“THAT’S THE LIFE OF A GANGSTER”:
ANALYZING THE MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS OF DANIEL WOLFE

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Leisha Ann Grebinski, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, has presented a thesis titled, "That's the Life of a Gangster": Deconstructing the Media Representations of Daniel Wolfe, in an oral examination held on April 25, 2012. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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ABSTRACT

“That’s the Life of a Gangster”:
Analyzing the Media Representations of Daniel Wolfe

Daniel Wolfe has been represented by the news media as one of Saskatchewan and Manitoba’s most “notorious gang members.”¹ Wolfe first made headlines at the age of 31 after he instigated a fatal home invasion in the rural community of Fort Qu’Appelle, northeast of Regina.² Later that year, while on remand at the Regina jail, Wolfe and five other Aboriginal inmates staged an elaborate break-out which received extensive national media coverage.³ Two years later Wolfe was killed in prison. His death, although tragic, was regarded by media and experts as an “obvious conclusion” to a gangster’s story.⁴ Through an interdisciplinary approach consisting of interviews with key participants and a discourse analysis of print, radio, TV, and online new sources, I examine the media spectacle of Daniel Wolfe as a case study concerning the implications his story had on media representations of the Aboriginal gangster on the prairies.

“That’s the Life of a Gangster”: Analyzing the Media Representation of Daniel Wolfe interrogates how Daniel Wolfe’s story is used by media, police, and politicians to perpetuate fear of Aboriginal men. I examine: 1) The role the media plays in the

Aboriginal gangster is a current monolithic mis-representation of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples.

For this thesis I take a three pronged approach: Firstly, I conduct an analysis into the media representations of Wolfe to examine the racialization of gang crime and the production of a moral panic. Secondly, I investigate how stereotypes of Aboriginal gang members such as Wolfe are reproduced and embodied by Aboriginal youth through an analysis of media represented links between Aboriginal bodies, hip-hop, and crime. Thirdly, I examine how agency and healing are being practiced through processes of storytelling by members of Wolfe’s family. The intent of this thesis is to contribute to and challenge the current conversation regarding the growing Aboriginal population and its perceived link with a so-called ‘growing Aboriginal gang problem’ on the prairies.
Acknowledgments

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Dedication

To my parents Ben and Starla Grebinski for their love and encouragement.

Thank you for sharing your passion for education with me.
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Introduction

Media reports often highlight a "growing Aboriginal gang problem" on the Canadian prairies even though the media has reported crime statistics are on a steady decline. Headlines such as “Native gangs spreading across Canada” or "Battle over war on gangs" are not uncommon, yet little evidence is given to substantiate such claims. The prevalence of sensational media coverage of a perceived racialized gang problem produces what Stuart Hall refers to as a “moral panic.” To critically examine how the production of a “moral panic” perpetuates fear of Aboriginal bodies on the prairies, I turn to the media coverage of Daniel Wolfe as a case study. Wolfe first made headlines at the age of 31 after he participated in a fatal home invasion in the rural community of Fort Qu'Appelle located 75 kilometers northeast of Regina. Later that year, while on remand at the Regina jail, Wolfe and five other Aboriginal inmates staged an elaborate break-out which received extensive national media coverage. Wolfe was killed in prison two years after.

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later. Media and “experts” such as police, lawyers, and judges regarded his tragic death as an ‘obvious conclusion’ to a gangster’s story.\textsuperscript{12}

Officials and journalists produced a media spectacle of Wolfe’s life and death which unconsciously linked his story to an entire race of people and legitimated the argument that Aboriginal gangs remain a serious problem and pose a significant threat to society. As such, this case study is informed by the following questions: How do the radio, television, print and online news media use Daniel Wolfe’s story to perpetuate fear of Aboriginal bodies?\textsuperscript{13} In what way do mediations of Daniel Wolfe draw on historic constructions that perpetuate the myth that Aboriginal people are inferior? How are representations of Daniel Wolfe in the media play a role in producing and romanticizing the mythology of a gangster?\textsuperscript{14} Why are representations of Daniel Wolfe as an Aboriginal gangster contribute to a current monolithic mis-representation of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples?\textsuperscript{15}


This thesis is divided into the following chapters: Chapter one is a synopsis of my theoretical framework and methodology. Chapter two is an extensive examination at the moral panic produced by media following a deadly shooting in Fort Qu’Appelle. Chapter three documents the competing narratives that emerged during Wolfe’s escape from prison. Chapter four critiques the media representation of Wolfe and his family during the murder trial and the stereotypes that emerge through both media coverage and the Wolfe family’s attempt to offer a counter-narrative. Finally, chapter five examines how Wolfe is constructed by media after he is killed in prison as well as his family’s desire to memorialize him.

The apparent enormity of Wolfe’s story culminated in an in depth Globe and Mail feature by Joe Friesen nearly two years after the gang member’s death. News stories rarely exceed 500 words so the time, resources, and final length of the Globe and Mail piece speaks to the perceived significance of Wolfe’s life and his role in producing the Aboriginal gang problem as constructed by media and others. I utilize the Globe and Mail feature as an anchor throughout my analysis to demonstrate how the media summarizes Wolfe’s narrative and the notoriety his life has gained through the extensive media coverage.
1.1 Theoretical Framework

For this interdisciplinary thesis, I incorporate scholarship from Media and Communications Studies,\textsuperscript{16} Indigenous Studies,\textsuperscript{17} Cultural Studies,\textsuperscript{18} Ethnomusicology,\textsuperscript{19} and Post-Colonial Studies\textsuperscript{20} and my research is primarily situated within a Post-Structural and Critical Race Theory framework. At the foundation of my work is Hall et al’s (1976) noted argument that states a moral panic occurs when the reaction by media exceeds the actual threat and/or danger of the crimes committed.\textsuperscript{21} Since media is an influential


disseminator of knowledge that can shape the public’s understanding of the world around
them, Hall et al concede that media is partially responsible for provoking public fear by
manipulating and interpreting crime statistics to ascertain the scale of the problem. In
my analysis, this becomes evident in media reports about Wolfe as an Aboriginal gang
member.

My work is also informed by French Philosopher Michel Foucault’s (1979) argument that power is produced through discursive formations such as media,
government, police, schools, etc. These institutions work as apparatuses of power to
produce a discourse on gangs where Aboriginal bodies become subjugated. Because
power produces limits, constraints, possibilities, relationships and negotiations, it
manifests itself everywhere including “at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted
processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours, etc.”
Thus, notions of power-knowledge situates subjects, specifically the Other, as outside the
dominant paradigm while still enabling them to challenge their subjectivity through
agency.

Post-colonial theorist Edward Said (1994) argues power relations have positioned
the Other as subordinate through processes of colonialism. He also critiques
representations that either romanticize or demonize the East. Said’s claim can be
applied to Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations in terms of the West’s understanding
of Indigeneity and the West’s strategy of colonizing Indigenous people. As Said argues,

22 Ibid
23 Foucault, Michel, Two Lectures in Power / Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-
24 Foucault, Michel, Two Lectures in Power / Knowledge, 97.
“There is a profound difference between the will to understand for purposes of coexistence and humanistic enlargement of horizons, and the will to dominate for the purposes of control and external dominion.” Just as romantic and violent images of the East influenced the West’s perceptions of the so-called Orient, popular representations of Indigenous peoples have perpetuated a false sense of Indigeneity.

To that end, media scholars Francis Henry and Carol Tator (2002) argue media play a critical role in teaching people about race. They also assert the majority of media reports about crime feature racial minorities, which contributes to a moral panic and fear of the Other. Historian Mark Anderson and art historian Carmen Robertson (2011) argue crime reports in the Canadian printed press involving Aboriginal peoples mirror colonial discourses which claim Aboriginal peoples as inferior.

To further examine the racialization of crime in media reports, I draw on a body of critical race literature that theorizes whiteness and the dominant classes’ ability to remain unmarked in society. Communications scholar Yasmin Jiwani (2006) advances an analysis of “discourses of denial” as she argues the media becomes “the invisible backdrop against which stigmatized and valorized Others are profiled.” Jiwani’s statement offers direction for examining how and why Wolfe serves as an object of

26 Said, xix.
29 Yasmin Jiwani, Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender, and Violence, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006).
30 Ibid
scrutiny for the media. Wolfe becomes a focus for the media because of the violent nature of his crime. However, since media highlights the sensational elements of Wolfe’s story that reinforce his inferiority, criminality and race, the media perpetuates colonial discourses that emphasize power inequities.31

1.2 Noble Savage / Violent Warrior

In an examination of the representations of Native Americans, Indigenous studies scholar Gail Guthrie Valaskakis (2005) notes, “There has always been one dominant image of Indian struggle, one dominant narrative of Indian confrontation: warriors and the militant stories they tell.”32 This rings true for Canada’s First Nations, Inuit, and Métis as historically, Aboriginal people have been represented as either mythic noble savages who were nearly killed off by the colonizers to the violent warriors who took up arms at the 1990 Oka dispute. Colonial ideologies that position Aboriginal people as inferior, criminal, burdensome, lazy, etc. remain a constant thread in public discourse. Stereotypes such as these penetrate public consciousness at a deep and often insidious level which informs current media coverage of Aboriginal people, including the media representations of Wolfe. Often journalists draw on historically destructive tropes to tell stories - and draw conclusions - about Aboriginal people. As Anderson and Robertson (2011) write, “The country’s most ubiquitous agent of popular education, the newspaper, 

has tended to conflate all of these people into one heavily stereotyped monolith, patterned on a colonial ideology that flourishes to this day.”

As such, the diversity of the many cultures that make up Canada’s Aboriginal population are lost in a storm of stereotypes with the latest being that of the Aboriginal gangster.

Historian Daniel Francis’ (1992) concept of the “Imaginary Indian” is based on assumptions made by early settlers about Canada’s original inhabitants. As Francis argues, the early colonizers viewed Aboriginal people “through a screen of their own prejudices and preconceptions.” The colonizers, who came from the ‘civilized’ world, saw Indians as ‘savages.’ Francis further contends the colonizers assumed Aboriginal peoples were connected to the land and possessed a naivety towards contemporary society. These two assumptions contributed to the production of the noble savage stereotype. Historian Robert F. Berkhofer (1979) argues the Indian was a white invention that grouped together a diverse population into a single ‘Indian’ entity. This stereotype, he argues, “does not square with present-day conceptions of how those peoples called Indians lived and saw themselves.”

The noble savage construction has remained a constant stereotype. For instance, in an analysis of the 1974 Anicinabe Park Standoff in Kenora, Ontario, Anderson and Robertson (2011) contend Natives were portrayed as “exotic wraiths, frequently stoic, a child-like people simultaneously in need of correction and direction at the same time as being on the verge of dying off.” This inaccurate representation positions Aboriginal

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33 Anderson and Robertson, Seeing Red, 3.
34 Daniel Francis, The Imaginary Indian, (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992)
35 Francis, The Imaginary Indian, 7.
36 Francis, The Imaginary Indian, 7.
38 Anderson and Roberson, Seeing Red, 174.
people as inferior. As Native literature scholar Emma LaRocque (2000) adds, “The ‘Indian’ as an invention serving colonial purposes is perhaps one of the most distorted and dehumanized figures in white North American history, literature, and popular culture. The false depiction of Aboriginal people is not only damaging to individuals but also contributes to a divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

Hollywood films often reinforce the image of the noble savage. The documentary *Reel Injun* by Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond examines the portrayal of the Hollywood Indian through a century of cinema. The documentary shows how the same stereotype emerges over and over again in Hollywood productions, showcasing Aboriginal people wearing feathers and riding horseback. For instance, the quintessential film *Dances with Wolves* reinforces noted stereotypes that misrepresent Lakota people as “gentle, wise, and child-like.” Although the film acknowledges that Aboriginal people are multi-dimensional people who come from loving families and possess a sense of humour, the iconic film often reinforces the romantic myth of the noble savage.

Images of Aboriginal people in popular culture inform the public’s understanding of the Aboriginal community which contributes to current misconceptions. Particularly in sports culture, teams such as the Washington Redskins, the Atlantic Braves, and the Cleveland Indians conjure up false depictions of Aboriginal people as either being the violent savage. These icons bolster a false sense of Indigeneity as they deduce Aboriginal people to a stereotype of nobility and/or violence. Indigenous writer David Bellfly (2005) explains: “For Indigenous people, walking the tightrope between who we really are and

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who we are perceived to be by those who create popular culture, the issue of identity is forever in our minds.” As Bellfly concedes, the images are “profoundly disturbing” because they obscure the rich nuances of Aboriginal people and they articulate to the public that Aboriginal people are simply a monolithic, static culture.

Another dominant stereotype of Canada’s Aboriginal people is that of the violent warrior with the most unequivocal example being the media representations of the violent warriors during the so-called 1990 Oka Crisis in Quebec. The Mohawk people behind the barricade were cast by media as masked warriors who were armed and dangerous, even though children and elders were behind the barricade as well. The warriors were positioned by media as criminal savages, giving the public a skewed sense of what the Mohawk people stood for at Oka. However, as Anderson and Robertson (2011) distinguish, a counter-narrative emerged during the protests at Oka from a generation of awakened warriors, including Indigenous scholar Taiaiake Alfred who now writes extensively about reclaiming the Indigenous warrior spirit. In his (2005) book *Wasase*, Alfred speaks of awakening the Indigenous spirit so one can stand and be a warrior for his or her people. He explains, “The journey is a living commitment to meaningful change in our lives and to transforming society by recreating our existences, regenerating our cultures, and surging against the forces that keep us bound to our colonial past.”

The warrior construction is a complex one. Although the Ojibway Warrior Society in Kenora and the Mohawks at Oka were constructed by the press as an explosive group ready to commit criminal behaviour, many Aboriginal youth saw the warriors as

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45 Anderson and Robertson, *Seeing Red*, 222.
strong, inspirational leaders. These moments in history started a wave of people reclaiming Aboriginal culture and rights.  

47 As journalist and hip-hop artist Wab Kinew writes in *This is an Honour Song*, a book to mark the twentieth anniversary of Oka, “When we started to see images of the warriors in The Pines standing up for our people and for our land, we were inspired to emulate them.”  

48 For Kinew, Oka changed his definition of a warrior. He saw that embodying the warrior spirit, as exemplified by the warriors in Kenora and Oka, he could lead his people. As he states, “To me that is the real ‘revolution.’”  

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However, for other Aboriginal youth, the path to becoming a proud Indigenous warrior was more complicated. Some youth formed warrior societies driven by capitalism and violence in the form of gangs, to provide a sense of family and belonging. Daniel and Richard Wolfe created the Indian Posse as an attempt to reclaim their Indigenous identities. They wanted to be part of a group that would grant them respect, a sense of identity, and a sense of belonging. This is why many Aboriginal youth, such as the Wolfe brothers, embody the gangster stereotype as a means of acceptance in neighbourhoods that have been designated as the ghetto or the ‘hood,  

50 while others attempt to resist the stereotype that has been mapped onto them.  

51 On the other hand, media latches onto the

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47 Wab Kinew, “Cowboys and Indians,” in *This is an Honour Song*, (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2010).

48 Wab Kinew, “Cowboys and Indians,” 47.

49 Wab Kinew, “Cowboys and Indians,” 50.


gangster stereotype as the latest monolithic Indigenous stereotype to simplistically articulate the complex nuances of Indigenous youth.\(^5\)

1.3 Counter-narratives

Although Wolfe was labelled by media as dangerous and fearsome, he and his family attempted to engage in a dialogue with media by agreeing to interviews following his escape and subsequent arrest. Literary scholar Jo-Ann Episkenew (2009) documents the power of storytelling and its ability to heal and challenge master narratives.\(^5\) Taking into consideration Episkenew’s argument, I argue Wolfe and his family attempt to resist the dominant narrative of Aboriginal peoples by speaking with the media although the resulting media coverage is not necessarily what the family had intended. The family’s internalization of stereotypes and the media’s narrow storytelling framework make it impossible for the Wolfe family to produce a counter-narrative. Yet by drawing on decolonizing frameworks that utilize the concept of speaking out as method to resist oppression and challenge master narratives, I examine the Wolfe family’s initiative to challenge the gangster stereotype. By analyzing both the media construction of a notorious gangster and the family’s attempt at (re)telling Wolfe’s story, the clashes between multiple narratives emerge.

1.4 Methodology

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\(^5\) See Dyer and hooks on stereotyping.

Informed by an interdisciplinary methodological approach, this research project includes critical discourse analysis, ethnographic methods including interviews, and decolonization methodologies such as storytelling to understand and challenge the status quo that is (re)produced by media. As a white researcher focusing on Indigenous representation, I must acknowledge my power-position in society. As Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach (2010) writes, “In anti-oppressive approaches to research, self-reflection is described as ‘critical reflexivity,’ which purposefully gives space for the political examination of location and privilege.” By stating one’s power-position, there is admission of potential biases. There is also a recognition of how my research is shaped by my experiences in society. I acknowledge my subjectivity as a non-Indigenous person and therefore I incorporate Indigenous perspectives to include a range of ideas that may counter a dominant western point of view. Smith (1999), Kovach (2009), and Mihesuah (2005) also ask scholars to emphasize how the research can benefit (rather than harm) the Indigenous community by asking: Was this research done in a “good” way? I also recognize my position as a journalist who has worked within a Saskatchewan media organization for a number of years. This “insider” experience brings a specific understanding to media culture and production. I believe it is important to step away from the daily news media production to theorize the implications media constructions of the Aboriginal gangster have on Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and I hope my research findings will add to an ongoing discussion regarding these issues.

To examine print, radio, television, and online media sources that report on Wolfe between 2007 and 2011 I utilize critical discourse analysis methods. I focus on key media events involving Wolfe such as the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting, the escape from the Regina jail, and his death, to decipher how representations of Wolfe contribute to the production of a moral panic. I have conducted an exhaustive search of the Regina Leader Post, and the Winnipeg Free Press for articles about the gang leader as both major daily newspapers reported on Wolfe as he moved between provinces throughout his adult life. In addition to the two major daily newspapers, I examine reports that mention Wolfe in the Fort Qu’Appelle Times, as well as two Aboriginal publications Eaglefeather News and Saskatchewan Sage.

Along with the printed press, stories broadcast by CBC Saskatchewan and CBC Manitoba are included in my analysis. Of particular interest is an interview conducted by CBC Manitoba with Wolfe while he was being held at the Winnipeg jail on September 17, 2008. I also analyze material made available to me by Global Television in Regina and CTV news in Regina, including the Aboriginal-focused current affairs program, Indigenous Circle which included programming about Wolfe.

For direction in analyzing these media reports, I draw upon Teun Van Dijk’s (2008) model of critical discourse analysis which involves the study of text, talk,

57 Wolfe allegedly started the Indian Posse in Winnipeg’s north end in the late nineties. He then travelled west to start an Indian Posse chapter in Saskatchewan. During his jailbreak, Wolfe spent the majority of his time in Manitoba. Due to his movement between the two provinces, both newspapers had a vested interest in reporting on Wolfe.
language, dialogue, and conversation from all possible perspectives.\textsuperscript{58} Critical discourse analysis allows me to decipher how power is produced through discourse. As he states, the goal is to “understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality.”\textsuperscript{59} As such, Van Dijk’s (2003) aims to expose “the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance.”\textsuperscript{60} His definition of dominance is the exertion of power by elites, as he states, “Dominance may be enacted and reproduced by subtle, routine, everyday forms of text and talk that appear natural and quite acceptable.”\textsuperscript{61} Van Dijk adds that power and dominance are normalized through institutions and exercised by people in positions of authority (i.e. doctors, lawyers, journalists, police officers, etc.), making them privy to certain systems of knowledge and therefore able to dominate. This according to Van Dijk means, “Power and dominance of groups are measured by their control over (access to) discourse.”\textsuperscript{62}

Following Foucault (1979), Van Dijk asserts how power is produced through mechanisms of control that either regulate or prevent text or talk. Understanding how certain voices are regulated, limited or silenced can help deconstruct why hegemonic ideas are so often (re)produced by media. By applying critical discourse analysis to media texts concerning Wolfe, I critique who has been privileged to speak about Wolfe.

In addition to Van Dijk’s work, I will draw on media analyst Norman Fairclough (1995) who approaches critical discourse analysis from three dimensions:

1. How is the world (events, relationships, etc) represented?

\textsuperscript{59} Van Dijk, \textit{News as Discourse}, 30.
\textsuperscript{61} Van Dijk, “Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis”, 254
\textsuperscript{62} Van Dijk, “Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis”, 257.
2. What identities are set up for those involved in the programme or story (reporters, audience, ‘third parties’ referred to or interviewed)?

3. What relationships are set up between those involved (e.g. reporter-audience, expert-audience or politician-audience relationships)?

Both Fairclough and Van Dijk assert that reporters do not passively report on events. Rather, they actively reconstruct them by drawing on certain frameworks that mirror corporate values, professional ideologies, news values, etc. Henry and Tator (2002), for example, draw heavily on Van Dijk’s and Fairclough’s understanding of discourse by contextualizing how and why certain language is used by media to analyze the social, political and cultural significance of the text. As they argue, “Critical discourse analysis of language and text provides a tool for deconstructing the ideologies of the mass media and other elite groups and for identifying and defining social, economic, and historical power relations between dominant and subordinate groups.”

What maintains these power relations is a denial that inequities exist. As Van Dijk (1991) states, “One of the main strategies of the ideological framework keeping white dominance in place is precisely to deny or to play down the prevalence of racism and to blame victims for the persistent inequalities that are its outcome.” To that end, communications scholar Bohdan Szuchewycz (2000) examined the Globe and Mail’s denial of racism by applying critical discourse analysis techniques to determine how...

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65 Note that Henry and Tator, like many in social studies, use coding techniques to analyze how many times certain words appear in text. For the purposes of my case study, I will not be using coding techniques but rather looking at the broad socio-context in which the text appears.
66 Henry and Tator, Discourses of Domination, 72.
omitting language can be discriminatory.\footnote{Bhodan Szuchewycz, “Re-Pressing Racism: The Denial of Racism in the Canadian Press.” In \textit{Canadian Journal of Communication} Vol 25 No 4, (2000), Pgs. 497-515.} By ignoring that racism exists in the press, Szuchewycz says the \textit{Globe and Mail} contributes to the myth of Canada’s identity as an accepting and tolerant nation. Szuchewycz and Van Dijk note that journalists’ strategy to use disclaimers such as “allegedly” or “claimed” prior to a racist assertion implies doubt that the situation was actually racist. As Szuchewycz states, “Where the dominant consensus is that racism does not exist, it becomes more difficult for minorities to have their concerns taken seriously and acted upon by those who hold power.”\footnote{Szuchewycz, “Re-Pressing Racism,” 501.} Jiwani has also theorized how “discourses of denial” in the media breed violence, particularly against women of colour.\footnote{Yasmin, Jiwani, \textit{Discourses of Denial}, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006)} She argues that the media is implicit in the reproduction of racism as she writes, “They constitute a monopoly of knowledge, and through their practices of selection, editing, and production determine the kinds of information we receive about our culture, nation, and the rest of the world.”\footnote{Jiwani, \textit{Discourses of Denial}, xx.} In my analysis of the construction of Wolfe as an Aboriginal gang member, I critique how the media either acknowledges or erases the racist circumstances that may lead someone to participate in a gang in the first place.

To better understand the intentions and practices of the creators of media stories about Wolfe, I conducted interviews with key journalists who covered multiple stories about Wolfe. In preparing for these interviews I utilized what Communications scholar Arthur Asa Berger (2000) describes as “unstructured interviews” which deviate from a formal line of questioning.\footnote{Arthur Asa Berger, Media and Communication Research Methods, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000)} Instead, I facilitated a dialogue to learn more about the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{2} Szuchewycz, “Re-Pressing Racism,” 501.
\bibitem{3} Yasmin, Jiwani, \textit{Discourses of Denial}, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006)
\bibitem{4} Jiwani, \textit{Discourses of Denial}, xx.
\bibitem{5} Arthur Asa Berger, Media and Communication Research Methods, (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000)
\end{thebibliography}
decision-making process that led to the representation of Wolfe in particular ways. In relation to these interviews, it is essential that my position as a journalist be taken into consideration. My experience in the media is the driving force behind my scholarly critique of media production and representation. It also provides contextual understanding and a bias of how reports are gathered and disseminated.

1.5 Decolonizing and Indigenous Methodologies

In conjunction with critical discourse analysis and ethnographic methods, I also employ decolonization methodologies. Just as critical discourse analysis works to expose power inequities, methods of decolonization aim to critique and resist the power imbalances that are created by historic and current colonial regimes. Indigenous studies scholar Linda Smith (1999) says research should be situated in a much larger historical, political, and cultural context to take into consideration past wrong-doings while embracing the possibility of change. Smith argues that decolonizing methods attempt to encapsulate pre-colonized and colonized time periods and their impact on Indigenous peoples’ past, present, and future. “A constant reworking of our understandings of the impact of imperialism and colonialism is an important aspect of indigenous cultural politics,” she contends, “and forms the basis of an indigenous language of critique.”

Thus, research with Aboriginal communities must consider the colonial context in order to understand why certain knowledge was historically privileged, but also acknowledge how colonialism remains deeply embedded in systems today.

Historically, in a Eurocentric tradition, Indigenous people were typically the object of study rather than active agents in the processes of researching Indigenous

issues. As a result, research projects were inaccurate, insensitive, and harmful to Indigenous communities. Indigenous studies scholar Devon Mihesuah (1998) argues, research led by non-Indigenous peoples repeatedly led to an “invented version of Indianness” - a construction based on inaccurate assumptions and assessments. Since research was conducted by the colonizers, the Indigenous perspective was often skewed or silenced completely. As a result, deep skepticism developed amongst Indigenous communities regarding the practice of research. To prevent such wrong-doings from continuing to occur, Indigenous studies scholar Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (1998) argues, Indigenous people need to be at the forefront of research that is done with, about, or for Indigenous communities as she writes, “How the Indian narrative is told, how it is nourished, who tells it, who nourishes it, and the consequences of its telling are among the most fascinating - and, at the same time, chilling - stories of our time.”

1.6 Storytelling, Dialogue, and Healing

In researching the media representations of Wolfe as an Aboriginal gangster, I asked Wolfe’s family members to participate in interviews as a way to help contextualize Wolfe’s life. Sharing personal stories can be a method of decolonization. During these conversations, Wolfe’s family members recalled difficult experiences caused by colonialism. I draw heavily on Indigenous methodologies to inform the interview process

75 Ibid
76 Devon Mihesuah, Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 10.
with Wolfe’s family. Often interviews are deeply embedded within a framework of power between the interviewer and interviewee. One person has the right to ask questions while the other is mined for information. By taking Kovach’s approach to these conversations, aspects of sharing and discovering multiple truths are more likely to emerge. As such, conversations can include elements of “reflection, story, and dialogue” to engage in an act of sharing knowledge. Kovach writes, “In line with Nehiyaw epistemology, which honours sharing story as a means for knowing, conversation is a non-structured method of gathering knowledge.” This is in line with Indigenous principles that believe there are many layers to a story or experience. It is believed these perspectives should be shared so others may learn. Cruikshank (2000) echoes this point by saying:

Dialogues open the possibility that we may learn something about the process of communication, about how words are used to construct meaningful accounts of life experience. In this way they differ fundamentally from structured interviews, where one of the participants claims the right to both pose the questions and interpret the responses.

Aboriginal storytelling is used as a method to connect the past with the present and as McLeod (2007) writes, “No story is complete in itself.” Rather, stories are part of a larger narrative that gives context to current experiences. Furthermore, Cavender

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78 Fixio encourages researchers to “think like an Indian.” Although I find that phrase problematic, there needs to be an attempt by researchers to understand and empathize with the Indigenous world-view. Fixio argues that the only way to do that is to talk to Indigenous peoples, 93.
79 Ibid
84 McLeod, *Cree Narrative Memory*, 8
Wilson (2008) says stories have the potential to challenge the status quo since tellings may offer a different version of events. One story may frame an event as an “Indian problem” while another version of the same event may blame “white atrocities.” In other words, storytellers, such as members of Wolfe’s family, may have seen something differently and as they relay their experiences, listeners can begin to imagine a counter-reality different from the media representations.

Throughout Wolfe’s life, both he and his family members were engaged in a dialogue with journalists, lawyers, and police officers. These interviews and conversations were recorded by officials. Segments are then (re)produced in official documents, quoted in newspapers, television, and radio and consumed by the public. In my examination of this dialogue, the context of these tellings needs to be taken into consideration. As Cruikshank (2007) states:

What becomes critical in the context is not what is being said but the social conditions of narrative production (in a courtroom), reproduction (in official transcripts), distribution (to various government agencies), public legitimation (through newspaper reports), and erasure (of the defendants).86

Therefore, the context of each telling must be noted as each situation deeply impacts how knowledge, experiences, and details are shared.87

In separate conversations with Wolfe’s mother Susan Creely and brother Richard Wolfe, both shared with me their desire to speak publicly about Daniel Wolfe’s life. Both say that sharing his story can in many ways teach the public more about Wolfe’s

85 Angela Cavendar Wilson, “American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American Indian History?” in Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians. ed. Devon Mihesuah. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 34.
86 Cruikshank, The Social Life of Stories, 95.
87 Cruikshank also notes that many elders in the Yukon would begin a story by stating, “I believe this to be true,” which recognizes there can be different points of view on one story, 42.
circumstances and the many sides to him as a father, son, brother, and friend. In sharing, however, there is potential for Susan and Richard to experience trauma as they re-live difficult life experiences and memories. Indigenous studies scholar Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux (2009) refers to the impact of colonialism as “intergenerational trauma.” She defines this trauma as the historical experiences of First Nations people that disrupted individual and community identity formation and have impacted multiple generations of families. Many, however, are now reviving their culture and identity as reconstituted subjects. For instance, Susan and Richard’s move to speak out is an act of resistance and reclamation and both have shared their desire to move forward, while not forgetting the challenges of the past. In our first meeting, Susan spoke of abstaining from drugs and alcohol. She has reconnected with her Indigenous culture and regularly attends spiritual gatherings. Richard made the bold decision to leave the Indian Posse while he was serving time in prison. He reconnected with his family and culture and shares his life story at public gatherings with a younger generation. Speaking publicly about Wolfe is another step on Richard’s healing journey as he attempts to renegotiate his place in society and create a legacy for Wolfe that is different than the legacy constructed by the media.

Chapter Two: The shooting

In the summer of 2007, after Daniel was released from his latest round in prison, he moved to his mother's reserve, Okanese, just north of Fort Qu'Appelle, Sask. Police say he was on a recruiting mission.

On Sept. 20 that year, according to court testimony, Christina Cook, 61, returned to Fort Qu'Appelle from a trip to find her daughter and some friends at her home. A few minutes later, two men kicked open the front door. One wore a red bandana over his face. He held a .22-calibre rifle. Jesse Obey was sitting on a couch directly in front of the door. All he saw was the gun barrel, he later testified. The first bullet went through his cheek and blew out his teeth. The next hit the left side of his torso.

The shooter took a step past him to the bedroom, where Ms. Cook and several others were sitting. Sitting across from her, Michael Itittakoose's white hoodie exploded with red. She scrambled to find the phone.

One of the attackers yelled, "Shoot the old lady, she's calling the cops." The shooter swivelled toward Ms. Cook, and in a fraction of a second, her husband, Marvin Arnault, dove across the room and threw her to the ground.

He asked if she was hurt. No, Ms. Cook replied, she was okay. "You know I love you," her husband said. "Look after the boys."

"Are you hurt, Marvin?" she asked.

He said, "I think so." Mr. Arnault, 51, died at the scene. Percy Pascal, a friend of the family, was shot nine times and somehow survived. Cordell Keepness took three bullets, including one through the hand.

The gunman lowered his weapon and stepped toward the door. He had fired more than 20 shots. Two people were dead, three others wounded.

"That'll teach them to mess with IP," he said.91

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The man described by *The Globe and Mail* as wearing the red bandana was Daniel Wolfe, but at the time of the shooting, few knew him by name or the extent of his criminal background. Most certainly, he was not on reporters’ radar and it would take months before police would charge him with murder. But the night of the deadly Fort Qu’Appelle shooting is where this “notorious gangster”’s story begins for the media. In this chapter I analyze the media spectacle of the Fort Qu’Appelle shootings. I question how the media coverage of the shootings caused a moral panic regarding a seemingly growing Aboriginal gang problem. I also interrogate how media reports about the shooting exacerbated concerns that Aboriginal gangs are encroaching on rural communities. Although Wolfe is not named in news reports by the major Saskatchewan media organizations that covered the shooting, he is already being constructed as a dangerous gangster largely responsible for the creation of the “Aboriginal gang problem” on the prairies.

2.1 Community in shock

Following the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting, nearly every Saskatchewan media organization descended on the community of close to 2,000 people. Initial reports

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92 Ibid
95 I utilize Stuart Hall’s definition of moral panic.
97 Jana Pruden, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 21, 2011.
evoked the small town myth that the seemingly “quiet” rural community is rarely a site of crime. For example, a *Leader Post* headline read, “Qu’Appelle shooting shocks community,” stressing the normally peaceful nature of the town while *CBC TV* emphasized the community’s picturesque lakes and bustling tourism industry - hardly the expected backdrop of a crime scene. However, the “cozy” community of Fort Qu’Appelle which lies in the heart of the Qu’Appelle Valley, has long been a site of colonial violence and tension.

Originally, the town was built as a Hudson’s Bay Company trading post with numerous First Nations communities surrounding the town. In 1874, the Cree and Saulteaux of the area signed the Treaty Four agreement to surrender their rights to 75,000 sections of land in Southern Saskatchewan. What followed were forced assimilation policies that confined Aboriginal people to reserves, restricted cultural and spiritual ceremonies, and committed Aboriginal children to residential schools. Mistreatment of Aboriginal people by dominant society was common place in Fort Qu’Appelle. Not only did such policies impact Aboriginal communities, but they were instrumental in shaping white society’s (mis)conceptions of Aboriginal peoples in the area. In Indigenous scholar Blair Stonechild’s (2002) analysis of Treaty Four, he notes historically Aboriginal people were commonly seen as “savages devoid of higher reasoning or morals.”

99 Ibid
101 Ibid
construction continues to resonate in Fort Qu’Appelle as demonstrated in the media coverage of the shooting.

As a result, like many settler communities across Canada, Aboriginal and white relations have been strained in Fort Qu’Appelle.103 As Anthropologist Elizabeth Furniss (1999) explains in her study of the racial make up in small town William’s Lake, BC, small town identities are rooted in the image of being on the periphery of mainstream society while being surrounded by natural, untouched, wilderness.104 As Furniss observes, small town residents are seen to be in a constant battle against the so-called wild elements and the “potentially hostile Indians”105 who have been forced to share their land. In her interrogation of the “frontier myth,” Furniss writes, “The categories of Indian and white are mutually exclusive and oppositional and in which Euro-Canadian cultural superiority, material privileges, and political authority, are taken as unquestioned truths.”106 In Fort Qu’Appelle, there are divisions between the Aboriginal and white populations based on historic policies that segregated the two. Still today, dominance over Aboriginal people is maintained.107

Through media representations, the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting can be read as disrupting society’s concept of a quaint, safe, predominantly white, small town, while maintaining power relations between Aboriginal and white community members. The

104 Elizabeth Furniss, The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 17
105 Furniss, The Burden of History, 18
106 Furniss, The Burden of History, 17
107 For further analysis on racial relations in Canadian small towns see: James McNinch, “I thought Pocahontas was a Movie”: Using Critical Discourse Analysis to Understand Race and Sex as Social Constructs” in I Thought Pocahontas Was a Movie Ed. Carol Schick and James McNinch, (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2009), pp. 151-176; Lisa Priest, Conspiracy of Silence, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1989).
culprit in the shooting is the already suspect Aboriginal body. This fuels the colonial argument that Aboriginal people are dangerous and need to be contained in order to preserve respectable white communities. Jiwani (2010) argues that Canada’s denial that racism exists permits (implicit and explicit) colonial narratives to continue to penetrate public consciousness. Oppressive systems that marginalize Aboriginal people, and other people of colour, are eclipsed by Canada’s imagined - yet championed - view on multiculturalism. This tale of inclusion and equality for all actually hinders any productive dialogue that could critique how certain bodies are racialized. Jiwani refers to this as a “discourse of denial,”108 which is a complete disregard that inequality, hatred, and oppression exists within our borders. A blatant example of denial can be read in the Fort Qu’Appelle mayor Ron Oskika’s response to the shootings. In a September 22, 2007 Leader Post article he is quoted as saying: “This is not a regular occurrence in our community. We're a peace-loving community.”109 If the community is imagined to be “peace-loving,” the violent act appears more shocking. In the same Leader Post article he states, “It's unfortunate that only those people behind those closed doors know what's going on and have control of any of those situations.”110 Using terminology such as “those people”111 reinforces a binary between good and bad people in Fort Qu’Appelle and shifts culpability away from white citizens. Even though stories about the Fort Qu’Appelle shootings are bound to notions of Aboriginal criminality, there is a complete

110 Ibid
111 Ibid
silence of how race relations between white and Aboriginal people, and systemic oppression, may be at the core of the issue of the growing Aboriginal problem.

Since very few details were provided by police, reporters quickly tried to piece together a sequence of events by talking to neighbours in order to write their news stories. Many suggested the shooting was gang related and that the Indian Posse was likely to blame, even though no one really knew who was responsible for firing the shots. Community members in Fort Qu’Appelle told the media they were well aware of a gang presence in their community yet reporters emphasized instead how gangs are predominantly an urban issue. A CBC Radio headline on September 21, 2007 declared: “Two dead, three in hospital. It’s the kind of headline you would expect from Detroit or Los Angeles, not Fort Qu’Appelle. But that’s what happened there last night. Neighbours are saying the shootings are gang related.” Journalists perpetuate the notion that Canadian cities are safer than American cities, relying on stereotypes that position Canada as friendly and peaceful compared to our neighbours to the south. Meanwhile CBC TV reporter Jonathon Shanks opened his story on September 21, 2007 by saying, “The violence of urban street gangs seems to have spread to rural Saskatchewan.” The dominant narrative yet again is that violent crimes do not happen in places such as Fort Qu’Appelle. The media, (re)produces the colonial myth that small towns are quiet, safe, and an unlikely site for a violent gang shooting to take place.

2.2 Breaking news

113 Anderson and Robertson, Seeing Red, 34.
114 Jonathon Shanks, “Fort Qu’Appelle shooting,” CBC Saskatchewan TV, September 21, 2007, DVD.
The dramatic nature of the shooting and its negative consequences made the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting extremely “newsworthy.”\textsuperscript{115} As Hall (1976) argues, “Crime is ‘news’ because its treatment evokes threats to, but also reaffirms, the consensual morality of the society.”\textsuperscript{116} Crime, in other words, not only impedes normalcy, but disturbs dominant culture’s relationship to morality. When normalcy and morality are disrupted, the media takes note. The more dramatic or violent the crime, the more attention the press will afford it. When reporting on crime, journalists, on behalf of the public, interpret and give meaning to the event by drawing on a “common stock of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{117}

The stories that appeared in the \textit{Leader Post} and on most TV and radio broadcasts describe a rental house cordoned off with yellow police tape on a “seemingly quiet street” where retired residents and families live, painting an unsettling picture of Aboriginal crime infiltrating middle-class Canadian neighbourhoods.\textsuperscript{118} Sensational shrieks from family members were caught by radio microphones and TV cameras as medics removed a body bag from the home.\textsuperscript{119} Reports describe family members overwhelmed with grief, police cars surrounding the house, and a coroner on site.

In a close reading of the chosen media texts, it is evident that police provided limited information to reporters. Police did confirm that a group of individuals opened fire on seven individuals inside a home. Two men were killed and three men were

\begin{footnotes}
\item[115] I draw on Hall’s definition of news values. That is, events that in some way “breach our ‘normal’ expectations about social life.” Stuart Hall et al, \textit{Policing the Crisis} (London: MacMillan Press, 1976), Pg. 53.
\item[116] Hall, \textit{Policing the Crisis}, 66
\item[117] Hall, \textit{Policing the Crisis}, 56
\end{footnotes}
injured. Two women in the house remain unharmed. Police said the victims were between the ages of 22 and 50 years old and a search for suspects would immediately commence. Police would not specify whether the crime was gang related. Since information was scarce, journalists questioned community members for details and reaction. In an interview, Leader Post’s court and crime reporter Jana Pruden explained how she reported on the scene when she arrived four years ago:

I went out there with a photographer and knocked on doors around the scene. I took notes at the house, just did what I normally do at a breaking news event which is look around and see who will talk to me, but there was very limited information available at the time. The coverage was what I was seeing out at the site.  

One neighbour told the Leader Post that a dozen young people were at the house prior to the shooting, shoving each other until police cleared them out. The newspaper also quoted the same neighbour as saying: “We’re all complaining about the house. I call it a rat trap,” adding that he had heard rumours about gang activity in the home. Neighbours told reporters they believed the crime to be gang related, specifying that Native Syndicate members resided in the house where the crime took place and likely Indian Posse members were responsible for the attack. The speculative account of the shooting was used by journalists to explain why violence erupted in Fort Qu’Appelle. As Pruden stated, “I remember a neighbour who had a young daughter and she said right away that they were IP [Indian Posse]. The gang issue was quite well known in Fort Qu’Appelle.” Additionally, CBC Radio’s Stefani Langenegger on September 21, 2007 said in a news report, “One woman said they came to the house, lifted their bare shirts

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120 Jana Pruden, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 21, 2011.  
121 Ibid
and revealed IP on their stomachs....” The Canadian Press Wire Service which provides copy for radio stations such as MBC and the printed press, also reported that “gang warfare” was used in the Fort Qu’Appelle incident.122 Based on both these reports, residents of Fort Qu’Appelle already had both conscious and unconscious assumptions about an ostensible presence of Aboriginal gangs in their communities. These ideas stem from historical discourses of racism and segregation prevalent in Fort Qu’Appelle for generations. Fueled by media questions and subsequent reports that seem to verify claims that Aboriginal gangs are encroaching on rural communities, such assumptions are reinforced.

Evoking Hall (1979), clearly many of the ‘facts’ presented by reporters about Aboriginal gangs in the Fort Qu’Appelle event remain constructions based on public speculation.123 As I will more fully discuss in a following chapter, when captured by police, Wolfe self-identities as an Indian Posse member and a judge later ruled that the crime did indeed target members of the Native Syndicate, a rival gang. By the time that information was made public, people had already formed conclusions based on the moral panic produced by the media at the time of the shooting, which perpetuates ongoing assumptions that Aboriginal people are innately criminal.

Although two people were killed in a violent and reprehensible act in Fort Qu’Appelle how significant was the public risk? According to media reports, the threat was substantial, but how is the media partially responsible for constructing fear which

123 Such conclusions are not unique to this situation. For example, the Timothy McVeigh bombing in Oklahoma City was originally labelled an Islamic terrorist attack by media noted in Edward Said on Orientalism, DVD, 1998.
fuels the public’s anxiety over gangs? One example that directly illustrates how the media constructed fear at the time of the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting involves CBC TV host Costa Maragos who began the six o’clock newscast on September 21, 2007 with the inflammatory comment, “Tonight people in Fort Qu’Appelle have to live with the fact that there are killers on the loose,” implying that anyone in Fort Qu’Appelle could be the next target. The less than two minute story by CBC reporter Jonathon Shanks that followed Maragos’ introduction recounted details of the shooting and explained why community members should be scared to leave their homes because the unknown suspect remained at large. Furthermore, Shanks stated finding a suspect will be extremely difficult because witnesses have been reluctant to share information with police as they fear gang retaliation.

Frances and Tator (2002) concede that members of the public rarely experience crime first-hand. Rather, criminal incidents are (re)constructed for them by the media. Consequently, the public’s comprehension of gang crime is often based on the sounds, text, and images that appear in the newspaper or on the six o’clock news. The media reports I have discussed suggest community members heard (fabricated) accounts that gang activity had been on the rise in Fort Qu’Appelle, but little evidence was given by reporters to substantiate that claim. The community’s knowledge about gangs was either gained through personal relationships (i.e. a neighbour or family member who was associated with gangs), or through information received from the media. In Fort

124 Henry and Tator, *Discourses of Domination*, 163
126 Henry and Tator, *Discourses of Domination*, 163
Qu’Appelle, neighbours draw on popular gangster tropes, as represented by Saskatchewan media, as they tried to explain the violent attack to reporters.

2.3 “Growing Aboriginal gang problem”

The topic of Aboriginal gangs has dominated prairie print, radio, television, and online media for more than a decade in Saskatchewan. A 2005 Criminal Intelligence Service Saskatchewan (CISS) report showed that Aboriginal gang involvement in Saskatchewan was escalating and would continue to grow as the Aboriginal population increases in the province. The CISS data, which was interpreted and disseminated by media was used to mount evidence that gang crime was and continues to be a serious problem without addressing the social, cultural, and political situations where these incidents occur. As Hall suggests, “Statistics – whether crime rates or opinion polls – have an ideological function: they appear to ground free floating and controversial impressions in the hard, incontrovertible soil of numbers.” Using crime statistics like this report, allows the media to validate its decision not only to report on criminal activity, but to substantiate claims that a certain amount of crime is taking place at a certain rate.

When such statistics are void of context, the numbers convey only one side of the story as political scientist Joyce Green (2009) contends in her study of the Starlight Tours

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130 Hall, Policing the Crisis, 9.
in Saskatoon: “The miserable statistics are seldom accompanied by political and theoretical analysis that might explain how certain communities come to be systemically liable to particular kinds of misery.” Green argues that linking a burgeoning Aboriginal population with gang crime without acknowledging the systemic racism that often pushes Aboriginal youth into gang involvement only fuels colonial tropes situating Aboriginal bodies as criminals. “Given Saskatchewan’s demographic trajectory,” she contends, “a failure to deal with white racism guarantees that there will continue to be social stresses between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations, damaging the province’s economic and social viability into the future.” In Fort Qu’Appelle, a failure to name racism during discussions about Aboriginal gang crime omits the contributing factors that produce the Aboriginal / settler binary which demonizes Aboriginal people and pushes many of them to gang life.

In conjunction with the media’s emphasis on a growing Aboriginal gang problem, politicians, police, and members of the public have formulated ideas and policies in response to the journalistic rhetoric regarding gangs. The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) responded to the statistics by demanding a political plan to address the issue. Numerous youth organizations have formulated “anti-gang strategies,” and right-leaning governments have continued to call for ‘tough on crime’ policies to deal

132 Ibid
134 Polischuk, Heather, “Regina Anti-Gang Services program tries to change lives,” The Leader Post, April 26, 2011.
with an increase in gang activity. Stories about gang crime penetrate the daily news and as a consequence, the response to Aboriginal gangs are representative of the ideologies of the dominant class. As Hall writes, “The more such issues passes into the public domain, via the media, the more it is structured by the dominant ideologies about crime.” In the case of Fort Qu’Appelle, community members had already adopted an understanding fueled by media reports that made gang members and Aboriginal bodies interchangeable. Thus, media reports following the shooting reaffirmed their assumptions about Aboriginal criminality.

2.4 Gang Shooting?

The media was quick to label the crime in Fort Qu’Appelle a gang shooting. According to the Canadian Criminal Code a gang is comprised of a group of three or more members whose sole purpose is to commit crime for financial gain. However, cultural theorist Henry Giroux (1996) discerns how the term “gangs” becomes a “racially coded concept” that conjures up images of poor, racial minorities who come from dysfunctional homes. He notes that gang crime is distinctly marked by race, unlike other crimes such as drunk driving or corporate crime. The racialization of gang crime is partially generated by popular media representations that depict a gangster as an Aboriginal youth with baggy pants, bandanas, and flashing hand symbols. These

136 Hall, Policing the Crisis, 136
137 Definition found in Michael Chetteburgh, Young Thugs, (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2007).
139 Robert Henry, Not Just Another Thug: The Implications of Defining Youth Gangs in a Prairie City, (master’s thesis University of Saskatchewan, 2009)
signifiers become engrained in public consciousness as characteristic of a gangster, whether or not there is any indication of criminal activity.

Giroux (2009) argues through expanding disciplinary discourses, youth, specifically poor young minority males, become suspect under law and order rhetoric. In regards to North American youth of colour, Giroux explains how they face a “coming-of-age crisis marked by mass incarceration and criminalization, one that is likely to be intensified in the midst of the global financial, housing, and credit crisis spawned by neoliberal capitalism.” Aboriginal youth face a similar crisis as many are more likely to end up in prison than finish high school.

While the media demonizes gangster tropes, popular culture more generally has romanticized and promoted stereotypes that appeal to youth. In her analysis of media representations of gangsta’ rap in Regina, Marsh (2011) explains how inner-city youth mimic mythologized and sensationalized gangster signifiers as articulated by popular culture in an attempt to belong. As she writes:

Participating in gang life and living life as a gangsta’ represents a reclamation of (urban) territory, the creation of community or ‘family,’ a sense of belonging, safety from rival gangs, the accumulation of social status within the ‘hood, and a means to cope with systemic issues linked to poverty and racism.

The stereotype of the “Aboriginal gangster” has been normalized through media representations that construct Aboriginal people as being disproportionately susceptible to crime. It is through stereotypes that people often make sense of one another. As bell

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140 Henry Giroux, Youth in a Suspect Society, (New York: Palgrave, 2009), Pg. 73
141 Giroux, Youth in a Suspect Society, Pg. 73
hooks (1992) writes: “Stereotypes, however inaccurate, are one form of representation. Like fictions, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretense.”144 Thus, the myth of the Aboriginal gangster becomes solidified in people’s minds and the social issues facing one’s city are easier to digest if there is distance between one and the Other.

Many journalists argue, however, that the media needs to tell stories about Aboriginal gangs through an objective lens. Leader Post reporter Pruden believes that by bringing the issue to the public, people can formulate an understanding of the complex nature of gangs. As she explains, “I think it should be out there because then everyone can have an informed discussion - What is this? Why is this happening? Who is this? What can we do about it? Is it a problem and if it is what can we do about it?”145 Striving to create awareness is an initial step, but how does the media’s inclination to tell sensational (i.e if it bleeds it leads) stories distort the complexities of Aboriginal gangs?

Joe Friesen’s noted Globe and Mail report at the beginning of this chapter describes the gruesome impact the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting had on Jesse Obey such as: “The first bullet went through his cheek and blew out his teeth. The next hit the left side of his torso.”146 Or how Michael Itittakoose’s “white hoodie exploded with red.”147 Such provocative details attract readers because they sensationalize the shooting. Such details, however, provoke fear.

2.5 Suspect at Large

145 Jana Pruden, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 21, 2011.
147 Ibid
Shortly after the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting, editorials and public reaction began to analyze the implications of the shooting. One *Leader Post* commentary, written by Michelle Hugli, a Saulteaux-Swiss journalist who is often called upon by media to speak on behalf of Aboriginal youth, entitled “Where are Today’s Warriors?” on October 3, 2007 states, “I don’t know whether gangs were involved or not, but we know that aboriginal gangs in our province are growing and our communities are changing because of their activities.”

Hugli shares her “disgust” with the violence gang members inflict on both rural and urban Aboriginal communities. She says her ancestors did not fight oppression so that “generations could go around killing one another,” a sentiment that Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2005) echoes. Alfred calls on Indigenous people to decolonize their minds as a way to fight oppression. Employing a definition of warrior, Alfred explains Indigenous people should be “recreating our existences, regenerating our cultures, and surging against the forces that keep us bound to our colonial past.”

In that sense, Alfred calls on Indigenous people to challenge Settler power structures while finding ways to work together that respects Indigenous knowledge, culture, language, and ways of being. Similar to Alfred’s call to action, Hugli writes on October 3, 2007:

> We need our men to stand up and show our boys what being a proud aboriginal man is all about. It's far too easy to fall into the clutches of a gang. It's incredibly hard to break those cycles and bring the culture back into our families. But a proud warrior will always try to do what is right and good to protect his people.

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149 Ibid
In a sense, Hugli is proposing Wolfe, and others, stand up and be proud Aboriginal men. The concern, however, is that Hugli places the onus on individuals to stand up and be warriors, rather than society as a whole.

While Alfred encourages warriors to oppose the colonizers in a peaceful way, the warriors who comprise Aboriginal street gangs, such as the Indian Posse use violence as a means to challenge aspects of colonization. Alfred's view of the warrior is peaceful. He believes colonization can be overcome through relationship building and reconnecting to tradition in a non-mythic way. Wolfe incorporated some of Alfred’s ideas by attempting to build relationship with other Aboriginal youth. He had some awareness of the colonial structures that oppress Indigenous peoples, yet Wolfe's concept of an Indigenous warrior was rooted in violence and he romanticized and mythologized concepts of Indigeneity. As such, the reclamation of a strong Indigenous spirit, as described by Alfred and Hugli, was lost for Wolfe in the Indian Posse.
Chapter Three: The Escape

The guards at Regina Correctional Centre had just finished the evening cell check when Daniel Wolfe tapped his younger half-brother on the shoulder and told him to get ready. The escape was on.

Small and wiry, with long hair and glasses, Daniel had been anticipating this moment for four months. He'd realized there was a two-metre blind spot at the end of the long corridor that housed the prison unit - a place not covered by the security camera. So that was where he'd decided to dig.

Using nail clippers, he'd unscrewed the cover of a heating vent directly beneath the camera. Then he and his half-brother, Preston Buffalocalf, had started prying and scraping at the wall behind it with a kind of mini-crowbar they'd made by breaking off a piece of a metal table.

They would dig for an hour each night after dinner, while other inmates did calisthenics to distract the guards. It had taken a month and a half just to get through the steel plate at the back of the heater. Then it was weeks of chipping away at the cinder block with a homemade chisel. They stuck a piece of fabric from a winter coat behind the grill to hide their progress. And they flushed the dust and debris down the toilet.

"I thought that we'd get caught in the act. All the banging, all the noise, the dust all over us," Mr. Buffalocalf says.

Accused murderers almost never break out of jail. But Daniel, awaiting trial and facing the certainty of life in prison, had thought about little else since his arrest in January, 2008.153

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Wolfe’s elaborate prison break, an embarrassment to police and jail officials, captivated journalists and citizens across the country for almost two months. This chapter analyzes how Wolfe’s reputation as a “notorious gangster” is solidified throughout the media coverage of his escape from a Regina correctional facility. The media spectacle, described by journalists as “something right out of a Hollywood blockbuster,” manifested many narratives that began to circulate about Wolfe. Police cited parole reports that described him as an extremely dangerous individual. Previous media reports about Wolfe were dug out of the archives in an attempt to more fully divulge the extent of his criminal history. Meanwhile friends, family, and Wolfe himself engaged in a dialogue with media to counter dominant representations of Wolfe. By critically analyzing the various representations of Wolfe during his break from jail, I examine how multiple versions of a story are constructed and disseminated by media. I critique how representations of Wolfe during his escape perpetuate fear of Aboriginal bodies which mirrors colonial discourses that suggest Aboriginal people need to be contained. Despite media constructions that romanticize the mythology of the dangerous gangster, I also

154 Mike McIntyre, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 28, 2011.
analyze how narratives of Aboriginal criminality, as exemplified in media reports about Wolfe, are challenged.  

3.1 Break Out

When news of the escape finally did break, it quickly exploded into the biggest story of the summer. As Friesen observes in the Globe and Mail cited at the beginning of this chapter, “Accused murderers almost never break out of jail.” The sensational and rare nature of Wolfe’s jail break contributed to the extensive coverage. Mug shots plastered on newspapers, televisions, and websites of the six Aboriginal men became engrained in public consciousness as the frantic search for some of Canada’s most wanted and dangerous criminals commenced.

Pruden explains her journalistic reaction when news of the prison break was made public. As she recalls, “I got a tip that it happened and it was huge,” highlighting the (perceived) magnitude of the incident. The improbability of a prison break contributed to the news value of the event. Furthermore, the circumstances in which the inmates broke free are the makings of a “good story.” The public’s perception of prisons is largely

160 Most incidents of a dramatic nature are colloquially referred to as “good stories” by journalists.
fueled by popular Hollywood film and TV representations which illuminate the excitement of “breaking free.” As such, the Regina jail break mimicked a television script and journalists’ appetites to tell the story were seemingly insatiable.

Details regarding the inmates’ escape slowly emerged from unnamed sources inside the jail because of the justice department’s reticence to give information to the media. In a newspaper article written by Pruden on August 27, 2008, circumstances leading to the escape were divulged by an unnamed source inside the Regina jail. He is cited as saying the plan was “well-executed” with a “huge cache of weapons,” which challenges assumptions that gang members are uneducated, yet they are able to foil the prison system. As the source told the Leader Post, “It was so disturbing how many weapons they found. People are going, ‘How the hell did that happen?’” The escape disrupted popular beliefs that prisons are a sure way to protect society from such offenders and the media is left to reposition the myth.

3.2 Constructing Fear

Taking into consideration Henry and Tator’s (2002) argument that the public’s perceptions of crime are based on media reports, it is highly problematic when reports

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161 In her analysis of prisons, Angela Davis (2003) notes several film and television productions about the prison system such as Escape from Alcatraz, Big House, Prison Break, etc. Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).


163 Ibid

164 Ibid

165 For an in depth critique on the ideological role of prisons in society, I turn to Angela Davis’ (2003) argument that prisons are where “undesirables are deposited” and the rest of society does not need to take responsibility. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, 16. Also refer to Michel Foucault’s (1976) argument that rather than reform prisons breed criminals. For details on how gangs specifically have proliferated through Canada’s prison system see the following articles: Mervin Brass, “Winnipeg missed warning signs as gangs grew,” *The Edmonton Journal*, July 20, 1997; Sandra Contenta, “Prisons poisoning natives; Jails turn out to be ‘gladiator schools for the many Aboriginal who end up there,’” *The Toronto Star*, July 20, 2008. Raquel Exner, “Jail gives gangs boost, group told; Splitting up gang members increases their opportunities to recruit, *The Edmonton Journal*, September 26, 1998.
about crime feature an inordinate number of minority bodies.\textsuperscript{166} On the prairies, Aboriginal people are disproportionately cast in news stories as criminal. That said, there is no disputing Wolfe’s criminal behaviour, yet Green (2009) furthers this argument by contending, “For the most part, Aboriginal peoples do not exist for the media, except as practitioners of violence or political opposition, as marketing stereotypes or as bearers of social pathologies.”\textsuperscript{167} As such, people come to know Aboriginal people through narrow, and often inaccurate, media representations that regularly position Aboriginal bodies as “entities to fear.”\textsuperscript{168} These popular mediations influence the public’s perceptions of the escapees and reinforce the troubling stereotype that judges all Aboriginal men as a monolith who are violent. Representations of Wolfe confirm this.

The frequent and dramatic stories about the escape put Fort Qu’Appelle and Regina community members on alert for Aboriginal suspects who matched the description of the six men at large. To do this, community members draw on “common sense”\textsuperscript{169} practices to distinguish who should be feared or considered suspect in their neighbourhood based on stereotypical imagery that often positions Aboriginal men as savage. According to race and cultural studies professor Sarah Ahmed (2010), fear of the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{166} Henry and Tator, \textit{Discourses of Domination}, 163.
\textsuperscript{169} I refer to Sarah Ahmed’s definition of common sense: “Common sense not only defines what ‘we’ should take for granted (that is, what is normalized and already known as ‘the given’), but it also involves the normalization of ways of ‘sensing’ the difference between common and uncommon.” Sarah Ahmed, “Chapter One: Recognising Strangers” in \textit{Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality}, (London: New York: Routledge, 2010), 21-37. Pg. 29.
\end{flushleft}
Other is produced through the normalized practice of recognizing strangers. As she writes:

That is, information is not given about how to tell the difference between normal and suspicious, because that difference is already ‘sensed’ through a prior history of making sense as the making of ‘the common.’  

Through historic and current discourses that produce Aboriginal bodies, specifically Aboriginal men as criminal, their bodies are construed as strange or dangerous. As Ahmed suggests, “Some-bodies are more recognizable as strangers than other-bodies precisely because they are already read and valued in the demarcation of social spaces.” Taking into account Ahmed’s argument, some community members read Aboriginal men as “dangerous” because of how the media has previously represented Aboriginal men as having criminal propensities.

In addition to the spectacle of a successful escape, the characteristics of the Aboriginal gang members at large contributed to the media’s penchant to describe the severity of the jail break. The first Leader Post headline alerting the public of the escape read, “Accused killers among escapees.” The inmates who escaped from the Regina jail were “well-known” to the criminal justice system which is why, Pruden as the major daily newspaper crime and court reporter, was familiar with their stories. As she states, “We found out the names of who it was and I knew every single one of those people and what they were in for.” Twenty-five-year-old Ryan Agecoutey, 22 year-old Preston Buffaloalf, 19 year-old Cody Keenatch, 25 year-old James Pewean, and 23 year-old

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170 Ibid
171 Ahmed, Strange Encounters, 30.
173 Jana Pruden, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 21, 2011.
174 Ibid
old Kenneth Iron were the individuals at large. Pruden outlines their criminal histories in
the newspaper: “Pewean, Wolfe and Buffalocalf are all facing murder charges, and
Agecoutay is awaiting trial for aggravated assault. There is no public record of an adult
criminal record for Keenatch.”175 The story documents the dangerous nature of their
crimes, which legitimized the need to reflect a sense of urgency in the media reports. The
story also outlines the escapees associations with Aboriginal street gangs. In addition, a
National Post story on August 25, 2008 read, “At least two of the escapees from a
Saskatchewan prison176 are drug-addicted gang members whose criminal pasts include
alleged murder, aggravated assault, and arson.”177 This story alerts a national readership
of the “violent”178 and “sadistic”179 behaviour of Wolfe. The article excludes details of
the escapees’ race, yet because of the inmates’ names, the public is able to draw on
preconceived notions of Aboriginal criminality without explicitly stating the race of the
individuals at large. Meanwhile, a Globe and Mail article on August 27, 2008 describes
the escapees as “gang members who were considered among some of the most dangerous
men in provincial jails.”180 The consistent argument made by all media outlets was that
Wolfe and the other inmates were considered a major threat to society because of their
link to gang crime which as suggested, is often racialized by police and media.

175 Ibid
176 The six escapees escaped from a Regina jail, not a prison. The National Post is incorrect in labeling the
facility a prison. The jail is a correctional facility used to house people who are on remand. A prison is a
federal run institution for individuals convicted of a crime. None of the escapees had been convicted on the
charges listed in media reports.
178 Ibid
179 Ibid
Due to the “violent nature”\(^{181}\) of the escapees, the Saskatchewan Justice Department came under fire by journalists for not promptly alerting the media. On August 25th at 1:00 pm, fifteen hours after the escape, a media alert was finally released.\(^{182}\) The delay in public notification was prominently featured in stories about the escape,\(^{183}\) reminding the public of their right to safety, and their right to know when their safety has been breached. A *Leader Post* headline on August 27, 2008 states, “Communities find late notification ‘unsettling’.\(^ {184}\) The story outlines people’s discomfort with not being alerted immediately so that safety precautions could be taken.

Residents close to the Regina jail shared their unease with a *Leader Post* reporter stating:

> It's a scary feeling. A lot of parents are saying, 'We don't even want to send our kids to school.' School starts (today) for a lot of the Catholic Schools and a lot of parents are saying, 'No, we just don't want them going to school until these guys are caught.' And I don't blame them. Safety is a big concern.\(^ {185}\)

Another person described her fear by saying, “We’re not talking minor burglary here. We’re talking pretty heavy-duty offenses with violence.”\(^ {186}\) The nature of the crimes committed by the individuals at large were in fact serious, violent crimes and the media holds a responsibility to inform the public. However, the escape involving Aboriginal men is not deemed as an isolated case. Instead journalists and the public refer to popular


\(^{182}\) The media criticized the government for being late with the release as 15 hours is an unusually long time period to wait for a release. Following an external review, the provincial government introduced new rules that would ensure the public would be notified of a jail break within one hour. See also Angela Hall, “Inmates dug out of Sask. jail,” *The Leader Post*, March 12, 2009. <http://www2.canada.com/topics/news/story.html?id=1382416>. Accessed July 19, 2011.


\(^{185}\) Ibid

\(^{186}\) Ibid

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media representations that position Aboriginal men as dangerous to simplistically understand the nature of the escape.

In *Race, Space, and the Law* (2002), anti-racist scholar Sherene Razack notes how boundaries which regulate the movement of bodies within certain spaces are produced. For example, in the egregious case of Pamela George, an Aboriginal woman killed by two white men in Regina, SK, Razack argues George was physically relegated to the destitute areas of the city because of poverty, racism and her line of work as a prostitute. Razack’s analysis raises an interesting question: where then do Aboriginal bodies ‘belong’? In what spaces are they permitted to dwell? Jails and prisons establish an explicit boundary that separates criminals from good citizens. Due to the disproportionate number of racialized bodies locked up, the prison ultimately segregates Aboriginal bodies from white bodies and since the escape disrupts these boundaries, panic ensues.

Of equal importance to Razack’s examination is Green’s (2009) analysis of the demarcation of space as illustrated by Saskatoon’s Starlight Tours, the practice of police officers dumping Aboriginal men on the outskirts of town and freezing to death as a result of being intoxicated. This deliberate act to remove “troublesome” Aboriginal men from city spaces implies that “inferior” and “degenerate” Aboriginal bodies are not authorized to occupy certain spaces. The boundaries articulated in both of these cases were created and enforced by colonial ideologies that outline for the public who is acceptable in certain spaces and who is not. Colonial discourses of segregation are evoked through Regina community members’ concern that the escapees might be in ‘their neighbourhood.’ This racialized discourse affirms historic segregation practices that allege the imagined response: ‘We must contain “them” in order to protect “us.”’
This narrative is not new. Historian Sarah Carter (1997) has documented early-settler practices on the prairies that legitimized the implementations of laws to “contain” Aboriginal bodies. As she explains, colonial discourse situated white women as pure, vulnerable, and necessary to protect. In contrast, Aboriginal men posed an (imagined) threat to the sanctity of white women. Such ideological and racialized beliefs informed and condoned segregation policies, such as the reserve system, as Carter writes:

Ideas about the vulnerability of white women helped to create and sustain concepts of racial and cultural difference, to legitimize tough action against indigenous people, and to convey the message of the necessity of policing boundaries between different peoples.187

In other words, “regulating race and gender relations in the West was about clarifying and maintaining boundaries between Native and newcomer.”188 These boundaries persist today as specific neighbourhoods, like Regina’s “hood,”189 are more heavily policed and certain individuals are more at-risk of racial profiling.190

Colonial discourses of segregation and criminality are constantly (re)produced by media. As Anderson and Robertson (2011) articulate, the Canadian printed press has been complicit in upholding colonial policies such as Canada’s vicious and aggressive legacy of colonialism as demonstrated by the seizure of land and the apprehension of Aboriginal

188 Carter, Capturing Women, xv.
189 Jonathon Gatehouse, “Canada’s Worst Neighbourhood: How did the province where medicare was born end up with a city this frightening?” Macleans Magazine, January 15, 2007.
children into the residential school system, while constructing Canada’s reputation as a peaceful, inclusive country.\textsuperscript{191} As they insist:

Collectively, on the one hand, this imagery has served to informally yet persuasively teach countless Canadians about imagined native inferiority in all its splendor (that is, the Other, in its many guises); and on the other hand, the portrayals have served to reinforce prevalent mainstream notions about Aboriginal peoples, all of which degrade, denigrate, and marginalize.\textsuperscript{192}

As I have demonstrated thus far, mediations of the escape are no different. Media reports about the jail break explicitly stated that the six escapees ‘belonged’ in prison. This discourse produced by media is based on colonial assumptions that position Aboriginal people as a threat to white society.

3.3 The Mythology of a Gangster

Over the course of the almost two-month search for the escapees, two individuals became of particular interest to journalists.\textsuperscript{193} Wolfe and Agecoutey, who remained at large the longest, were “considered by some to be the most dangerous of the six men involved in the brazen escape.”\textsuperscript{194} Reporters at the \textit{Leader Post} obtained documents from the National Parole Board which outlined Wolfe’s engagement with the criminal justice system and then (re)presented those findings in their media reportage. In the opening line of a story by Barb Pacholik for the \textit{Leader Post} on August 30, 2008, Wolfe is described as “a violent man who once defended street gangs as empowering people.”\textsuperscript{195} The story

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{191}] Robertson and Anderson, \textit{Seeing Red}, 2011.
\item[\textsuperscript{192}] Robertson and Anderson, \textit{Seeing Red}, 10.
\item[\textsuperscript{193}] Barb Pacholik, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 13, 2011.
\item[\textsuperscript{194}] For the purposes of this case study, I am focusing solely on the representations of Wolfe. Jana Pruden and James Turner. “Recaptured inmates on way back to Regina.” \textit{The Leader Post}. September 11, 2008.
\item[\textsuperscript{195}] Barb Pacholik, “Wolfe on run for third time from police,” \textit{The Leader Post}, August 30, 2008.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
quotes parole reports “rife with references to Wolfe’s affinity for gangs and guns.”  The story continues to cite reports that document Wolfe’s entanglement with the justice system, including an arrest in 1999 following an assault where Wolfe threatened his victims with a sawed off shot gun and brass knuckles. Following that incident, a psychological report described Wolfe’s involvement as evidence of “sadistic behaviour/torture.” Such details are of public interest if this person is unlawfully at large. However, as a result of these parole reports making the news, the public’s anxiety regarding the whereabouts of Wolfe increased and therefore their fear of the ‘growing Aboriginal gang problem’ also increases.

While the search for the escapees continues, the constructions of Wolfe as an infamous gangster dominates news coverage. According to one officer quoted in the *Globe and Mail* on September 18, 2008 Wolfe, “whose profile has been raised to that of a virtual folk hero,” was “partying on his home reserve, cultivating an image as the ‘Don Juan of the Pas.’” Police had conducted a search on the Opaskwayak Cree Nation near the Pas, Manitoba but were unable to capture Wolfe before he fled the reserve for Winnipeg. Many journalists wrongly stated that Wolfe was from the Pas, including the officer quoted in the *Globe and Mail*. This information was incorrect which is evidence

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196 Ibid
197 Ibid
199 Ibid
200 To understand the extent of the coverage of the escape, including the references to Wolfe being from the Pas, see the number of articles published in newspapers across the country: Meghan Hurley, “Regina jailbreak Escappee sought in The Pas complex,” *The Winnipeg Free Press*, September 15, 2008; Chinta Puxley, “Two escaped inmates captured; Pair who broke out of Saskatchewan jail caught in Winnipeg; Two more still at large,” *The Toronto Star*, September 11, 2008. “Police come up empty in search for accused killer; Escaped from jail. ‘High-risk situation’ Mounties warn,” *The Montreal Gazette*, September 16, 2008; “Police still can’t find escaped convict,” *The Vancouver Sun*, September 16, 2008; “RCMP fail to flush out jail escapee; Housing complex evacuated before day-long standoff,” *The National Post*, September 16,
that much of the rhetoric surrounding Wolfe was based on misinformation being circulated in media reports. Also in The Globe and Mail report, an RCMP officer was quoted as saying, “Like any outlaw, they have a certain mystique about them. But he’s charged with murder. He’s not a Robin Hood or anything like that.” Sensational adjectives and metaphors conjure up images of a violent villain demonized for his role as a gangster. The mythic description furthers the argument that Wolfe’s hero/villain status is an imaginary construction (re)produced by media to romanticize the life of the gangster.

One story in particular that contributed to the construction of Wolfe’s character is a 1994 article from the Winnipeg Free Press which surfaced during an archive search as journalists tried to piece together Wolfe’s identity, and his intentions regarding the formation of a gang and devoting his life to crime. The report from September 30, 1994 entitled, “Gang began as Native kids’ club,” discusses the gang’s “child-like beginnings.” The article, part of a week-long series called Bad Boys, documented the “growing” problem of gangs in Winnipeg. According to the report, the “children” forming these gangs were from Winnipeg’s North End, a neighbourhood often linked to child neglect, poverty, and alcohol and drug abuse by media. Richard Daniel Wolfe revealed in the Free Press article that at the age of 14, he and his brother Daniel Richard Wolfe formed the Indian Posse with four other “disadvantaged teens” who wanted to

201 Ibid
202 Journalists will often do an archive search to look for previous articles on the subject.
203 The article, which originally ran in The Winnipeg Free Press was given a new title by the Canadian Press which distributes articles to papers across Canada. “Gang began as native kids’ club” The Canadian Press Newswire, October 5, 1994.
205 Ibid
form a “brotherhood.” The report notes the youth, “had a lot in common: They were urban aboriginals, poor and from broken families, with abusive backgrounds and substance abuse problems.”

Sociologist Bernard Schissel (2006) problematizes popular media representations, like the Free Press’ series, that criminalizes poverty. The tendency to place blame on dysfunctional families charges the “poor parenting of single mothers, decontextualized from economy or society, as the singular cause of youth malevolence.” Society’s implicit role in the marginalization of minority youth needs to be taken into consideration in any discussion about gangs. Instead, as Schissler might argue, the article neglects to explain how capitalism (which often produces poverty) can push youth towards the gangster lifestyle. In the face of discrimination and racism, it might be easier (and more prosperous) for an Aboriginal youth to push drugs as a gangster than it is to get a job selling burgers at McDonalds. The complexities of joining a gang that move beyond the stereotypical tropes of poverty and destitution are not examined in the Free Press series. Rather, conventional notions of race and class persist. The story was revisited by reporters during the escape to further support and criticize Wolfe’s involvement with gangs.

Ironically, reporters who were covering the escape mistook the quoted Indian Posse member Richard Daniel Wolfe for Daniel Richard Wolfe who had escaped. The media positioned the Wolfe brothers as a conflated monolith. Daniel’s slightly older brother Richard, who was serving time in a federal penitentiary on attempted murder

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206 Ibid
207 Schissel, Still Blaming Children, 99.
charges during the escape, heard reports that the Leader Post was attributing his interview with the Free Press to his brother Daniel. By attributing the details in the 1994 Free Press story to Daniel, journalists got the story wrong. Richard requested his mother call the Leader Post to clarify which son spoke to the Free Press. The mother was quoted in the Leader Post on September 5, 2008 as saying, “That’s my other son saying that. He told me to phone and get the story straight.” By demanding accuracy, the Wolfe family attempted to influence the representations of Daniel in the media. Most importantly, Richard wanted to be constructed as more than just the stereotype represented in the media, but as a unique individual, with differing views than his brother.

However, when media made the correction, the distinction was moot to most readers. Reporters further sensationalized the story by highlighting how two brothers with interchangeable names had a “mutual interest in gangs and guns,” reinforcing for readers the monolithic construction. Richard’s words published in 1994 were used to create a bleak picture of not just an individual, but a family entrenched in gang activity. The story of two brothers so close in age with such heavy involvement in the creation of one of Canada’s first Aboriginal street gangs almost superseded stories about the escape. In the Leader Post story on September 5, 2008, that includes the correction, Pacholik notes that two years after Richard was quoted in the Free Press, he was sentenced to 19 and a half years in prison for the attempted murder of a pizza delivery guy. Pacholik’s story reminds readers that Daniel did not commit crime in isolation - he and his brother

209 Ibid
210 Ibid
were responsible for the creation of the Indian Posse. Wolfe was no longer just another gang member, but a founding member with power and influence amongst a younger generation of Aboriginal people. Richard’s words were used to help construct Daniel as an influential and dangerous killer responsible for leading hundreds of Aboriginal youth astray by pulling them into the gangster lifestyle. Although Richard attempts to influence how the media tells his story, his words reinforce some of the very stereotypes he is trying to resist and therefore the media’s (re)production of his words further demonize the gangster.

3.4 Speaking up

Richard’s intention in speaking to the Free Press was to provide his perspective on the formation of the Indian Posse (IP) which challenged popular assumptions about gangs but also glorified the lifestyle of a gangster. In many instances, speaking can create a counter reality as bell hooks (1988) argues, “Speaking becomes both a way to engage in active self-transformation and a rite of passage where one moves from being object to being subject.” Richard said the Indian Posse provided him with a family and a sense of belonging. It enabled him to walk through his neighbourhood with his head up. The name of the IP was a reclamation of the derogatory term “Indian.” In Richard’s opinion, this organization was taking a stand against the oppression his people experienced in society. To describe his sentiments about the gang and its role in society,

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212 Ibid
213 bell hooks, Talking Back, (Toronto: Between the lines, 1988), 12.
214 In the interview with Leisha Grebinski, Richard never referred to the Indian Posse as a “gang.” Instead he referred to the IP as a family or crew. This indicates Richard’s desire to (re)present the IP as more than just a criminal organization. Richard Wolfe, interview by Leisha Grebinski, March 31, 2011.
215 Richard explained in his interview how Indian Posse was chosen as a name. They chose “Indian” rather than Native because Indian was used to degrade Aboriginal people. They came upon the word “Posse” when flipping through a hip-hop magazine. Later, Richard realized that Posse meant family.
Richard wrote a manifesto while in a Manitoba Corrections Youth facility. The following statement describing the Indian Posse’s philosophy was reprinted by the *Winnipeg Free Press*:

“Indian Posse.” When you see Red (sic), you see a proud Indian stand tall for what he or she believes in, but all in all we’re “Indian Posse.”

If a brother or sister dies, it’s not because he or she was in a gang, it’s because they had pride for themself and wanted to prove to everyone else they were worriors & in are minds they were Indians & in are hearts they were brothers & sisters.

But if we have to kill other brother or sister then let it be, we will survive the war path in the future. We will join the great Spirit in the sky & it will be done if there is no other way to do it.

But we all have to remember we are in it together & will die together & sometime down the road we will be remember as proud Indians.

But are people must understand we didn’t this to make are people look bad. If are people can’t understand that then we feel sorry for are people cause we all have a dream & the dream is to be a proud Indian you are & believe in yourselves.

A lot of people think they know us but really don’t, they just go by the papers & what they see.

Call us what you want but it’s your spirit you will see, brother and sisters for ever.”\(^{216}\)

The manifesto attempts to reclaim Indian pride, survival, and spirit. As articulated by Richard, for a generation impacted by residential schools, racism, and marginalization, the Indian Posse manifesto, published by the *Free Press*, serves as a skewed sense of Indigeneity. The manifesto offers a different perspective than the

\(^{216}\) This is the original draft of the manifesto published in the *Free Press*. Spelling has not been altered. Paul Wieck, “Free at last and full of fear,” *The Winnipeg Free Press*, September 30, 1994.
representations expressed by media. As the manifesto astutely points out, “They just go by the paper & what they see,” meaning that the public’s only understanding of Richard is through media representations. Therefore, Richard wants to reclaim a sense of Indigenous pride that counters the stereotypes often produced by media. As Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2005) explains, men through processes of colonization lost their warrior status. Alfred believes the warrior spirit must be reestablished by opposing the colonizers and reclaiming Indigeneity. However, Richard’s efforts to reclaim his own romanticized sense of Indigeneity is further complicated by capitalist desires that are centered around money and violence. Yet, the manifesto still offers a glimpse into a young person’s quest to stand up and be proud of his ancestry. The media, however, redirects and disciplines the meaning of the manifesto by focusing only on Richard’s reference to violence and death as Pacholik’s story on September 5, 2008 chose to publish the following excerpt: “He wrote that members may have to kill or die ‘because we all have something to prove for one other & it will be done if there is no other way to do it.” References to death trump Richard’s affinity to Indigenous pride because of systemic issues that often position Aboriginal men as being innately violent.

At times, Richard’s take on the Indian Posse contrasts the media representations of the violent gang he and his brother are accused of forming. As he states, “We didn’t really think much of it at the time just that we wanted to be a little family.”

Richard says the original members of the “crew” came from dysfunctional homes and therefore

217 Ibid
219 Ibid
220 In conversations with me, Richard refers to the Indian Posse as a “crew.”
the Indian Posse became a “brotherhood”\(^{221}\) that took care of its members; albeit often through intimidation and force.). As he recalls, “At the time we thought it was fun for us. But when I really sit down and think about it, I think it was me trying to cry out for attention, for my mother and my father to you know, pay more close attention to their kids I guess.”\(^{222}\) Richard’s insights complicate the formation of Aboriginal gangs as he raises issues of neglect and poverty as contributing factors of the gang.

According to Marsh (2011), Aboriginal youth are often seduced by the brotherhood of the gangster lifestyle, and the form of masculinity it offers, much in the same way male youth are drawn to other institutions representing brotherhood such as a sports team, police force, business club, etc. As she contends, “The privileges that accompany these organizations - community, security, loyalty, belonging, social status, networking, and capital - are ironically similar in spite of the perception of one as ‘good’ and another as ‘bad’.”\(^{223}\) The desire for Aboriginal youth to belong to something, even a gang, is taken up by media as a reckless choice. In reality, conventional brotherhoods that may not be welcoming to Aboriginal bodies mean that Aboriginal men are often excluded from the privileges such organizations may offer.\(^{224}\)

Despite the attempt at creating a brotherhood, Richard admits the Indian Posse continues to commit an incredible amount of violent crimes, yet, as he explained to Globe and Mail reporter Joe Friesen, the inception of the Indian Posse was centered on pride. As he told Friesen in the article cited at the beginning of each chapter, “We did feel pride, me and Danny. He always used to tell me, ‘Be proud of who you are.’ And I knew what

\(^{221}\) Ibid
\(^{222}\) Richard Wolfe, interview by Leisha Grebinski, March 31, 2011.
\(^{223}\) Marsh, Keepin it Real?, 155.
\(^{224}\) For an analysis into how racialized bodies are read see Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness” In Anatomy of Racism, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 108-126.
he was talking about, right away. No matter what, when we pass away, 50 years down the road, when they bring up the Indian Posse, they’re going to remember our names.” It is unclear what exactly the Wolfe brothers wanted to be remembered for. Most definitely, they made choices that earned them both reputations for being violent criminals. But in the midst of those choices, the Wolfe brothers indicated to the media that they wanted to also be noted for being proud Indigenous men. In addition, Wolfe’s name and his hand in creating the Indian Posse have been remembered by those in positions of power, specifically police and the media as a negative force in Canadian society. As such, Wolfe’s name now serves to symbolize the Aboriginal gangster. His media constructed persona signifies a wide range of negative attributes associated with violence and destruction within Canada’s Aboriginal youth population. However, the Wolfe family’s attempt to challenge the meta-narrative of the dangerous Aboriginal gangster helps reshape the skewed constructions of Aboriginal youth.

While Wolfe was being represented as extremely dangerous by police and journalists, a regularly featured column by Aboriginal writer Colleen Simard in the Winnipeg Free Press on September 4, 2008 attempted to cast Wolfe in a different light. Simard knew Wolfe when she was a teenager. She describes her encounters with a young, skinny, quiet boy who was in love with her cousin. Simard intended to provide an oppositional viewpoint to media coverage about Wolfe. As she writes in the Free Press, “I hate gangs but don't blame Danny, his brother or their friends for IP. It was bound to

happen because the breakdown and gaps in our families existed and continue to exist.”

Simard tried to explain to readers why gangs have become prevalent in Aboriginal communities. Her column alludes to the disintegration of family values and a subsequent lack of pride amongst Aboriginal youth as a direct result of residential schools. What makes Simard’s column distinct, however, is the fact that she had a relationship with this “dangerous criminal.” As she explained, “I wanted people to see, criminals aren’t always criminals. Criminals were once kids that were once sweet and innocent...Gangs don’t attract bad people. Gangs attract people who are missing something.”

Through processes of colonization, specifically the residential school system, Wolfe’s pride and sense of identity were diminished. In the same interview, Simard notes the Indian Posse was supposed to emulate a more traditional “native warrior society.” According to Simard, Wolfe wanted to stand up for something he believed in: “I think Danny was trying to do something noble with that. I think he wanted to be part of something, you know? Like someone said, a brotherhood.”

Richard and Daniel may have looked to Indigenous people involved in the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the Objibwe Warrior Society as models when forming their own Indian brotherhood. Both organizations had a presence in Winnipeg in the mid 1960s. Sometimes violence was used as a method to resist the oppressor. Although the Indian Posse committed horrific crimes, often against the founders’ community as Aboriginal gangs were often in

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227 Colleen Simard, interviewed by Leisha Grebinski, April 28, 2011.
228 Ibid
229 Ibid
violent conflict with each other, the formation of the IP, like AIM and the Ojibwe Warrior Society, was rooted in Indian Pride, albeit in a skewed form.

3.5 The Capture

On September 17, 2008, Wolfe was captured by police in Winnipeg. Mike McIntyre’s report for the Winnipeg Free Press confirmed, “One of Canada’s most wanted and dangerous street gang members is back in custody.” 231 The story outlines how police were on “high-alert” as they scoured the city looking for Wolfe. Details of Wolfe’s violent background were repeated in each story about the escape, causing fear of Wolfe to escalate. 232 For example, an annual Treaty Four pow wow in Fort Qu’Appelle, the town where Wolfe was accused of killing two people, was shortened by organizers out of fear Wolfe would attend and possibly cause violence. 233 A huge police presence at the pow wow monitored the 4,000 expected visitors as a precaution, yet there was no sign of Wolfe and violence did not ensue. 234

CBC Winnipeg reporter Sheila North-Wilson covered the escape and was fascinated by the attention given to the spectacle, which she says amounted to a “cat and mouse chase” 235 between police and Wolfe. North-Wilson recalls how police constructed Wolfe in true Hollywood western fashion. “It was mostly the RCMP that led the charge, but they made him out to be this dangerous individual that had long shot guns and that he

232 References to Wolfe’s alleged involvement with the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting were made in almost every story.
234 Ibid
235 Sheila North-Wilson, interviewed by Leisha Grebinski, April 27, 2011.
was going to kill anyone who would cross his path.”236 As an Aboriginal resident, North-Wilson said she had heard Wolfe’s story before237 and knew there was likely more to him than the representation promoted by police and subsequently (re)presented by media. She explains her inclination to speak with Wolfe directly the day after he was caught. As she states, “Honest to god I woke up in my bed, opened my eyes, and something told me, call the jail where he is at, he will talk to you.”238 North-Wilson phoned the jail to request an interview and by mid-morning Wolfe agreed to speak with her.239

In the 30-minute interview with North-Wilson, Wolfe recounts some of his experiences while on the lam. As he states, “I relaxed. I tried to visit family members, you know and just say hello to everybody. It wasn’t like I was out, to go all out, kinda thing. I wasn’t out to party and you know. I wanted to see family members, you know.”240 Although North-Wilson was skeptical of Wolfe’s response because she knew he could be lying, she wanted to create a space where his version of events could be heard.

It is rare for authorities to grant a criminal subject an opportunity to speak to the media. As Hall (1976) concedes, “By and large, the criminal, by his actions, is assumed to have forfeited, along with other citizenship rights, his ‘right of reply’ until he has repaid his debt to society.”241 Asking Wolfe to share his views while being held for

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236 Ibid
237 In her interview with Leisha Grebinski, North-Wilson explained how she did lots of stories about gangs for CBC Winnipeg. Wolfe’s story shared similar traits to the other individuals she did stories on such as living in poverty, abuse, etc. and that the gangs were a means for belonging and survival.
238 Sheila North-Wilson, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 27, 2011.
239 North-Wilson is a TV reporter but decided to record the telephone interview so it could be used for broadcast. She did this just in case the on-camera interview with Wolfe would be called off.
allegedly killing people was met with trepidation. But without the voice of the person accused, crime stories remain one-sided. In the case of the escape, police spoke with the most authority regarding Wolfe as well as journalists, lawyers, and parole officers. Therefore, hearing Wolfe’s perspective provides rare insight into the motivations of a gang member and circumstances that produce a criminal, or specifically an Aboriginal gang member.

When North-Wilson was on her way to the jail to do an on-camera interview with Wolfe, she received a call from Manitoba justice officials saying they would no longer permit the inmate to speak out. Given Hall’s argument that criminals forfeit their right to speak, it is no surprise officials halted interviews with Wolfe. North-Wilson explained to me the officials said it was in Wolfe’s best interest. In a Free Press story, however, RCMP Sergeant Line Karpish admitted Wolfe might try to “manipulate the media.” She said to reporters, “He could be lying to you.” But as North-Wilson recalls, “I don’t think [RCMP] legitimately cared if he hung himself or not. I think they were embarrassed. They had been searching for him for so long that they didn’t want to be subjected to further humility [sic], I think.”

Since North-Wilson recorded her telephone conversation with Wolfe, sound bites of the interview were aired on CBC television in Winnipeg. In the interview, Wolfe represents himself in numerous ways. He insists he is not the person the media made him out to be. He says, “I’m not like they fucking say. I’m not like the person they put me out to be. I’m not like that, I’m not a dangerous person.” Wolfe denies that he is a dangerous

242 I was working in a news room at the time North-Wilson’s interview with Wolfe took place. I witnessed a heated debate amongst producers, hosts, and journalists where many thought media should not be giving Wolfe air-time.
243 Sheila North-Wilson, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 27, 2011.
person yet his violent actions suggest otherwise. A judge found Wolfe guilty of murder a few months after the interview with North-Wilson. Although North-Wilson is giving Wolfe space to challenge the dominant narrative that has been circulating about him, consideration needs to be given to whether Wolfe is in denial of his violent behaviour or if he is trying to manipulate the reporter. In addition to recounting how he spent some of his time during the escape, Wolfe explains why he was drawn to gangs:

> It was survival. I’m the aftermath of residential school. My parents were in residential school. You know they were alcoholics, they drank, they partied, and I was neglected. And, you know, I had no one but my friends.\(^{244}\)

Wolfe contextualized his reasons for starting the Indian Posse by linking historic wrong-doings to his present day situation. Richard and Daniel made choices in their lives that led them down a violent path; however, they were also raised in an oppressive system that in many ways forced them into gang life. Richard indicated in interviews for this research project, that remembering and sharing past wrongs aids in a representation of Wolfe’s story that counters the dominant media narrative. Media and police often frame Wolfe as a producer of the Aboriginal gang problem but in Wolfe and Richard’s words, they are products of a system that attempted to assimilate and destroy Aboriginal people.

\(^{244}\) Daniel Wolfe, interview by Sheila North-Wilson, *CBC Winnipeg*, September 18, 2008.
Chapter Four: The Trial

A year later, there was a heavy police presence, including snipers on rooftops, when Daniel’s murder trial began at the Regina courthouse. The gang’s penchant for intimidating witnesses was by now well known. The Saskatoon police chief said it’s not uncommon in Saskatchewan courts to see gang members gesturing that they’re going to slash the throat of a witness as he or she takes the stand.

In delivering the verdict, the judge said Daniel convicted himself with his own words.

"This case is evidence of Wolfe’s callous disregard for human life. There are no mitigating circumstances," the judge said. "But for some luck, many more people would have been killed. It ranks as one of the worst of its type in the history of this province."

Daniel received five life sentences.245

In media representations of the trial, Wolfe continues to be constructed as incredibly violent, not just because of his actions, but due to the stereotypical gangster tropes presented in testimony and in the verdict delivered by the judge. Most noteworthy, however, is representations of Wolfe’s identity established in earlier media coverage of being a notorious gangster that are drawn on repeatedly by journalists. As indicated in the above Globe and Mail excerpt, “The gang’s penchant for intimidating witnesses was by now well-known.”246 These facts appear “well-known” simply because of their reappearances in news stories. In this chapter I analyze how fear of Aboriginal bodies is reaffirmed through repetition present in court reporting. I also examine how certain voices are privileged in a court of law and then reproduced by media by focusing on the

246 Ibid
role of “primary definers”247 whose arguments are seen as holding the most weight versus the voices of family members.

4.1 Court Reporting

The media (re)presentations of Wolfe are based on court proceedings that take place in Canada’s “fair” and “unbiased” justice system, based on a European model implemented by colonizers in the 17th and 18th century.248 The law, which is meant to protect human rights and maintain order, has simultaneously degraded Aboriginal people by denying them from a plethora of basic rights. As Justice Murray Sinclair, co-Commissioner of the 1999 Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba, points out:

Canada had enacted law depriving Aboriginal people of the right to contract, to sell property, to engage in business, to establish successful farms, to vote, to go to court, to raise their children, to practice their spiritual beliefs, to manage their own affairs, and to select their governments in accordance with their traditions.249

The justice system has been reformed considering Aboriginal people were granted the right to vote in 1960 and many segregation policies have been eliminated.250

A large body of evidence suggests Aboriginal peoples are treated differently under Canadian laws such as the Indian Act. Numerous special investigations and justice commissions have also exposed the racist practices that prevent Aboriginal people from fully benefiting from Canadian society. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry (AJI) in Manitoba

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248 For a history on Canada’s Justice System see: “Canada’s System of Justice,” http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/dept-min/pub/just/03.html


was launched in 1991 following the trial of four men accused of killing Helen Betty Osbourne and the police shooting of JJ Harper. The AJI was launched after JJ Harper was killed by police and Helen Betty Osbourne was murdered by two white men. Both cases were considered highly racialized and exemplary of the mistreatment of Aboriginal people by the justice system. For more information see: http://www.ajic.mb.ca/volume.html.


253 The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was prompted by events at Oka and the Meech Lake Accord.

254 The 1996 Royal Commission of Aboriginal People (RCAP) also extensively documented devastating legal ramifications which left many Aboriginal people in dysfunctional and desperately poor scenarios. The Commission set out a twenty-year plan to improve the situation of Aboriginal peoples. To date, no government has moved on RCAP’s recommendations.

To understand the scale of the conflict between Canada’s justice system and Aboriginal peoples, incarceration rates show the disproportionate number of Aboriginal
people incarcerated. According to federal statistics gathered in 2009, more than 20 per cent of inmates are of Aboriginal descent and the numbers are much more bleak in the prairie provinces. As Justice Hamilton argues, “Aboriginal people are not in jail because they are aggressive or have a criminal bent. It is largely because they are caught up in a system that fails to meet their needs.”\textsuperscript{255} In many instances, according to Justice Hamilton the system conflicts with Aboriginal traditions. For example, Canada’s system is punitive whereas Aboriginal traditions promote healing and forgiveness, with support from an individual’s community.\textsuperscript{256} In addition Justice Hamilton notes it is “contrary to tradition to have one person sit in judgment on the conduct of another,”\textsuperscript{257} which is the primary objective of Canada’s justice system.

In her book \textit{Looking White People in the Eye}, Razack contextualizes how histories of oppression influence power dynamics in a courtroom. Although there is often a recognition of colonization and its impact on Aboriginal peoples who are now facing the courts by a “culturally sensitive”\textsuperscript{258} judge who may acknowledge that alcohol abuse and sexual violence are consequences of the residential school system there is no recognition of how the dominant group emerged through processes of colonization. As Razack asks, “We may know how colonization changed Aboriginal people, but do we know how it changed, and continues to change, white people?”\textsuperscript{259} Whiteness, Razack argues, as a metaphor for domination, permeates court proceedings, yet is never acknowledged or named. In other words, systems of oppression have been a factor in producing the high number of white judges just as it has contributed to the high number of Aboriginal

\textsuperscript{255} Hamilton, \textit{A Feather Not A Gavel}, 193.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid
\textsuperscript{257} Hamilton, \textit{A Feather Not A Gavel}, 239
\textsuperscript{259} Ibid
offenders, yet those in positions of power are never called upon to recognize their
privilege. In light of this, Razack argues people are judged as “though they were not
embedded in historical and contemporary relations of domination.”

The legacy of the residential school system and its impact on Wolfe is never
acknowledged in statements made by lawyers and the judge in newspaper reports. The
fact that Wolfe was raised by the foster care system is also absent in newspaper reports.
Many of the social factors that contributed to Wolfe becoming a gangster are missing
during the trial. Jiwani (2006) argues there is little recognition of the systemic racism or
cultural genocide that happened, and continues to happen in Canada. This denial is
secured through the “power not to be named.” That is, journalists, lawyers, and judges
remain unmarked while simultaneously seeing, naming, analyzing, and oppressing the
Other. Media reports and interviews are framed against a backdrop of white superiority
which is trying to “make-sense” of the Other. As such, whiteness becomes the dominant
discourse in court proceedings. For example, in the case of Pamela George, Razack
argues, “White people’s historic participation in and benefit from that dispossession and
violence; and the law’s complicity in settler violence, particularly through an insistence
on racelessness and on contract, all remained invisible.” The denial of race as a factor
in the killing of a young Aboriginal sex trade worker by two middle class white men
ignores the circumstances that led to such a horrific act to take place. The law’s denial of

260 Razack, Looking White People in the Eye, 156
261 Jiwani, Yasmin. “Doubling Discourses and the veiled Other: Mediations of race and gender in Canadian
Smith. Toronto: Between the Lines, 2010. 59-86 Pg. 60.
262 Sherene Razack, “Gendered Racial Violence and Spacialized Justice: The Murder of Pamela George in
Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society. Ed. Sherene Razack. (Toronto: Between the
race, and its denial of power relations embedded within Canada’s colonial project prevent justice from being met in the case of Pamela George.

It is clear that Canada’s justice system is fraught with inequities that perpetuate discourses of whiteness, yet news reports that summarize court proceedings, such as Wolfe’s trial, do not articulate the systemic injustices faced by Aboriginal people. Since the public’s primary interaction with the justice system is through media stories that appear in the news media and popular culture, the principal message it receives from media is that the justice system is adequately doing its job. As Criminologist Robert Reiner (1997) writes, “The media generally present a very positive image of the success and integrity of the police, and criminal justice more generally.” Journalists transmit messages verbatim from police and justice officials, without criticism, under the guise of objective reporting. In other words, journalists “report on the facts,” especially during court proceedings as objective observers.

Hall has vehemently argued the news media is subjective because reporters and editors select subjects and comments to tell their stories. They further influence the narrative by writing a headline and placing the story in a particular section of the

263 For an in depth analysis on the incidence of racial profiling and the inadequate treatment of people of colour by the justice system see Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *Racial Profiling in Canada: Challenging the Myth of ‘A Few Bad Apples’*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.)
266 In an interview with Jana Pruden, she explained her role as simply reporting on the facts in court. Jana Pruden, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 21, 2011.
newspaper or in the lineup of a radio or television broadcast. This shapes the outcome of the story and the public’s understanding of the criminal events that took place. Hall further argues the media relies on “primary definers,”267 the spokespeople of the elite as they occupy positions of power within society, to construct news stories. They are deemed to possess authority and journalists often attempt to obtain special access to them. Judges, lawyers, police officers, and other so-called experts provide context for stories. As Hall contends, “The media stand in a position of structured subordination to the primary definers.”268 By relying on specific individuals within society for comments, a story will evidently take on a specific slant that represents the ideologies of those who hold power. As Hall articulates, the journalists job is to “translate into a public idiom the statements and viewpoints of the primary definers.”269 This way, the ideas of primary definers, and their ideologies, become naturalized and part of the public’s stock of popular imagery. This perpetuates the ideology of dominant society as common knowledge.

4.2 Primary Definers

At the Fort Qu’Appelle murder trial, court reporters relied on key witnesses, lawyers, and a judge to build a narrative regarding the night of the deadly shooting. The dominant thread that emerged throughout the media coverage of the trial is one of carnage and chaos that erupts in a small and otherwise placid community because of a gang dispute.270 While the testimony provided by witnesses is used by the crown to describe the events of September 20, 2007, experts, or primary definers, are brought in to

267 Hall, *Policing the Crisis*, 58
268 Hall, *Policing the Crisis*, 59.
269 Hall, *Policing the Crisis*, 61.
270 Jana Pruden, “‘There was nowhere to run’; Witness calmly testifies about deadly shooting at her home,” *The Leader Post*, October 20, 2009.
substantiate the witness’ claims of the violence allegedly committed by Wolfe. An undercover officer, who posed as an associate of a biker gang, shared damning statements made by Wolfe. As the article states, “The undercover officer told court that Wolfe repeatedly said he was ‘f--ked,’ and that he would be doing life for murder.”

According to the undercover officer in the newspaper, Wolfe said he was a founding member of the Indian Posse, a gang he claimed had 3,000 members. The article further reads, “Wolfe also said he should have killed both the man and his teenaged co-accused after the shootings and vowed to kill the man no matter how long it took, the officer told court.” Wolfe also told the officer “he had considered suicide, but would rather have his ‘bro’s’ kill him than have a rival gang take credit for his death.” Again, the undercover officer’s statements are taken as fact, and reported in the newspaper, without further contextualization by either the lawyers or the journalists reporting on the testimony.

Guilty by his own admission, Wolfe was convicted of two counts of first-degree murder and three counts of attempted murder. In the sentencing, Judge Eugene Schiebel claimed in the Leader Post on November 19, 2009, “Wolfe has proven the case against himself by his own mouth.” The judge as the most powerful definer, interprets the case and delivers his judgment which reporters reproduce for the public. Because judges are expected to embrace the utmost level of impartiality, their statements are not questioned. In the case of Wolfe, Judge Schiebel stated in the media, “This case is evidence of

272 Ibid
273 Jana Pruden, “5 guilty verdicts; Gang leader sentenced to 25 years in prison for two first-degree murders, three attempted murders, in ‘one of the worst cases of this kind in the history of this province,” The Leader Post, November 19, 2009.
Wolfé’s callous disregard for human life,” which is republished by numerous media organizations. In reference to a series of muggings that took place in Britain, Hall (1979) contends that a judge’s admonition in such cases is not just intended for the criminal. Judgments are for the “wider social significance of the particular crime ‘epidemic’, society’s revulsion from it and thus the social justification for exemplary sentences are directly invoked.” As an example, following the judgment at Wolfe’s trial, the Leader Post summarized the crown prosecutor as saying, “He hoped the sentence would send a message to young people that the life of a gang member is ‘a short life, full of violence, destruction, sadness, and grief.’” As Hall’s theory suggests, Judge Scheibel’s statement and the verdict in court, which is then reproduced by media ‘sends a message to young people.’

4.3 Taking the Blame

A limited amount of context is provided by reporters following the trial based on a conversation they had with Wolfe’s mother, Susan Creely outside of the court house. She is quoted in numerous stories outside of the Regina court house as taking responsibility for her son’s actions as she states, “I used to drink with him, I used to toke with him. I showed him that.” Creely, who is situated as “responsible” for her son’s violence, internalizes the stereotype as the absent-mother. Furthermore, she internalizes the “squaw” stereotype that has evolved through history as a degenerate term for

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274 See Joe Friesen, “The Ballad of Daniel Wolfe,” The Globe and Mail, June 18, 2011; Jana Pruden, “5 guilty verdicts; Gang leader sentenced to 25 years in prison for two first-degree murders, three attempted murders, in ‘one of the worst cases of this kind in the history of this province,” The Leader Post, November 19, 2009.
275 Hall, Policing the Crisis, 32.
276 Jana Pruden, “5 guilty verdicts; Gang leader sentenced to 25 years in prison for two first-degree murders, three attempted murders, in ‘one of the worst cases of this kind in the history of this province,” The Leader Post, November 19, 2009.
277 Ibid

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Indigenous women who were read by the colonizers as being promiscuous and essential “unfit” women. There is a large body of evidence that suggests people internalize acts of self-oppression by either committing violence against oneself, one’s family, or self-medicating through addiction. Métis writer Maria Campbell (2010) explained how women suffer from depression as a result of the historical trauma experienced through colonialism.\textsuperscript{278} The effects of historical trauma resonate in Creely’s conversations with journalists. Admissions that she drank and regrets about how she raised her son emerge in press reports.\textsuperscript{279} According to media reports, she also “accepts responsibility”\textsuperscript{280} for her son’s gang involvement. Although Creely does admit her problems negatively impacted her son, the media’s tendency to reproduce these statements without taking into consideration the trauma she experienced in her lifetime through residential schools furthers the squaw stereotype that positions Aboriginal women as being unfit mothers.

Creely’s words, and the media’s reproduction of her words, embodies what post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994) refers to as “colonial mimicry.”\textsuperscript{281} That is, actions that are normalized by colonial elite and adopted by the Other in an attempt to conform. It is what Bhabha refers to as a reformed and recognizable Other.\textsuperscript{282} As such, the media’s emphasis on Creely’s culpability for her son’s actions removes the blame from society at large and instead places weight on what Schissel (2006) refers to as “individual immorality and pathology.”\textsuperscript{283} Daniel and Richards’ conversations with journalists are treated no

\textsuperscript{278} Episkinew,\textit{ Taking Back Our Spirits}, 9.
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid
\textsuperscript{281} Homi Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture}, (New York, Routledge, 1994), 123.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid
differently. Richard’s words, particularly the Indian Posse manifesto, indicate the inherent violence possessed by gang members. Daniel’s words exemplify his ruthless ability to kill. As such, Creely and her family become easy scapegoats for media. Each embody a stereotype that further perpetuates the notion that Aboriginal bodies are degenerate, despite their attempt at reversing negative images.

Chapter Five: The death

In January of 2010, Daniel’s mother was driving along a snow-swept prairie road when she saw a white owl perched near the shoulder. “In our spirituality, owls give messages,” Ms. Creeley says. “As I passed, he just turned his head and followed the car. I thought, ‘This is not good.’”

She was worried about Daniel. He had called to say things were crazy in jail. She pulled over to the side of the road and made an offering of tobacco.

At 12:40 p.m. that day in the federal penitentiary at Prince Albert, Sask., a group of six prisoners launched a choreographed attack on two inmates. In the surveillance video, Daniel can be seen at the back of the room, apparently unaware of what was happening. Senior Crown Attorney John Morrall, who later prosecuted the case, says Daniel was obviously not the target.

But when he noticed the attack, Daniel moved to help one of the victims. He was physically blocked by another
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But when he noticed the attack, Daniel moved to help one of the victims. He was physically blocked by another inmate. He approached a second time and one of the attackers lashed out at him. A single stab - Mr. Morrall calls it a "get the hell out of here" stab - pierced his chest. Less than a minute later, prison guards fired tear gas to break up the melee. The attackers retreated. As the gas cleared, the two targets lay on the floor bleeding from more than 20 wounds.

Daniel appeared calm on the surveillance video. He sat down at a table near the wounded men and sipped a cup of coffee. He put his slippers back on. After a few minutes, he slumped over and fell to the floor. The wound had sliced a coronary artery. He was dead at 33.284

The death of any inmate is news, but previous reportage of Wolfe’s turbulent life contributed to the feverish coverage of his sudden death. Officials at the penitentiary would not confirm the victim in the prison brawl was indeed Wolfe so reporters used unidentified sources from inside the institution to verify who was killed. Since details were scarce, emerging media reports were primarily based on speculation. Considering much of the reportage was drawn from the minimal information reporters could surmise, journalists used stereotypical gangster tropes to write the narrative of Wolfe’s murder. This chapter examines how media representations of Wolfe’s death romanticize the mythology of a gangster. I will investigate how the gangster stereotype is produced and embodied by Aboriginal male youth such as Wolfe by interrogating the perceived link between Aboriginal bodies, hip-hop and crime. How does coverage mirror popular representations that glorify the life and death of a gangster?

Additionally, in the year following Wolfe’s murder, strikingly different mediations about the gang member emerged from the fear-induced reportage the public witnessed during the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting and jail escape. On one hand, journalists took Wolfe’s death as an opportunity to better understand the gang member’s

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285 Journalists regard the death of an inmate as news because prisons are understood as safe spaces for reformation. As Pacholik said in an interview for this research project, “We send people there, you know, supposedly to reform if we actually put some money into our correctional centers and prisons, but that’s the notion behind them. We don’t hang anyone anymore for murder. So the fact that you go to prison and you end up dead, that’s news of itself. It would have been news regardless of who died.” Barb Pacholik, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 13, 2011.

286 In an interview for this research project, Pacholik explains why the media emphasized Wolfe’s death: “I don’t think this was news because this was Daniel Wolfe the gang member. This was news because this was Daniel Wolfe who had killed two people and now himself was killed. I mean, there’s irony in that too, right? That’s what made it news.” Barb Pacholik, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 13, 2011.

287 Common practice amongst journalists is to have a number of unidentified sources confirm the information off the record. Then it can be viewed as “fact.” Mike McIntyre admits in an interview for this research project that much of his reportage is based on speculation. Mike McIntyre, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 28, 2011.

288 The most comprehensive example is The Globe and Mail article excerpted at the start of this chapter.
complex life by giving his family members space to speak out. On the other hand, journalists reinforced stereotypes that individualized Wolfe’s criminality by emphasizing the breakdown of his family which emerged during his trial. Therefore, I analyze how Wolfe is represented by journalists posthumously through binary constructions that situate Aboriginal people as either noble savage or ignoble.

5.1 That’s the life of a gangster

One of the dominant threads in the media narrative of Wolfe’s death indicates his murder was an obvious conclusion to a gangster’s story. In the first published report on January 5, 2010 about Wolfe’s death, Leader Post reporter Barb Pacholik wrote that Wolfe’s prison sentence quickly became a “death sentence,” inferring death as an ironic consequence to Wolfe’s actions. The media report also states the brawl involved ten people in a common area who were out of their cells during a lunch break. A quote from police spokesman Darcy Begrand said only “compatible inmates” were housed together on that unit, meaning the individuals were likely members of the same gang as opposed to rivals. This indicated to reporters that Wolfe may have been killed by members of his own gang. According to Begrand’s observations noted in the newspaper, it was unclear what sparked the incident.

290 Ibid
291 Ibid
Since particulars of the prison brawl were not publicly stated by prison officials, reporters generalized and recast details taken from earlier stories to write this latest news report. Information previously cited in the news about Wolfe regarding the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting, Wolfe’s escape from jail, and the trial that found Wolfe guilty of murder, served once again as rhetoric that Wolfe was an entity to fear. For example, Pacholik’s story on January 6, 2010 uses information that emerged in the trial to remind readers Wolfe told an undercover police officer “he’d rather die at the hands of his ‘bro’s’ than at the hands of a rival gang.”294 The irony of this statement in light of how Wolfe allegedly died was used by reporters to articulate the inevitability of a gangster being killed but also the shock that his own gang might turn on him. Another statement frequently recounted in media reports following the prison brawl is Wolfe saying, “They’re going to give me 25 to life. That’s the life of a gangster.”295 This statement is used by media to demonstrate how Wolfe articulated and embodied stereotypical gangster characteristics throughout his life. Meanwhile, Regina’s Global News began its newscast by saying one of the men who died in the prison brawl was a “well known criminal just convicted of murder,”296 reinforcing Wolfe’s violent nature.

As noted in the previous chapter of Wolfe’s trial, testimony noted features of the gang members, including Wolfe, as wearing white tank tops and having gang-related tattoos visibly placed on their bodies. These stereotypical attributes are likely drawn from popular culture and adopted by gang members such as Wolfe.297 In the Globe and Mail article cited at the beginning of this chapter, “The Saskatoon police chief said it's not

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uncommon in Saskatchewan courts to see gang members gesturing that they're going to slash the throat of a witness as he or she takes the stand. Based on signifiers noted by the *Globe and Mail* such as tattoos, violence, and intimidation, readers draw on common knowledge and stereotypical understandings of Aboriginal street gangs. Because most Canadians have no personal knowledge of gangs, they can only rely on media and popular culture for their information.

The story also notes that a “grainy surveillance recording” was played in court which showed several “persons of interest” coming and going hours before the shooting. However, what constitutes a person of interest is not explained. Instead, the public is left to conjure up an image of a “person of interest.” Such persons are likely to fit the description of a “dangerous Aboriginal man,” a common description used to construct Wolfe during his escape. Another key witness is quoted as saying, “All I saw was a gun.” Another witness states in court, “I just remember seeing blood all over.” These “sound bites” drawn from testimony further contribute to an incredibly violent, yet narrow explanation of what was described by media as a seemingly minor gang dispute.

The gangster trope resurfaced on October 22, 2009 in the *Leader Post* when Native Syndicate member Bernard Percy Pascal who was at Trapper’s bar in Fort Qu’Appelle is quoted as recalling someone with the tattoo: “Red ‘til I’m dead,” an Indian Posse slogan. Gerrard Granbois is also called to the stand to identify Wolfe “as a

299 Ibid
300 Ibid
301 Ibid
302 Ibid
man in a white tank top who appears on surveillance video.”\textsuperscript{304} The story further states, “Granbois also told court he spent about a year in the witness protection program after providing information to police,”\textsuperscript{305} confirming the fear brought on by the shooting. The testimony uses stereotypical gangster tropes to construct fear of the Other.

Referring to African American examples, bell hooks (2004) explains, “Gangsta culture is the essence of patriarchal masculinity.”\textsuperscript{306} In her analysis, hooks denounces how popular media messages reinforce black inferiority, stripping men of any sense of power. Thus, the lure of the streets and the possibility of fast, easy money offered by gangs are stronger and more enticing than succumbing to the white man. Furthermore, popular culture has already “prepared them to seek themselves in the street, to find their manhood in the streets, by the time they are six years old.”\textsuperscript{307} As Marsh (2011) has noted, this analysis applies to Aboriginal men in Canada such as Wolfe who have lost their sense of pride through processes of colonization and who then believe they can find a sense of masculinity - and power - in a gang.\textsuperscript{308} The combination of poverty and disenfranchisement unite the American and Canadian marginalized groups who gravitate towards gangs.

Wolfe reinforces sense of male power in his articulations with an undercover officer in order to prove his own so-called street-cred which is brought up in testimony. In the closing arguments of the trial, Wolfe’s lawyer Estes Fonkalsrud argued the notes from an undercover RCMP officer’s conversation with Wolfe are an “overly

\textsuperscript{304} Ibid
\textsuperscript{305} Ibid
\textsuperscript{306} bell hooks, \textit{We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinities}, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 27.
\textsuperscript{307} hooks, \textit{We Real Cool}, 26.
\textsuperscript{308} See Marsh: \textit{Making it Like a Man}. 
condensed” version of the exchange and that things “may have been beneficial to his client were not written down.” The Crown, on the other hand, said “Wolfe’s conversation with the undercover officer contains statements that are an ‘explicit confession’-- including Wolfe saying he was “f--ked’ and was to get life for murder. Wolfe also told the officer, ‘This is the life of a gangster.’” Reifying gangster signifiers such as men with tattoos wearing bandanas repeated in media reports on the trial, becomes embedded in public consciousness and connects violence with Aboriginal bodies that look the part. Wolfe’s performance as a tough gangster reinforces popular imaginings of the savage Indian. As Francis (1992) argues, white society has constructed “imaginary” notions of Aboriginal men as either the stoic Chief or the violent warrior and Aboriginal women as either the Pocahontas or “squaw.” This discourse often eclipses consideration of the rich and diverse cultures that abound amongst Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. The gangster stereotype, as embodied by Wolfe and represented by the media, is the latest monolithic representation of Canada’s imagined Indian.

Reporter Mike McIntyre in the Winnipeg Free Press on January 6, 2010 used Wolfe’s death as an occasion to warn the public of potential gang violence. As he suggested in his report, “Tensions between Saskatchewan and Manitoba members of the same street gang are being blamed for a prison stabbing” and that there are “fears the deadly dispute could reach beyond prison bars and spill out onto the street.”

310 Ibid
311 Ibid
312 Emma LaRocque, for example, writes about representations of the “savage,” “violent,” and “blood-thirsty” Indian in literature.
313 Note that the warning that gang violence would spill out into the streets never came to fruition. Mike McIntyre, “Indian Posse founder killed: Gang leader stabbed to death during prison brawl in penitentiary,” The Winnipeg Free Press, January 6, 2010.
followed suit by reporting Wolfe was likely killed “during a fight between the Saskatchewan and Manitoba factions of the Indian Posse.” These stories promote fear and that once again Wolfe - although dead - is instigating violence across communities as news reports warn violence will spill out onto the street as a result of Wolfe’s death.\(^{314}\)

McIntyre admits his report was based on speculative information he obtained from police, legal sources, and officials inside the Saskatchewan penitentiary.\(^{315}\) McIntyre concedes details are difficult to obtain as he states, “The information doesn’t always come out immediately, so there is often more speculation than fact. It was difficult in those first few hours to find out exactly what was going on.”\(^{316}\) The speculative information McIntyre acquired was represented by numerous media outlets. For example, McIntyre was interviewed by Sheila Coles on *The Morning Edition* on *CBC Radio* in Saskatchewan on January 6, 2010 where he explained how the Indian Posse is “largely comprised of Aboriginal youth.” He said the Indian Posse is considered “one of the most violent” and Wolfe played a “prominent role”\(^{317}\) in producing the gang. McIntyre’s version of events was then rebroadcast on Saskatchewan’s *CBC Television* that evening, warning people for what is likely the third or fourth time\(^{318}\) that violence might spill out onto the streets.

In the original interview with the *Morning Edition* on *CBC Radio* in Saskatchewan, Mike McIntyre emphasized how Wolfe’s death was not a surprise, nor something to grieve. As he states, “I don’t imagine there are many people out there this


\(^{315}\) Mike McIntyre, interviewed by Leisha Grebinski, April 28, 2011.

\(^{316}\) Ibid

\(^{317}\) Mike McIntyre on *The Morning Edition* with Sheila Coles on *CBC Radio* in Saskatchewan, January 5, 2010.

\(^{318}\) Clips are repeated on newscasts almost every hour on CBC Radio throughout the day.
morning who are feeling very sorry for Wolfe, and I guess nor should they.”\textsuperscript{319} McIntyre recalls people’s lack of surprise regarding the news.

I think once we found out that it was Daniel, it really didn’t strike anyone that I talked to as a great surprise. In fact, I think people kind of saw this was going to be an inevitable conclusion whether he died on the streets or in this case behind bars. That seemed to be the direction his life was heading and people weren’t really surprised at all.\textsuperscript{320}

\textit{Leader Post} Barb Pacholik recalled: “There wasn’t a sense of ‘oh good he deserved it.’ I didn’t get that from anyone. I think there was a sense of how tragic and senseless his life had been. You know that idea ‘live by the sword, die by the sword.’”\textsuperscript{321} While Pacholik suggests that no one thought Wolfe deserved it, like McIntyre she recalls the death of a gang member being inevitable. Furthermore, veteran crown prosecutor Alistair Johnston, one of the co-prosecutors against Wolfe during the Fort Qu’Appelle shooting trial, was quoted by reporters on January 6, 2010 Wolfe’s death came as no surprise because it was “the life he was in.”\textsuperscript{322} Therefore, the death of an Aboriginal gang member is naturalized. Through stories that position gangs as the enemy against mainstream society, there is little room to question the circumstances of Wolfe’s death. It is assumed Wolfe did something to deserve it, yet in reality, future reports showed Wolfe was an innocent bystander and not the target.\textsuperscript{323}

\textsuperscript{319} “Wolfe killed,” \textit{CBC TV} in Saskatchewan, January 5, 2010.
\textsuperscript{320} Mike McIntyre, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 28, 2011.
\textsuperscript{321} Barb Pacholik, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 13, 2011.
Furthermore, in an interview with the *Leader Post*, criminologist Mark Totten said many “aboriginal gang members, who have experienced numerous suicides, homicides, and accidental deaths among family and friends, see life as fleeting.”324 In this statement published on January 6, 2010, tragedy, despair, and death amongst Aboriginal people is normalized. Totten also noted in the newspaper that Wolfe’s demise will be seen as “honourable” amongst gang members.325 So not only is death expected, it is allegedly glorified by Aboriginal youth.

5.2 Producing the Gangster

Aboriginal youth are the fastest growing demographic in the country and much of the political and journalistic rhetoric surrounding the boom in population points to a perceived spike in gang activity, as demonstrated by mediations of Wolfe, despite the fact that crime statistics continue to drop.326 Yet the perception of increased Aboriginal gang crime is produced in media reports about Wolfe’s death. The media’s tendency to link crime, hip-hop culture, and racialized bodies fuels the perception that there is a growing problem. As Marsh (2011) explains, the gangster identity is mapped onto Aboriginal youth:

Through a discourse of both ‘true’ accounts and sensationalized racist and gendered narratives offered up by multiple media sources, and subsequently, often reproduced by marginalized and disenfranchised young people who adopt cultural signifiers, tropes, and practices associated with mythologized gang lifestyles represented in mainstream hip hop and gangsta’ rap cultures.

324 Ibid
325 Ibid
The gangster label becomes normalized through popular media representations that link hip-hop, gang crime, and racialized bodies, thus producing a stereotype. As sociologist Richard Dyer (2006) argues, stereotypes become internalized, as an act of self-oppression, and then performed, which produces the stereotype as truth. While youth may try to challenge stereotypes that deduce Aboriginal bodies to gangsters, they may also emulate hip-hop and gangster signifiers as a way to achieve status, power, and wealth.

Marsh also notes the grim reality of gang life and the challenges youth face in negotiating the lure of gangs and its wealth, status, and prestige versus its consequences within a racist and colonial framework that already marks them as being predisposed to criminal activity. The concept of “safety from rival gangs” comes from the assumption that gangs proliferate in certain communities. Media reports often highlight the high crime rates that take place in specific neighbourhoods such as Regina and Winnipeg’s inner-city, which results in certain bodies and certain places, conventionally marked by race, to be more heavily policed.

According to Marsh, within these very specific places that are portrayed negatively through popular media (re)presentations, emerges a burgeoning culture of resistance, often in the form of rap or hip-hop beats and rhymes. Communications scholar

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329 An Aboriginal hip-hop station in Winnipeg called Streetz FM held a forum where youth shared their experiences of being racially profiled at the Thunderbird House in Winnipeg, Manitoba. March 18, 2010. The forum was later aired as a three-part series on *The Word* on Streetz FM and a half-hour special on CBC Radio One in Manitoba. For more information on the station refer to <http://www.streetzfm.com>
Murray Forman (2004) writes that hip-hop, “illuminates a particular relationship to space or, more accurately, a relationship to particular places.” What rappers from ‘hoods in LA or New York speak about resonates with Aboriginal teens in Canada’s inner-cities. For instance, Forman says many hip-hop artists were coined “‘hood journalists,” as they were “reporting” truths from neighbourhoods marred by mediations of social problems. As Forman writes, “Rap ‘reporters’ articulate the widespread sentiment among minority youths that unless there is a body count, society deems their stories irrelevant.” Due to either the erasure of stories or the highly sensationalized and violent mediations of minority youth, rappers conceive of themselves as “legitimate street reporters” who (re)present the experiences of blacks and Latinos in the United States through music. Although Wolfe was not a rapper, he was highly influenced by hip-hop that was emerging from the United States and he adopted modes of resistance present in hip-hop music but he also adopted many of the gangster tropes prevalent in the genre.

Marsh builds on Forman’s concept of rappers articulating a shared experience by noting how hip-hop can be adapted and localized by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in Canada. As she suggests, Aboriginal youth turn to the mythology of hip-hop to write “narratives and experiences of emancipation, reclamation, and revolution.” Youth can also “keep it real” by re-articulating “authentic” hip-hop tropes linked to life

331 Ibod
332 Ibid
333 Ibid
on the streets or in the ghetto.\textsuperscript{335} Although youth come from very different experiences, hip-hop becomes a common device to share stories about marginalization. As Marsh (2009) states in her analysis of hip-hop production in northern Canada:

\begin{quote}
Hip-hop has also become a way to voice past and current lived experiences, a means to challenge stereotypes, a method for re-establishing relationships between youth and elders, a space to enact celebration, and a cultural practice that illustrates an important relationship between the local and global as well as the past, present and future in Nunavut.\textsuperscript{336}
\end{quote}

Social media scholar danah boyd (2010) further argues youth make sense of their identities through popular culture. As she states, “Within their local life worlds, popular culture can provide kids with a space to negotiate issues of identity and belonging within peer cultures.”\textsuperscript{337} Therefore, hip-hop is another tool for youth to make sense of the many nuances that often complicate their lives. Today, in the neighbourhood in which Wolfe started the Indian Posse, there is a burgeoning hip-hop community that is writing beats about the challenges of growing up in circumstances similar to Wolfe’s.

One challenge, however, is when media essentializes the experience of Aboriginal youth by connecting them to hip-hop and the violent gangster representations that dominate popular culture. As hip-hop analyst Michael Eric Dyson (2004) articulates, rap groups such as N.W.A (Niggers With Attitude) produce lyrics about their lived experiences in Los Angeles’ inner-city.\textsuperscript{338} Their complex musical expressions of violence either at the hands of police or from rival gangs, and the aesthetics (clothing, bling,

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{Marsh} Marsh, 127.
\end{thebibliography}
women, etc.) that accompany hip-hop culture, are often emulated by inner-city youth around the globe who are also trying to make sense of their environment. However, the media often simplifies these gangster tropes and equates them with expressions of violence. This oversimplification produces stereotypes that homogenize all Aboriginal youth, specifically those wearing certain clothing or those who are listening to a particular genre of music. As Marsh (2009) highlights, Aboriginal men who dress in hip-hop fashion are “read through a racist and ageist lens” and are often more heavily policed than non-Aboriginal men.339

Through media representations, specifically after his death, Wolfe becomes the archetype of the Aboriginal male gangster. He is often represented in television footage revealing his gang tattoos or flashing hand symbols that represent an allegiance to a certain gang. In addition to images of Wolfe, unidentified youth are shown in stories about Wolfe’s death who are walking in baggy pants and ball caps with weapons flashing before the screen, reminding viewers not only of the vicious nature of many of the gangsters, but what a gangster supposedly looks like.340 Again, the media essentializes the experience of Wolfe with all Aboriginal youth who dress a certain way.

It is important to note that stories about Wolfe do not occur in isolation. Rather they are viewed alongside numerous mediations of the “Aboriginal gang problem” that draw on stereotypes. Take for example a CTV W5 special which aired prior to Wolfe’s death called “City of Gangs,” was a national hour long segment which documents how

339 Marsh, 156.
 Regina is grappling with a “Native gang problem.” Images of Aboriginal youth in hoodies dominate the screen while the narrative describes a community devastated by gang crime. Additionally, a 2004 docudrama called “Stryker” is a sensational look at Aboriginal gang life in Winnipeg. Hip-hop tracks provide the soundtrack for the film and brutally violent scenes steer the narrative. Both these segments play a role in shaping the public’s understanding of gang life and the circumstances in which Wolfe was killed and they assist journalists who are crafting a narrative about a “notorious” gangster.

5.3 Laying blame

In stories following his death, Wolfe was pegged as “responsible” for creating such a large Aboriginal gang problem. The Globe and Mail article excerpt cited at the beginning of this chapter, states Wolfe founded the largest “Native street gang.” In the article from January 7, 2010, McIntyre confirms the gang is “made up entirely of aboriginal members” and has “expanded in recent years to Saskatchewan and Alberta.” These statements remain focused on race and the proliferation of racialized bodies terrorizing the prairie provinces.

Many media outlets used Wolfe’s death as a warning to Aboriginal youth. CBC Television in Saskatchewan opened its newscast on January 5, 2010 by stating, “Gang

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342 The opening to Stryker says it is based on events found on public record. Stryker, directed by Noam Gonick, Universal Home Video, 2004, DVD.
343 In an interview with Joe Friesen, Wolfe said he was angry at how the Indian Posse was represented in Stryker. Joe Friesen, interview by Leisha Grebinski, date.
344 Joe Friesen, “Indian Posse gang leader killed in prison brawl,” The Globe and Mail, January 6, 2010. The story also states: “From its small beginnings, the gang grew into what experts have described as the largest street gang in Canada, with chapters in cities, reserves and corrections facilities from Northern Ontario to British Columbia.”
345 Ibid
killing: Will Daniel Wolfe’s murder keep others from joining gangs?" The host does not contextualize why Wolfe’s killing would deter youth from being recruited other than instilling a sense of fear of death in viewers. But is Wolfe’s death enough to stop youth from joining gangs? Readers of the Leader Post are reminded that Wolfe told an undercover police officer, “I’m going to f---n’ terrorize the streets from inside and send them out. I’ve created how many monsters already.” The “monsters” Wolfe “created” were desperate, impressionable teens looking for a place to belong. But this statement begs the question: Did Wolfe’s performance of contemporary Indigenous male identity simply influence young people to join or are there extenuating circumstances disregarded by media that might persuade a young person to join a gang such as poverty, exclusion, racism, and colonialism? Emphasizing Wolfe’s role in creating a gang problem eclipses the real reasons there is a so-called gang problem. In the words of political scientist Joyce Green (2009), “There is much concern for ‘our’ security, but no great political push to eliminate the complex and intransigent conditions, including economic and political commitment to ending race privilege and oppression, the conditions that breed gangs.”

In an attempt to contextualize Wolfe’s experience, a commentary written by Bronwyn Eyre on January 13, 2010 which appeared in the Star Phoenix following Wolfe’s death said the gang member did not “live on the side of angels” but acknowledges some of the hardships he faced in life. Eyre says his death should not be viewed as a celebration. Instead she questions the justice system and how it deals with the complicated factors that cause crime in the first place. Wolfe’s lawyer Estes Fonkalsrud

347 CBC TV in Saskatchewan, January 5, 2010.
348 Ibid
349 Green, 146.
told the *Globe and Mail*, “He wasn't formally educated, but he was intelligent and quiet. ... He's a leader. He's almost charismatic, which is odd, because he probably could have succeeded in a lot of other things in life.”

According to this quote, Wolfe had the potential to be more than the monolithic stereotype of the Aboriginal gangster who was simply living to die. Pacholik also knows there is more to Wolfe than the media constructions as she said in an interview for this research project:

> These guys don’t start out as monsters. And I get that. I mean as I say, I’ve sat in court long enough and looked at enough parole reports and psychological reports, and dangerous offender reports to know that these guys don’t start out as monsters that somehow we build monsters... We as a society take a certain amount of responsibility for creating the Daniel Wolfe’s of the world.

In this statement, Pacholik admits that Wolfe’s inclination towards criminality is largely based on the environment in which Wolfe was raised and the public’s knowledge of Wolfe as an entity to fear is largely based on media constructions.

5.4 Posthumous Constructions

According to the Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), and supported by critical race theory, media reports predominantly and problematically depict Aboriginal people as either noble and savage or victim and villain. These simplistic binaries are particularly prevalent in coverage in the year following Wolfe’s murder. Prior to his death, Wolfe was constructed as deviant. However, in reports proceeding

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352 Barb Pacholik, interview by Leisha Grebinski, April 11, 2011.
Wolfe’s death, native spirituality was used as a mechanism to understand the potential causes of Wolfe’s criminality. Spirituality was also portrayed by media as helping give strength to his family as they dealt with his early death. Although seemingly positive, the evocation of native spirituality is a familiar stereotype journalists use when telling stories about Aboriginal people. Rather than serve to more fully articulate cultural concerns, the use of this trope denigrates and undermines spiritual pursuits as lesser than Christianity and as another way of saying he is ‘not on the side of angels.’ As the commissioners of RCAP write, “Even apparently positive stereotypes can distort relationships”354 as they block the “complexity of context and diversity of personality and perspective.”355 Skewed (re)presentations are based on imagined conceptions of Indigeneity.356 As Francis (1992) suggests, there is a long history of romanticizing Indians: “From the Noble Savage of years ago to the Mystic Shamans and Original Environmentalists of today, we continue to create idealized images of Indians which may have as little connection to reality as the demonic ones.”357 Portraying Aboriginal people through a stereotypical lens - even a seemingly positive stereotype - is a misrepresentation of a diverse and complex segment of the population.

5.5 Stereotypes and Sweetgrass

Much of the reportage of Wolfe after his death affirms the myth that Aboriginal people are either spiritual or lack the ability to be stand-up citizens. One clear example

354 RCAP Volume 3, Pg. 622.
355 Ibid
357 Francis, Imaginary Indian, 222.
occurred during an episode of the Aboriginal current affairs program called *Indigenous Circle* on *CTV* which featured a short documentary about Wolfe following his death. The report, which appears on an Aboriginal specific program which is produced by an Aboriginal journalist, attempts to (re)tell Wolfe’s story through his mother, Susan Creely. This is another effort by Creely to engage with media to ensure her son’s story is accurately told. Yet, she is again represented as admitting “her former lifestyle left a mark on her son.” In addition, a *CBC* story used to mark the one-year anniversary of Wolfe’s death on January 4, 2011, also employs Creely as a way to reproduce Wolfe’s life story. The host introduces the report by saying, “She blames herself for her son’s violent ways,” which places sole responsibility of Wolfe’s actions on Creely. The story then recounts the major media events in Wolfe’s life, connecting them to Creely’s troubled life, yet fails to acknowledge the context that produced Creely’s struggles. Although both the *CTV* and *CBC* segments take an in-depth look at one gang member’s complex life through the eyes of his mother, the historic and current colonial environment are absent from the reports.

Creely told reporter Nelson Bird for *Indigenous Circle* and Geoff Leo for *CBC* that she did not teach her son to pray or smudge, suggesting that if Wolfe would have been exposed to Aboriginal traditions, he may not have become a gang member ignoring any agency Wolfe may have posessed. Creely is quoted in the *Indigenous Circle* story as saying, “He didn’t know any other way, because I didn’t teach him the traditional way and it seemed like he was drawn right back into that activity.” This augments historic

constructions that present only ‘two types of Indians.’ Wolfe’s criminal tendencies are seen as a direct result of not being spiritual. Creely says her spirituality is helping her move forward following the death of her son and she is also quoted as saying she prays for the victims of her son’s violent behaviour. Although Creely’s decision to turn to spirituality is deeply personal and deemed valuable by herself, the media’s reliance on the historic trope once again leaves little room for nuances of Indigeneity in a country that privileges Christianity over all other religious beliefs and power structures.

Since Wolfe’s death, Susan and Richard have shared his story publicly as a step on their healing journey as demonstrated by the stories produced after Wolfe’s death involving Creely and the Globe and Mail story which prominently features Richard. As Wesley-Esquimax writes, “Currently, First Nations women (and men) are on what has been termed in the United States and Canada ‘a healing journey’, which can also be described as the process of discovering and escaping out of unfavorable circumstances.”[^361] In conversation, Creely spoke about positive changes that are occurring in her life, such as abstaining from drugs and alcohol. She has reconnected with her Indigenous culture and regularly attends spiritual gatherings. Richard, too, changed his lifestyle when he made the bold decision to leave the Indian Posse while he was serving time in prison. He too is reconnecting with his family and culture and is sharing his life story with a younger generation. They say speaking with journalists serves as


Richard further explains his motivation for speaking: “Yeah I have to tell it in my own way. Lot of people don’t want to tell their stories. They figure that they’ll get hurt over it or be threatened or something. I am not one of those kinda guys that’s going to sit back and hold my own story. If I have a story to tell, I’m going to tell it.”\footnote{363 Richard Wolfe, interview by Leisha Grebinski, March 31, 2011.} In this quote, Richard is alluding to the threat some people face in speaking out about gangs, which has never been a concern for him. His priority is to tell his version of events in his own way, rather than someone else telling it on his behalf. As Cree scholar Neal McLeod (2007) states, “Storytellers hold the core of a counter memory, and offer another political possibility.”\footnote{364 McLeod, \textit{Cree Narrative Memory}, 100.} In other words, Richard’s story holds a different meaning that can potentially change the public’s perception about himself, his brother, and the formation of the Indian Posse. In other words, Richard’s story potentially produce another narrative. Indigenous Studies scholar David Newhouse (2005) believes Aboriginal people have a task to speak up as he states, “We do have opportunities and I would add duties and responsibilities to add the story where it’s missing, to correct the story where it’s wrong, and to complete the story where parts are left out.”\footnote{365 David Newhouse, “Telling Our Story: Reflection on the Idea of Aboriginal History” in \textit{Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations}, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2005), 52} Richard felt it was his responsibility to speak out on behalf of Daniel as he states, “I usually talk about my brother because that’s something that he wanted to do. Yeah, he wanted to tell his story but he didn’t have
the opportunity to do it.” Richard believes his brother’s life story would have been told very differently if it was told by Wolfe himself. This comment valorizes Wolfe’s story but it also emphasizes the tension between competing narratives regarding Wolfe.

Friesen recognized the importance of Wolfe’s perspective. As he wrote his life story for the Globe and Mail, Friesen was in touch with Wolfe before he died. As he recalls:

I told him I wanted to write the history of Aboriginal gangs in Western Canada and he was very interested in that project and he said he wanted to help me with it. We were in the process of trying to arrange a meeting. He had to send me the forms so I could get into the prison and we never got around to doing it before he was murdered in early 2010.

Friesen wanted to give Wolfe a chance to share his story because it would possibly bring new information, and a new perspective, to the previous media reports about his life. Instead he wrote his feature without that perspective: “In terms of how the story itself would be different I would have loved to been able to speak to Daniel and ask him some of the same questions but I just didn’t get the chance, I wish I had.”

Both Susan and Richard shared with me their desire to speak publicly about Wolfe’s life in order to teach the public more about Wolfe’s circumstances and to share the many sides to him as father, son, brother, and friend. On the noted Indigenous Circle episode, Creely states, “I know I didn’t raise a monster. He was a loving person, he was a human being and he was my son. He was a gift given to me by the creator.” Creely tells viewers that Wolfe was a father who loved his children. She also shared pictures of

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367 Joe Friesen, interview by Leisha Grebinski, June 28, 2011.
368 Joe Friesen, interview by Leisha Grebinski, June 28, 2011.
Wolfe enjoying time with his family and pets, a striking contrast from the images predominantly used by media that show Wolfe outside court flashing gang symbols. Creely also told the CBC how much she loved her son and she shared a letter he sent home days before he was killed. Richard adds that Wolfe was often demonized by the media, as he states, “Yeah there’s maybe some things that are true about him but he’s definitely not a monster the way they portrayed him to be - like he’d bury you in a shallow grave or something just because he looked at you funny - No, he wasn’t like that.” Although further complicated by the internalization of stereotypes, Richard’s voice, and his mother’s, offer a different representation of Wolfe.

Richard acknowledges the negative reputation he and his brother earned, which is why he is so adamant about speaking out:

So we could tell our journey - tell our own individual stories of how we lived it, how we went through it. Cause as I sit here and talk with you there’s somebody else that’s going through my footsteps that’s actually going to be sentenced or hurting somebody and that’s - this is way out of hand.

He now believes sharing his story will help others see the reasons why he gravitated towards the gang in the first place. He also hopes he can deter today’s youth from joining gangs by sharing the harsh realities of his life, and his brother’s death.

The Wolfe’s family dialogue demonstrates the possibilities of a different representation, yet as they speak with journalists, they can only move so far beyond the stereotypical tropes. Richard and Daniel remain fixed as Aboriginal gangsters by media

370 The CBC story shows an up-close shot of the letter where Wolfe writes about family and sending gifts home to his mother for Christmas.
while Susan remains situated as the stereotypical “squaw.” However, insistence in “talking back” aids them in their own healing process as their stories symbolize an act of resistance towards popular representations of Aboriginal people. As such, stories attempt to connect the past with the present, the Wolfe’s family dialogue serves as one piece of a larger process of decolonization.

In addition to sharing anecdotes about Wolfe’s life with reporters, the Wolfe family has held on to various objects (i.e newspaper clippings, obituaries, letters, pictures, etc.) as a way to hold on to key moments in Wolfe’s life. Media, culture, and communication professor Marita Sturken (2007) documents the significance of memorializing traumatic events. In her analysis of the Oklahoma City bombing and 9/11, Sturken observes how objects can offer people a sense of control and containment over a particular event. With that in mind, Wolfe’s family members keep and share certain objects as a way to reproduce moments of Wolfe’s life. For instance, at an anti-gang youth workshop where Richard and Susan shared Wolfe’s story, both passed around objects of significance that represented Wolfe and helped illustrate the trauma associated with his life and death. Richard shared a photocopied version of his brother’s obituary which captures the moment of Wolfe’s violent death. His mother carried with her the card that was distributed at her son’s funeral. She shared this card with individuals who were sitting at a table with her. These objects are used by the Wolfe’s family to memorialize the deceased but also to help articulate moments of his life that conjure up a variety of emotions from sorrow to joy. Furthermore, these objects are utilized by the family when

373 I borrow this phrase from bel hooks.
they share stories with the media. Susan provides pictures of Wolfe to journalists which are reproduced in news reports and she is filmed reading letters Wolfe sent her from prison. All of these objects serve to capture a moment in time in Wolfe’s life. They provide an additional layer to the story yet because of the prevalence of stereotypes, the tools Creely uses to challenge current media constructions of Wolfe, they serve to reify Wolfe as an Aboriginal gangster.
6. Conclusion

Daniel's death weighs heavily on his older brother. Richard questions the decisions he and his brother made more than two decades ago when they founded the gang.

"I keep going back, thinking, 'If we didn't make this, would he still be alive?'" he says. "Sometimes I look back and it overwhelms me."

But he also can't conceal his lingering regard for what they built. "We did feel pride, me and Danny. He always used to tell me, 'Be proud of who you are.' And I knew what he was talking about, right away. No matter what, when we pass away, 50 years down the road, when they bring up the Indian Posse, they're going to remember our names."375

6.1 Last Word

As this thesis has demonstrated, a number of competing narratives about Wolfe have emerged. One dominant thread stems from a plethora of media reports detailing the extent of Wolfe’s criminal activity. A counter-thread materializes through stories shared by family members both to journalists and through interviews for this research project. These two representations tell very different tales and it is through an analysis of both narratives that the true complexities of Wolfe as an Aboriginal gang member begin to surface.

Through the media analysis of the 2007 Fort Qu’Appelle shooting, it is evident that a moral panic ensued regarding Aboriginal gangs. The fear was not simply associated with organized crime, but a racialized segment of the population that has historically been represented as having criminal propensities. The suspect in the shooting, Daniel Wolfe, was not named in these media accounts, however, the groundwork for how future stories

are told about Wolfe is established through reports of the shooting. These stories sparked a moral panic regarding Aboriginal gangs and they legitimate the argument made by journalists and officials that Wolfe is largely responsible for creating the Aboriginal gang problem.

Furthermore, to tell stories about the shooting, reporters drew on common-sense (and often mythic) notions about crime, gangs, and Aboriginal bodies, specifically men. For instance, media reports highlighted that gangs were responsible for the shooting because neighbours claimed gangs were an issue in the community of Fort Qu’Appelle, even though there was little evidence to substantiate that claim. Comparisons were made between Canada and the United States, implying that violence such as a ‘gang shooting’ is more likely to happen south of the border and not in a quiet prairie town such as Fort Qu’Appelle. Yet, the community is site to historic tension between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population due to government policies of segregation. This history results in Aboriginal bodies already being suspect. Therefore, stories about the shooting (re)affirmed for Fort Qu’Appelle residents historic ideas about Aboriginal people being naturally associated with criminality.

Mediations of Wolfe’s escape furthered the ideology that Aboriginal people were dangerous and needed to be contained. Wolfe’s dangerous nature was exacerbated by media during the escape. Although Wolfe was wanted for a heinous crime, the media’s dramatic, frequent, and sensational coverage contributed to a largely false feeling of fear amongst the public. Furthermore, the media’s inclination to draw the public’s attention to the story was influenced by the fact Wolfe, and the five other escapees, were Aboriginal. Media plays a significant role in teaching people about race. The problem, however, is
the majority of stories about Aboriginal people by Canadian media are negative. Therefore, when stories about the escapees emerged, they were amongst countless other news stories that articulate how deviant Aboriginal people are, which perpetuates the myth that Aboriginal people are inferior.

The reportage of Wolfe’s murder trial reaffirmed the public’s understanding that Wolfe was a dangerous threat to the public. Wolfe’s mediated story was used by officials to warn youth of the dangers of Aboriginal gang crime in an attempt to curb the so-called growing problem. Ironically, these representations also can be read by youth as valorized examples of violence with Wolfe as the leader. Common stereotypes about gangsters and Aboriginal men were evoked throughout these mediations, which again maintains the myth that Aboriginal gangs are made up of innately deviant Aboriginal bodies. Wolfe embodied these stereotypes as a means to attain power and acceptance amongst his peers and media reported on him as if he was a one-dimensional being.

When Wolfe was killed in prison, his death was regarded by journalists and officials as expected. Mediations implied that Wolfe had opted for the life he led, and therefore had chosen a violent and early death. Following Wolfe’s death, seemingly positive stereotypes are elicited by journalists to try and create a more complete representation of Wolfe. However, the reliance on native spirituality reinforces the binary construction of the Noble Savage. It also defangs Wolfe’s personality cult while devaluing spirituality.

Representations of Daniel Wolfe as an Aboriginal gangster contribute to a current monolithic mis-representation of Canada’s Aboriginal peoples. Wolfe is pegged as one-dimensional by media. He is a dangerous gangster. End of story. As Indigenous scholar
Gail Guthrie Valaskakis (2005) suggested in a citation at the beginning of this thesis, “There has always been one dominant image of Indian struggle, one dominant narrative of Indian confrontation: warriors and the militant stories they tell.”\(^{376}\) This project has shown there is yet another narrative of Indian confrontation: gang members and the criminal stories they tell.

Although the dominant narrative regarding young Aboriginal men is about gangs, a more complex and detailed narrative emerges through the family’s attempts to challenge the status-quo presented in media reports. Family members shared stories with journalists to create a more complete and complex representation of Wolfe. Stories by family members such as Richard Wolfe and Susan Creely demonstrate how Aboriginal people attempt to move outside the static and incorrect representations that dominate news media in Canada.

There is also evidence within some media reports of competing narratives of Daniel Wolfe as the Aboriginal gangster. For instance, Colleen Simard’s column in the *Free Press* which shared memories of Wolfe offered a more human perspective on his life and trials as a gang member. Additionally, the 1994 *Winnipeg Free Press* story which featured the Indian Posse’s manifesto offered a glimpse into Richard Wolfe’s thinking behind the gang. There were also examples through Wolfe’s mediated story where the Wolfe family attempted to correct certain details that were being misreported by providing information about Wolfe’s life. As such, we have numerous stories circulating about Daniel Wolfe allowing the nuances of a complex character to emerge.

Contradictory messages simultaneously construct a young quiet teen trying to embrace

Indian pride to a dangerous killer wanted by police. These competing representations call into question colonial discourses that position Aboriginal bodies as inferior. Although the narrative of the Aboriginal gangster as an ‘entity to fear’ dominates, there are moments where stereotypical and colonial discourses are eclipsed and competing representations surface.

Thus, the image of the Aboriginal gangster becomes embedded in public consciousness and the stereotype becomes a fixed construction that gets mapped onto many Aboriginal youth. In her book The Other is Me, Native Studies professor Emma LaRocque (2010) argues Aboriginal people are “wrapped in stereotypes,” whether it is the Indian portrayed in old western movies, or the current young thug who is shown on the six o’clock news. Wolfe, as the stereotypical gangster, is clustered together with the many supposed Aboriginal gangsters who are decimating the community. He is not simply an individual whose life was taken too soon in a federal penitentiary but rather an illustration of what can happen if you join a gang. The gangster then serves as a disciplining example for dominant culture to control populations.

Because of the prevalence of skewed media constructions of Aboriginal people, the attempt to challenge such representations becomes of the utmost importance. As LaRocque (2010) states, “Because of the overwhelming history of misrepresentation, it is particularly crucial that what is unique about a Native person or persons is recognized.”377 Unfortunately, media representations following Wolfe’s death fail to accomplish this. Instead, a mythic and confined construction of Indigeneity that presents

377 LaRocque, The Other is Me, 141.
Wolfe as the violent gang member versus the spiritual and noble Indian is dominant in media reports.

Wolfe also presents contradictory versions of himself as either the victim or violent mastermind which adds to the evidence for the binary construction. Additionally, his family provided alternative constructions of Wolfe both for themselves as they embark on their healing journey but also so the public could be privy to a different perspective. As Indigenous studies scholar Catherine Martin (2008) suggests, “The telling of a story as a way to begin a healing process is one of the most powerful methods that I know to help begin a dialogue over what many have been silent about.”378 By speaking out, the family attempts to challenge the fixed gangster construction with hopes that a more complex understanding of the issue ensues. As Friesen’s Globe and Mail article cited above suggests, Richard articulates how he felt about his involvement in the Indian Posse and how he wants to be remembered: "We did feel pride, me and Danny. He always used to tell me, 'Be proud of who you are.' And I knew what he was talking about, right away. No matter what, when we pass away, 50 years down the road, when they bring up the Indian Posse, they're going to remember our names."379 It is the emphasis on pride that Richard wants people to remember.

Pride rarely surfaces in media reports about the Indian Posse, yet that is what Richard and Daniel naively intended with the formation of the Indian Posse. Most Canadians, relying on mainstream media and pop culture would find such a concept at odds with the accepted image of the gangster. Drawing on aspects of Alfred’s conception

of the warrior, Richard and Daniel attempt to challenge aspects of colonization through
the formation of the Indian Posse. However, their involvement in gangs focused primarily
on violence which Alfred and others clearly denounce. Yet, Richard still wants the aspect
of Indigenous pride included in narratives about the gang. As Richard succinctly states, “I
have a story to tell and I’m going to tell it, no matter how long it’s going to take.
Hopefully somebody out there will listen to it - to what I have to say.” This way the
multiple complexities that contribute to the production of a gangster can be considered.
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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix One

Timeline for Richard and Daniel Wolfe

Sept 8, 1975
Richard Wolfe born.

June 24, 1976
Daniel Wolfe born.

1988
Formation of Indian Posse by Richard and Daniel Wolfe and a group of young teens in Winnipeg.

1989
Daniel goes to jail for the first time.

1994
Richard Wolfe speaks with the Winnipeg Free Press about his gang involvement and shares the Indian Posse’s manifesto. Richard, 19, had just been released on day parole from the Headingly Correctional Centre.

1995

Sept 20, 2007
Fort Qu’Appelle shooting. Two men killed, three injured.

October 19, 2009
RCMP allowed media into the house where the shooting took place.

January 5, 2008
Manitoba youth charged in Fort Qu’Appelle murder. Two counts first-degree murder and three counts of attempted murder.

January 12, 2008
Daniel Wolfe charged in Fort Qu’Appelle shooting (name not released that day). Two counts of first-degree murder and three counts of attempted murder.

May 29, 2008
Preliminary hearing for 16 year-old youth and Daniel Wolfe in Regina. Decision both will go to trial in Regina.
August 24, 2008
Wolfe and five other inmates escape from the Regina Correctional Centre.

September 17, 2008
Wolfe caught in Winnipeg by police. He is the second-last inmate to be captured.

October 19, 2009
Wolfe begins two-week murder trial. Security includes police dogs and a swat team. He is found guilty of all charges and receives five life sentences.

February 27, 2010
Manitoba youth pleads guilty in Regina for two-counts of second-degree murder and three-counts of attempted murder.

January 5, 2010
Wolfe killed at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary in Prince Albert.
8.2 Appendix Two: Research Ethics Board Consent

DATE: February 10, 2011

TO: Leisha Grebinski
    #315 – 2315 McIntyre Street
    Regina, SK S4P 3Y8

FROM: Dr. Bruce Plouffe
      Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: A Critical Examination of the Representation of the Aboriginal Gangster on the Prairies (File # 63S1011)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☑ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB.** Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or redesign. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. Bruce Plouffe

cc: Dr. Charity Marsh – Media Production
     Dr. Carmen Robertson – Visual Arts

** supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca

Phone: (306) 585-4775