence of biopower against, what one could understand as, the other. Foucault clarifies himself by describing the ways in which killing and death do not simply pertain to physical destruction of life, but also to “exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on” (Foucault, 2003:256). Following the foundational intentions of biopower within Foucault’s perspective leads to the optimization of labour and management within capitalist society. However, when interpreting biopower within the colonial pursuit of what is now known as Canada, the intentional use of biopower is less clear; with what many consider to be a series of fragmented genocides rather than one homogenous genocidal sweep, the tactics and forms of control were varied and complex. As Foucault is quoted describing the function of biopower as to “intervene at the level at which [those] general phenomena are determined” (Foucault, 2003:246), the intention to eradicate the so-called “Indian problem” (Brant, 2020), took the form of starvation, dislocation, extermination, re-education and sterilization across the territory that is now known as Canada.

4.3 - Othering

According to powell and Menendian Othering can be defined as “set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities” (powell and Menendian, 2017). Therefore, Othering characterizes the action of labelling the group or an individual as different and essentially inferior based on differences such as race, ethnicity, culture, sexuality or religion. In this context, Othering is a conceptual framework, capturing both prejudice and behaviour while “sharp enough to point toward a deeper set of dynamics, suggesting something fundamental or essential about the nature of group-based exclusion” (powell and Menendian, 2017).
The highly popularized quote in Said’s *Power, Politics and Culture*, calls for critics of institutionalized marginality, postcolonial thinkers in this case, to “investigate the system of discourse by which the ‘world’ is divided, administered, plundered, by which humanity is thrust into pigeonholes, by which ‘we’ are ‘human’ and ‘they’ are not” (Said, 2002). This particular understanding of power, division and othering is evident across Said’s work, however it was predominately the West’s gaze upon the “Eastern subjects” of which he was interested and as Raka Shome explains this “is also applicable to those countries and racial groups that are not regarded as “Oriental,” but yet subject to the same processes of misrepresentation and colonization in Eurocentric Western discourses” (Shome, 1996).

The roots of the term “othering” are traced to colonial practices of military conquest and cultural genocides of European imperialism (Kingston, 2015), when the practice of Othering was used as a Western justification of physical and cultural destruction of colonized people by placing them on the periphery of geopolitical operation of colonial imperialism. (Ashcroft, Griffits and Tiffin, 1998: 142; Spivak, 1985).

In the context of Indigenous Peoples in North America, othering is a process that is both historical as well as contemporary, since “[I]ndigenous [N]ations continue to face systemic, widespread threats to their fundamental human rights to culture” (Kingston, 2015: 63). Colonization and othering have long-term effects on Indigenous Peoples that can be described as “collective and individual malaise” and include, but is not limited to, the destruction of traditional communities, economies, and languages (Kingston, 2015: 78).

As has been explored in previous sections, these processes of destruction are, at the least, considered genocidal processes by many postcolonial scholars and which have the interconnected effect of naturalizing Western society. A section from Shome’s article comments directly on these means of discursive discrimination - “it is unfortunate that in our literature we hardly find articles, especially in our mainstream journals, that examine neocolonial representations of racial “others” or that analyze, for instance, the discursive processes through which the (white) “West” gets constantly legitimized in political, cultural, and social discourses” (Shome, 1996).

4.4 - Representation

Representation through the lens of postcolonialism is vitally important in the fact that the representation of the “other” is directly related, or contrasted by, the self-representation of the West. As Nikita Dhawan explains, “At the heart of the working of colonial discourses is the
politics of representation, whereby postcolonialism is not only critical theory, but an identity politics where the historical analysis of processes of colonization and decolonization must focus on questions of representation; namely, deal with who speaks for whom along with what is being said.” (Dhawan, n.d.) Representation, as just stated, is inextricably connected to identity formation both of oneself as well as by one of another. Said discusses this topic at length with relation to the ‘Orient’ and according to Burney, “the word 'Orient' can be switched for 'Other’ for all of the above forms of representation are applied not just to the Orient or the Oriental but to all gendered, marginalized, and racialized "Others" - women, minorities, natives, gays” (Burney, 2012: 63) It also refers to the ways in which knowledge about certain subjects are created and recreated – by who, for what purpose and to what ends - “It is for this reason that the techniques revealed in Orientalism have influenced so much research today on media representations of the Other. Indeed, Said's theory is widely used to critique the media. Said gives an example of everyday representation by which the Other is objectified and dehumanized” (Burney, 2012: 98). Burney goes on to describe that the power involved in both othering and of representation is rooted in the alleged naturalized knowledge of the West which self-legitimates its role as having power to do so.
5 – Methodology

The choice of method for the paper, intends to study the prominent discourses that are espoused by mainstream media in Canada, by doing this the researcher intends to take a decolonial perspective in order to deconstruct and gain further insights into why and how these discourses maintain themselves despite the clear human rights abuses taking place within Canadian borders. The method should demonstrate how these prominent discourses support and uphold state interactions with Indigenous communities whether negative or seemingly well-intentioned. In regard to the material, the paper intends to focus on the broader ramifications on Canadian society by looking at mainstream discourse around these topics; seeing as Indigenous issues are not at the forefront of settler interests, mainstream news may be the only rare circumstances in which the average Canadian engages with such issues.

5.1 – Discourse within Critical Discourse Analysis

Within the social sciences the term discourse exceeds its layman definition of being a form of language or conversation, but takes up a more theoretical conception that is concerned with the communication, symbols, and representations that convey particular meanings, the interconnectedness between them and their relations to social structures and institutions. Particularly within CDA, discourse is seen as “language as social practice” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997 in: Wodak and Meyer, 2009a: 5). Discourse “constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it helps to sustain and reproduce the social status quo, and in the sense that it contributes to transforming it. Since discourse is so socially consequential, it gives rise to important issues of power” (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997 in: Wodak and Meyer, 2009a: 5). Within this thesis the examination of discourse as a social practice aims to better understand hegemonic views of settler society in relation to Indigenous activists in what is now known as Canada with the intention to identify the effects the social practice has on the material realities of Indigenous Peoples more generally.

5.2 - Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a method that works to analyze power structures and relations of dominance within discourse or “aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language use (or in discourse)” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009a: 10). CDA is an exemplary tool in the pursuit of understanding social
domination and its resistance. While there have been numerous attempts to define power throughout social theories, within CDA power is understood through “the overall structural features in social fields or in overall society” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009a: 9-10).

5.3 – Wodak and the Discourse Historical Approach

The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) is a variant of CDA, its difference rests in its attention to “historical background information and prior related discourse” which it deems necessary to fully comprehend current discourse. It is especially concerned with the development of discourse throughout time and how current texts relate to their precursors (Wodak, 2013 in: Strauss and Feiz 2013: 325). DHA has been used to extent in exploring national identity, national social exclusion and both national sameness and difference within discourse (Wodak and Meyer, 2009b: 18). One of the key differences of DHA according to Wodak and Meyer, is that in contrast to CDA, DHA aims to produce commentary and proposals in order to operationalize the realizations attained through its research (Wodak and Meyer, 2009b: 65).

Therefore, three levels of analysis are proposed by Wodak and Mayer (2009b: 64-65):

1. “Text or discourse immanent critique” which focuses on discovering inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas in the analyzed material

2. “Socio-diagnostic critique” which aims to unearth ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices. This level of analysis goes beyond purely textual or discourse sphere and encourages the researcher to make “use of her or his background and contextual knowledge and embeds the communicative or interactional structures of a discursive event in a wider frame of social and political relations, processes and circumstances.” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009b: 64-65)

3. “Prognostic critique” aims to contribute to the transformation of communication and points out possible ways of progression towards potential improvements

To summarize, DHA identifies conflicts and dilemmas within the discourse, aims to “demystify” the potentially “persuasive or ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices” through “contextual knowledge” and finally a “prognostic critique” which aims to suggest improvements to the creation or recreation discourses within certain institutions” (Wodak and Meyer, 2009b: 65). The DHA approach is evidently very fitting as a method for this study due in part to the necessity of historical context when utilizing postcolonial theory, but also due to
the nature of nationalism, othering and identity that is present throughout the material this thesis intends to analyze.

5.4 - Selection of Material

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), a federal Crown corporation - government organization that is guided by both commercial and public-policy objectives, plays a prominent role in the Canadian media landscape, serving as a national public broadcaster and operating mass and digital media services. Due to its nature, it plays a vital role in creating discourses that are widely distributed within Canadian society. This study will focus on the articles published on the digital media platform owned by CBC: CBC.ca, established in 1996. This decision is motivated by the wide circulation of news produced by this organization, its public profile as well as the accessibility of information available through its channels, lack of pay-walls and subscription needed to access said information. Moreover, since “from its inception the CBC was intended to convey Canadian culture and to be an instrument of national unity” due to the objectives of this study in investigation of Canadian discourses around Indigenous resistance, it was deemed to be an appropriate source for obtaining the material (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020).

5.4.1 - Selection of articles

The material was selected by using the key words through the search engine provided on the website CBC.ca. The key words chosen were: “Indigenous resistance” in order to ensure broad topic variety of material. Then the search was manually refined to exclude the articles that did not directly pertain to the interest of this study, for example not mentioning Indigenous resistance explicitly. Video and radio material were also excluded. Through this method of selection 12 articles published from 2007 to 2021 were chosen as the material for the analysis.

5.5 - Analyzing Data

Basing the analysis on the DHA model, developed by Wodak and Mayer (Wodak and Meyer, 2009b: 64-65) and presented above, the author will follow three steps of analyzing data for the purpose of this study.

1. “Text or discourse immanent critique” on which level the author will focus on analyzing the articles to discover if the gather material has potential inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas.
2. “Socio-diagnostic critique” on which level of the analysis the author will aim to analyze potential manipulative or questionable aspects pertaining to the articles’ narratives around the Indigenous resistance by implementing the knowledge gathered through previous research and in-depth contextual background.

3. “Prognostic critique” on which level the author will focus on possible ways of improvement and progression of the Canadian media discourses of Indigenous resistance.

Each step of the analysis will rely on close connection to research questions, theories, presented contextual background as well as previous research to ensure incorporation of such contexts, which are crucial for the chosen method and model.

5.6 - Delimitations

Due to the time and space constraints of this study being a bachelor thesis, the researcher will not focus too narrowly on province-to-province developments, but rather on the essence of social practices, by means of the Canadian media in relation to Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Furthermore, the researcher will be required to limit the amount of material analyzed in order to both gain a general understanding of the situation while also having the space to adequately analyze the chosen material in a sufficient manner. Moreover, while the initial starting point of this paper will be the ‘Oka crisis’ of 1990, the comparative cases will have to be limited also. Currently, there are three large scale and large profile land disputes in what is known as Canada; the researcher will be forced to limit the impulse to analyze all three in detail in order to exchanging claims of exhaustivity for claims of generalization. Another delimitation is that of the three Indigenous communities that reside in Canada, the cases the researcher is adequately capable of analyzing given the constraints are First Nations cases, therefore any concluding statements will need to be preceded by an explanation that while such implications very well may apply to Metis and Inuit populations, the results will be founded upon First Nations forms of resistance alone.

5.7 - Limitations

It is important to consider potential limitations of this study in connection with the chosen method. CDA is a well-established method in social science research, however it is sometimes criticized based on potential sampling bias, since the choice of material can deeply influence the outcomes of the study (Bryman, 2008). Due to this study being a qualitative research the reliability and validity of the finding are not possible to be determined in the same way as in
quantitative studies. In order to avoid this potential sampling bias, the explanation of the choice and process of selecting material is described above.

Another potential limitation is connected with the number of articles that were analyzed. It is the belief of the researcher, that the material sampled for this study is sufficient due to its quality and the sampling method in order to gain insight on potential answers to the research questions posed in the beginning of this thesis.

5.8 - Role as a Researcher

Similarly, to other methods stemming from CDA, DHA is grounded in the constructivist approach, which means that the role of the researcher produces and reproduces analyzed discourse. Therefore, the author adopts the epistemological position of a social constructivist approach, which can be understood as a belief that social actors continuously shape all social phenomena and their meanings (Bryman, 2008: 19).

Since the researcher takes the part in this process of shaping, the authors understanding of the material is influenced by frameworks, biases, theories and narratives that are known to them (Bryman, 2008: 19). Thus, it is important to address the question of reflexivity, which provides the guidelines for the process of methodological awareness to ensure that the research is transparent and trustworthy (Bryman, 2008: 393). As Bryman writes, “knowledge from a reflexive position is always a reflection of a researcher’s location in time and social space” (Bryman, 2008: 393). The author of this thesis is a Canadian citizen, born and raised in the settler colonial society. This fact influences the deeper understanding of social context pertaining to the focus of this study, but might also result in the potential bias. In order to ensure internal validity, transparency and trustworthiness of this study, the author aims to closely follow the methodological objectives connected to DHA and base their knowledge on previous research on contextual background as well as theories presented in previous parts of this thesis.

5.9 - Ethical Considerations

In regard to ethics, this paper does not make use of any personal data, however as touched upon previously the researcher’s position and identity must be taken into account. The researcher is a settler, originally from Canada, and ethical considerations must be taken into account in order for the researcher to position themselves within the subject area. The perspectives shared will aim not to reflect the researchers own biases, but rather to use Indigenous theories and
perspectives in order to analyze and better understand the materials and their implications for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Ethical considerations will be relating to the study of Indigenous issues with particular attention to Gregory Younging’s book *Elements of Indigenous Style* (Younging, 2018). The style guide covers, in great detail, the significance of respectful and attentive research in regard to Indigenous topics. Lastly, the researcher, through use of postcolonial theory, will inevitably be required to make observations on settler society and Indigenous peoples by contrast. With this in mind, it is important to make special note that Indigenous Peoples are by no means a homogenous group and statements made by the researcher in regard to Indigenous communities should not be interpreted as generalized statements, but rather as informed observations based on the research, methods, theories and material discussed within this thesis pertaining to Indigenous activists, land defenders and their supporters.
6 - Analysis

Without doubt media, particularly state-owned media, holds a significant role in the creation and recreation of discourse within any national context. In this section the researcher will analyze the selected material systematically through the chosen method – DHA. The structure will follow the consecutive order of the proposed research questions found in section 1.2:

a) How are land defenders and Indigenous activists represented in the Canadian media?

b) How is the issue of Indigenous land rights addressed?

In following the 'triangulatory approach' to DHA the researcher will first identify conflicts and dilemmas present in the discourse. Then use contextual knowledge to ‘demystify’ discursive strategies within the narratives, relate back to the theories discussed previously and, if relevant, apply SFL to identify any linguistic realizations. Finally, a prognostic critique will aim to contribute to the possible improvements to the communicative discourse. These processes will be repeated for each of the three questions.

It is necessary to mention, that due to the development and progressively larger attention paid to Indigenous Peoples and their rights in Canada the terms used to describe the vast array of Indigenous Peoples residing within the territory known as Canada is a complex and sometimes debated subject. In practice it is ethically correct to refer to a First Nations individual in relation to their specific nation. However, while the term 'Aboriginal' seems to be less commonly used in recent years many still view the term as 'politically correct', furthermore, the term 'native' is also still widely in use among First Nations Peoples themselves and lastly, the term 'Indian', today is a title that is still in use among First Nations communities, but is generally unacceptable to use to refer to First Nations individuals that are not first nations themselves – aside from the term 'Status Indian' which is a legal category.

6.1 - How are land defenders and Indigenous activists represented in the Canadian media?

6.1.1 – Discourse Immanent Critique

One of the most evident areas of concern within the material is the misrepresentation of land defenders and activists. Across the majority of articles, the terms protestor(s) and/or demonstrator(s) were used to refer to Indigenous activists. However, while there were a
multitude of reoccurring tropes, negative representations and value-based judgments, this does not necessarily prove a polar extreme in most articles analyzed. While analyzing the material a trend became apparent in that authors would refer to Indigenous activists and land defenders incorrectly – often vilifying them – and simultaneously write with clear intention to carefully address particular First Nations, key First Nations community members and lands accurately. This can be demonstrated in this quote: “Tuesday will mark six months since Indigenous demonstrators started blocking the McKenzie Meadows development site (...) and said it was unceded Haudenosaunee territory” (CBC News, 2021). Examples such as these may demonstrate the heightened attention to detail that has developed in recent years in regard to identity politics, political correctness and/or respectability politics.

Next, is the misrepresentation of the contexts in which Indigenous activists and land defenders are asserting their Indigenous Title (land claims). Defining land assertions and, more generally, the assertions of Indigenous Rights as struggles and/or conflicts (Barrera, 2020) strips agency as well as long historical contexts from the situations at hand.

To be expected, vilification and criminalization is a common theme throughout the material by listing arrests, court orders and blockades (CBC News, 2020a)(CBC News, 2013), contrasting Indigenous activists and land defenders as the opposing side of the police (CBC News, 2020a), or by describing activists and land defenders in exaggerated manners such as “masks and army fatigues” (CBC News, 2007b) and “armed” (CBC News, 2007a) while it is proven to be untrue.

Finally, in multiple cases articles portray information that is and has been easily verifiable with an impression of doubt such as “In the years following, the band tried to get the land back, claiming it contained a burial ground destroyed when the camp was built” (CBC News, 2007a) and “But several first nations groups are trying to kill the project because they believe it threatens their wildlife habitats” (CBC News, 2011).

6.1.2 – Socio-Diagnostic Critique

Postcolonial theory would suggest, the misrepresentations of Indigenous activists and land defenders within the discourse of the selected materials demonstrates a distinct separation between settler society and Indigenous communities. The vast array of media coverage that surrounded these cases came from an equally vast array of sources, among these sources were grassroots media reporters, independent Indigenous journalists, a national Indigenous network (APTN) as well as news outlets covering the length of the political spectrum. With this in mind, there is no other way to interpret the neglect and disrespect of misrepresenting Indigenous
activists and land defenders than a choice; either indirectly through neglect or directly as an
active choice not to use the terms in which such activists and land defenders identified with.

Furthermore, this decision also illuminates the disconnect between settler perspectives and
those of many Indigenous communities. Terms such as Indigenous activist or, perhaps more
specifically, land defender contains particular value that rests in Indigenous Peoples special
connection to their lands as mentioned in various international legal instruments. One could
also argue that Indigenous activists and land defenders are characterized as distinct from other
forms of resistance and thereby using collective terms for such activists – such as ‘protestor(s)’
or ‘demonstrator(s)’ – ‘may be seen as a denial of their identities and unique relations to their
cause. Finally, such representations can also be understood as the operationalization of a
naturalized form of settler knowledge which asserts its alleged ‘superiority’ through the
representation of the other as discussed in section 4.4.

Along a similar dimension, the misrepresentation of land assertions and occupations as
‘struggles’ or ‘conflicts’ acts as a form of erasure to the centuries of which Indigenous Peoples
across Turtle Island have fought against colonial forces for their inherent Land Rights and
Indigenous Title. The framing of these complex situations as ‘conflicts’ draws attention to the
media sensation of contemporary stand-offs between Indigenous Peoples and Canadian state
authorities, rather than the generations of resistance that precedes such articles. Parallel to
‘conflict’, the term ‘struggle’ to describe these situations, from a postcolonial viewpoint,
neglects Indigenous resilience (Younging, 2018: 77).

The numerous acts of vilification and criminalization of Indigenous resistance throughout the
articles mirrors the ‘Discourse of Savages’ and more specifically the ‘anti-Indianism’ covered
in Cook-Lynn and Johnson’s research (Cook-Lynn in: Johnson, 2011: 110). Consistently, the
discourse of the selected material narrows its focus on vilifying descriptors of Indigenous
activists and land defenders while frequently failing to report the causes, motivations, critiques,
and discussions surrounding both Land Rights and the proposed projects on said land. Aside
from potentially directing the narrative from the material realities of these issues, the discourse
shows multiple textbook examples of ‘othering’. These processes of ‘othering’ are compounded
by the positioning of Indigenous activists and land defenders as antagonists to the police; this
form of settler discourse is reminiscent of the early days of Canadian Confederacy and the
state’s goal of “eliminating the Indian problem” (Brant, 2020). As Morgensen and Dietrich
detail in their articles (Section 3.2), this lens in which Indigenous Peoples are perceived as
antagonists has historically been utilized as justification for their destruction. Additionally, this could also be perceived as the contemporary pursuit of amalgamation by the Canadian state – to rid itself not of the “Indian problem” but, perhaps those that cause problems for the Canadian state whether economic problems or problems that counter the Canadian ‘multicultural’ image.

Finally, the portrayal of doubtful statements connected to Indigenous claims and assertions by the media is a particularly patronizing discourse which could be understood as a social practice that limits agency, self-determination and self-government for Indigenous peoples.

6.1.3 – Prognostic Critique

There are plenty of routes and techniques that could be regularly implemented in order to avoid the possibility of ‘anti-Indianism’, Indigenous discrimination and/or settler-colonial power dynamics. First and foremost, in order for the settler colonial Canadian society to move towards a more progressive postcolonial position, I would argue that good faith dialogue is necessary to begin the process of decolonization of Canadian institutions, understandings and perceptions. By genuinely cultivating an equitable nation-to-nation relationship, Canadian settlers and settler institutions have the possibility to forge valuable practices that take Indigenous concerns into special consideration and provide the adequate rights, legislation and material needs to Indigenous Peoples. With special respect to discourse creation and representation, as Younging describes in detail, Indigenous Peoples must be involved in the production of discourses relating to them. To be abundantly clear, Mi’kmaw need to be involved in the discourse production related to Mi’kmaw, Wet’suwet’en in the discourse related to Wet’suwet’en and Haudenosaunee in the discourse related to Haudenosaunee. It is not adequate to consult any First Nations individual in regard to another Nation's discourse production (Younging, 2018: 31).

6.2 – How is the issue of Indigenous land rights addressed?

6.2.1 – Discourse Immanent Critique

As with the previous question, this analysis on how land rights are addressed will begin with misrepresentation. The continuation of inappropriate definitions carries over into this second question. First, in the description of land occupations as “blockades” (Barrera, 2019), misinforms the reader as to the contextual background of such occupations (as the one being described here - Wet’suwet’en) and neglects the long history of Indigenous presence within the lands in question. Moreover, one may argue that, it also misrepresents the Indigenous activists
themselves by erasing their continued agency in asserting their Traditional as well as legal rights over such territories.

A similar example can be found in the Ipperwash case in which an article states that “[t]he dispute goes back to 1942” (CBC News, 2007a) which exemplifies, yet again, the colonial perceptions regarding land rights; in reality these ‘disputes’ trace back centuries and are founded on a long history of resistance to settler colonialism by Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, in the same article, the land in question is presented as “Ipperwash Provincial Park” (CBC News, 2007a), naturalizing the contemporary history of land theft by the Canadian state.

Again, in a land assertion in Caledonia, ON, an article refers to the “Haudenosaunee nation re-seizing a portion of land” and goes on to refer to the reclamation as a “battle over a housing development” (Barrera, 2020). In this context there are two identified conflicts. First, the belittlement of the weight of the theft of Indigenous Land by referring to the land in question as “a portion”. The issue in this statement has to do with the perspective in which the article is narrating from; reporting on Indigenous concerns requires dialogue, this is a clear example of neglect that misunderstands the actors present in such a case. The second issue is directly tied to the first, the framing of this assertion of land as “a battle over a housing development” positions the article in a settler perspective that has made minimal effort to present the article in such a way that adequately addresses the severity or, even, nature of Indigenous concern (Barrera, 2020).

Finally, in an article pertaining to the Northern Gateway pipeline the article described a march in Calgary which aimed to “protest a proposed pipeline project that would carry oilsands crude to the west coast” (CBC News, 2011). Though, within this article, the author failed to mention the multitude of Traditional Lands the proposed pipeline would cross, let alone the Fraser River. This narrative irresponsibly presents limited information to audiences regarding the cause for such demonstrations nor the legitimacy of the Indigenous activists and land defenders working to oppose such, provenly, destructive projects.

Next the legal dimension of land rights will be addressed. Contained within an article regarding the Coastal GasLink pipeline touches upon the Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs refusing to consent to the pipeline which would run through their Traditional Territory. However, the tone shifts to the Band Councils that have agreed to the pipeline despite their lack of jurisdiction over such lands. The article goes on to state, “In British Columbia most of the land has never
been ceded or surrendered and Supreme Court decisions have grappled with the uncertainty left in that wake” (Bellrichard & Barrera, 2020). One ought to question then, what uncertainty has been left in the wake of knowing such territory is unceded? The article also points out that the Hereditary Chiefs have cited the CERD which, together with the UNDRIP, contain clear messages on the critical nature of FPIC. In an earlier article regarding the same subject, it is stated that Coastal GasLink “said the company has made agreements with all of the First Nation band governments along the route of the pipeline” (Bellrichard, 2018). Again, the same tactic is demonstrated as previously mentioned; the political institutions prescribed by a settler colonial state has consented to a project outside of their jurisdiction in an attempt to supersede the legitimate authority over the land.

Finally, an article describing the conservative pushback to Bill C-15 “An Act respecting the [UNDRIP]” (Stefanovich, 2021), touches upon the frustrations of ‘First Nations critics’ that state that Bill C-15 inadequately operationalizes the UNDRIP. However, rather than explore the frustrations of such critics the article proceeds to describe the conflict between the conservative and liberal parties. As was explored in earlier sections, Bill C-15 is considered insufficient by many activists particularly due to the failure to fully incorporate FPIC into Canadian legislation – among other concerns. This article demonstrates the neglect of discourses pertaining to Indigenous concerns, rather than explore the critiques, the discourse of this article is preoccupied with the drama of politicians and not the livelihoods nor rights of Indigenous Peoples.

6.2.2 – Socio-Diagnostic Critique

Misrepresentations are not limited to people(s) alone, the inaccurate portrayal of culture or objects of cultural significance can have similar effects on self-identity. In this particular example I refer to the term ‘blockades’ (Barrera, 2019) used in the discourse rather than the accurate description of a land occupation or rights assertion. The value of a history and culture built upon a relationship to a particular territory spanning millennia is lost in the term ‘blockade’, much like the term ‘conflict’ is inadequate to refer to the moment of resistance during the events transpired in Oka in 1990. The discourse analyzed has a strong tendency to simplify the forms of Indigenous resistance to the particular tactic that disrupts settler society; this concept it explored in more detail in Adam Barker’s text found in Section 3.1. A similar discursive strategy is located in the article pertaining to the Ipperwash case in which the article naturalizes settler colonialism through the identification of the territory as “Ipperwash
Provincial Park” (CBC News, 2007a). As I’ve repeated, discourses that contribute to the erasure of Indigenous histories and fail to acknowledge a long and diverse cultured history attached to, now, colonized places also contributes to the erasure of the Canadian state’s genocidal legacy which continues to marginalize Indigenous Peoples and which settlers continue to benefit from.

The following discursive strategy to deconstruct is the belittlement and neglect towards the concerns/causes of Indigenous activists and land defenders in regard to 1492 Land Back Lane. Not only did the article refer to the land assertion as a “portion of land” (Barrera, 2020), but the discourse also aligned with a trend of prioritizing profit (in the form of housing developments) over Indigenous Rights. By minimizing Indigenous assertions of their rights, particularly to their Indigenous Lands, the discourse acts complicitly with driving a hegemonic settler perspective that considers land theft as legitimate. In Morgensen’s description of Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* (Morgensen, 2011: 60-61), he traces how biopower can act to depoliticize and thereby strip an individual, or in this case a Peoples, of their rights. One can also see the similarities in Foucault’s *Society Must Be Defended*, whereby, racism becomes justification for the ‘killing’ of another; whether political or physical (Foucault, 2003: 256). These examples demonstrate how settler society has adapted to a new form of *Terra Nullius*, in which the colonizer no longer requires to reject the humanity of Indigenous Peoples to exploit their lands, but through the neglect of their rights and by stripping them of their political life the same ends can be achieved through different means. Discourses such as this example, risk complicity in this endeavour through implicit or explicit colonial narratives.

In the article regarding the marches in Calgary protesting the Northern Gateway pipeline, the discourse portrays the criticism of the pipeline without describing the multitude of Traditional Territories it would wind through. This can be understood as a form of discursive deceit by means of omission; particularly within the economic context of the Canadian state which bases a large portion of its economy on resource extraction. With this context in mind, it is not far-fetched to interpret the discourse as painting a dichotomy between Indigenous Rights and economic prosperity, thereby potentially ‘othering’ Indigenous activists and land defenders in contrast to the rest of settler society.

The following article discusses Wet’suwet’en Territory and mentions that much of British Columbia has “never been ceded or surrendered and Supreme Court decisions have grappled with the uncertainty left in that wake” (Bellerichard & Barrera, 2020). The discourse presented
here is of particular interest due to the acknowledgment that the Canadian legal institution recognizes a conflict between both domestic as well as international law and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. In the Previous Research section, Brenda Gunn refers to this dilemma and directly connects it to the Canadian state’s contempt in adopting FPIC in accordance to international recommendations (Gunn, 2013).

Following suit, the article regarding Bill C-15 and its Indigenous critics, insufficiently addresses the critiques Indigenous activists have on the proposed bill to adopt the UNDRIP. Though previous research has explicitly shown that the criticism arises from the lack of full implementation of FPIC into Canadian legislation. Media discourses that intend to discuss Indigenous Rights and international law in order to convey such information to the Canadian public ought to explore and describe the source of tensions and topics of debate or risk reporting in bad faith.

6.2.3 – Prognostic Critique

Similar to the Prognostic Critique on Indigenous activists, land defenders and their portrayal in Canadian media, there are a number of improvements that could be made to progress the nature of discourse relating to Indigenous land rights in a decolonial direction.

To begin, those in the practices that contribute to discourse connected to the aforementioned topics, should work to understand how settler relationships to land vastly differ to that of most Indigenous Peoples. The locations, knowledges and connections to land, for many Indigenous Peoples, are complex and unlike most settler relations to land. Working to achieve a further understanding of how land relates to different Indigenous Peoples history, tradition, cultural practices and communities is inherent to contributing meaningful and ethical discourse pertaining to Indigenous Land-related subjects.

Furthermore, aspiring to acknowledge the colonial history and its effects on Indigenous relations to specific lands – forced relocations, destruction, colonization etc. – can shift perspective on Traditional Territories beyond a contemporary settler framework.

Most importantly however, is to seek information from the Indigenous Peoples of which a land is currently ‘belonging’ to or has previously (by means of treaties) ‘belonged’ to. When contributing to Indigenous-related discourse of which does not belong to one’s lived experiences, contributors to discourse should prioritize the centering of Indigenous voices.
7 – Conclusion

All in all, the findings of this thesis have provided reason to believe that the nature of Canadian media discourse on Indigenous activists, land defenders and Indigenous resistance maintains a multitude of similarities to the reporting that contributed to the discourses surrounding the Kanesatake Resistance (‘Oka crisis ’ of 1990). The parallels in the misrepresentation of Indigenous Peoples asserting their rights, and the assertions of rights themselves between the ‘Oka crisis ’ and contemporary land assertions are strikingly similar. Moreover, the liberal settler narratives that permeate the discourse are notably evident in the fact that while textual identity politics has improved significantly in the last three decades, the understanding of Indigenous perspectives and critiques appear to be similarly insufficient as they were in 1990s.

However, with Indigenous Rights coming to the forefront of settler politics in recent years some improvements have been made in reporting style, acknowledgement of various discriminations and the reporting on specific Indigenous adversities. The intention of this thesis is to analyze the social practices of discourse and how they operate to uphold settler-colonial structures. And while narratives have fallen in line with the progress of a liberal, self-proclaimed ‘multicultural ’ nation-state. The researcher is unable to identify much significant progress towards decolonizing Canadian media nor its other institutions within the analyzed material.

The researchers’ recommendations for future research are to explore differences between discourse development within Metis and Inuit communities in order to add to the growing academic library of Indigenous studies.
List of articles


Bibliography


Available at: https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol7/iss1/4


Johnson, D. M. "From the Tomahawk Chop to the Road Block: Discourses of Savagism in Whitestream Media." The American Indian Quarterly, vol. 35 no. 1, 2011, p. 104-134. Project


