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

Abstract

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

Introduction

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

The representation and participation of First Nations women in online videos is the focus of this research paper. Since the time of contact with the Europeans to the present day, First Nations people have been living under and resisting the oppressive legislation and policies imposed on them by the colonial and Canadian government; Legislation such as the *1876 Indian Act,* has governed and continues to govern all aspects of a First Nations person's life in Canada (Miller, 2000, RCAP, 1996). The historical impact of colonization and the imposition of a colonial government and its legislation have resulted in the near destruction of the cultures and lifestyles of First Nations people in Canada, especially First Nations women.

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

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

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

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

Racialization, Gender and Representation

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

Critical theory looks at understanding the dynamics of power and the creation of inequality based on dimensions such as class, gender, and racialization, and how ideologies and social institutions support this social construction. Critical theory also seeks to understand how social constructions shape and dominate our perspectives. In their analysis of critical theory, Kincheloe & McLaren (1994) utilize Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which suggests that certain institutions in society such as media, religion, schools and others reinforce power dynamics or social constructions as a way to maintain dominance in society.

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

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

In a review of feminist theory, Tyson (1999) states that the male experience has been the benchmark by which all human experience has been and is judged. This universality of male experience has largely dismissed women's experiences. Feminist writers have explored the issues of marginalization and the representation of women (Valaskakis, 1993). Tyson (1999) states that patriarchal ideology defines women in one of two ways, either good or bad, the madonna or whore, depending on how she accepts the gender roles constructed by a patriarchal society. Patriarchal ideology also influences how First Nations women were and are portrayed. First Nations women face not only gender oppression but also oppression based on racist ideology. Tyson (1999) highlights how African American and Black feminists have brought attention to the limitations of mainstream feminism, most specifically how it has largely ignored the experiences of women of color through the essentializing of all women's experiences of oppression without taking into consideration the experience of women further oppressed by racism.

Early colonial society dichotomized the representation of First Nations women as either a princess or beast of burden (Mullings, 2004; Stevernson, 1999; Valaskakis,

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

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

Developing an Aboriginal Public Sphere and Critical Media Literacy

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

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

Fraser's examination of Habermas's theory and the underlying assumptions of the public sphere resonate with critical theory concerns such as the limitations in present democracy and the power dynamics within society that create subordinates, i.e., groups

oppressed and marginalized because of race, class, gender, sexuality and other dimensions of peoples lives. Fraser's and Miller's concept of an alternative public sphere can provide a framework for developing a First Nations or Aboriginal public sphere.

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

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

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

Participatory Video and Online Videos

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

Kindon (2003) describes participatory video as a tool that can be utilized in research to help break down the power relationship between the researcher and the research participants as long as the relationship has gone through a process of negotiation. She further describes the concept of *the gaze* within the context of geography

research that traditionally tends to be a process of "looking at" rather "than alongside" (p. 143). This can also be true for research with Indigenous communities where the power relationship has historically been hierarchial. Kindon (2003) has attempted to challenge this imbalance of power in her research project using participatory videos with Maaori people.

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

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

Some of the challenges to participatory video recognized by researchers include confidentiality, access, and ownership of the information (Kindon, 2003). Further, despite the potential of participatory video there remains the challenge of access to the communication technology as an avenue to share the video through the Internet where access maybe expensive, limited or non-existent (Perley & O'Donnell, 2006; White 2003b).

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

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

Research Methodology

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

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

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

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

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

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

Description of the Online Videos for the Qualitative Analysis

The first video that I selected for the qualitative analysis is *North America's Next Top Indian Model,* available on the YouTube website

http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Nishnawbe. The video is a satire of the show "America's Next Top Model" from the Nishnawbe or Indian perspective.

The second video is *The People vs Mary Moses*, available on the Atlantic First Nation Help Desk website http://firstnationhelp.com/fasd/fasdvideo.php. This is an educational video based on a play highlighting the effects of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The actors include of First Nations youth from the Atlantic Canada region.

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

Research Findings of the Video Analysis

North America's Next Top Indian Model

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

North America's Next Top Indian Model is described on YouTube as a satire from a First Nations or Nishnawbe perspective of the television program "America's Next Top Model". The video is a re-enactment of the TV program with three models, a host and three judges. The setting is an office or classroom environment with furniture in the room arranged in a panel for the judges to sit and view the models, while the host stands in front of the judges speaking with each actor-model in turn. The judges make comments to each of the models based on their performance during the staged competition. Throughout the video various traditional First Nations type symbols are used to portray First Nations culture, such as eagles, feathers, and braids, as well as symbolic traditional First Nations type names.

There is no specific emphasis on the judge's appearance in the video, however all three judges are women and have character names that are associated with First Nation traditional-type names such as Cheyenne "Tight-Braids", Katherine "Soaring-Eagle" and Paula "Talking-Duck". The judges are positioned in a panel seating arrangement behind a long table towards the back of the room. The host "Shaneeka" appears in front of the judges; the camera is focused primarily on her with the judges in the background. She is wearing First Nations style jewellery and regalia with her hair in braids with leather fringes tied to them.

The three models are shown in a photo competition which displays them posing in various nature type settings that include symbolic displays often stereotypically

associated with First Nations culture. "Lisa" poses next to an eagle, "Katie" poses with a stoic look on her face wearing her hair in braids, "Corel" is depicted in an erotic pose hugging a tree. There is an over-emphasis in the video linking nature with First Nations women.

The script emphasizes historical and present mainstream stereotypes typically associated with First Nations people, to stress the point of the video. Some of the words include are "stoic", "braids", "fried bread", and "pensive". As well, character names for the judges typify names linking First Nations with aspects of nature, animals or traditional cultural symbols.

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

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

The People vs Mary Moses

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

The primary character, Mary, is on trial for negligence as a result of drinking alcohol during her pregnancy 30 years ago, causing the baby to be identified as having fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). The video begins with a scene depicting Mary getting into the passenger side of a car with a song playing in the background. The image changes to a courtroom setting where the remainder of the video takes place. Several actors in the video play roles such as a judge, prosecutor, translator, doctor and the audience in the mock courtroom.

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

for Mary. They are dressed more formally indicating a professional appearance. There are several boys and girls in an audience sitting behind the prosecutor and defendant's table.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The image posted on the website for this video is in color but the video itself is in black and white. It is not apparent if more than one camera is used but there are several angle shots throughout the video with occasional close-ups of one woman who does the

talking throughout the video. The video pauses or breaks occasionally throughout with the subject of discussion changing or occasionally causing an abrupt break in the woman's dialogue. This may indicate editing of the video.

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

One woman (Sandra) does the talking while the other woman (Joanne) sits beside her and engages by listening and looking at Sandra speaking. The women are the central focus as the camera is angled almost entirely on them throughout. The angle does adjust occasionally to focus on Sandra then readjusts to include both women. Sandra's attention is not on the camera but on someone who does not appear in the video.

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

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

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

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

Discussion and Conclusions

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

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

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

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

The potential for online videos to make a difference is greatly increasing as more people are using websites to upload videos and exchanges ideas about them. The

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

Access to video technology and the Internet are making it more possible for the everyday person to view or share information on events or issues that in the past have not been made public. If this type of technology had been available during specific First Nations events in the past, it could have made the public aware of the historical issues and the realities of First Nations people in Canada. One example is the event in Quebec in 1990, often referred to as the "Oka crisis" where a confrontation between the First Nations people at Kanehsatake and the nearby community of Oka took place over First Nations traditional land territory being developed into a golf course by non-First Nations people (Roth, 1992). Another example is the fishing confrontation in New Brunswick when First Nations people (Mi'kmaq and Maliseet people) challenged the Canadian government and the provincial government's authority and control over fishing rights. The creation of online videos by First Nations people about these events would have provided these First Nations with the opportunity to present to the public their own perspectives rather than relying on mainstream media sources.

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

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

Online videos can create awareness of First Nations women's issues that are not discussed through mainstream media. They provide a way to take social action by distributing messages globally on issues such as the large number of Aboriginal women murdered or missing in Canada – an issue that has not been a priority in the Canadian justice system. Another event that could have benefited from online video technology was when First Nations women from the Tobique First Nation in New Brunswick challenged the discriminatory section 12(1)(b) of the *Indian Act,* the First Nations leadership in their community, the national First Nations leadership in Canada, and the federal government. Online videos created by these First Nations women could have sent

a message widely and powerfully about the discrimination and violence these women were facing.

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

Online videos are an alternate avenue of representation by First Nations people and especially First Nations women because they allow easy access to technology that can be used to create or produce videos that mean something to them. First Nations women can challenge the mainstream representation by voicing their own reality and experiences through sharing an online video, as demonstrated by the video "North American Next Top Indian Model". They can share their stories, educate their audience and have an impact on how a mainstream audience views First Nations people.

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

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

The use of online video is in its infancy and First Nations women are beginning to realize the powerful potential of this new visual media. Future research should focus on how First Nations women are tapping into this potential to attempt to create new possibilities for themselves as individuals and as a collective force that can shape a new reality for First Nations people in Canada.

Acknowledgements

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Surprise, women are still horribly underrepresented in film, and offensive stereotypes aren't going anywhere. Women are Still Grossly Underrepresented in Film. They've had a third of the speaking roles in movies in the past ten years. By Jaya Saxena. Aug 2, 2017. Universal Pictures. I know we all hoped Wonder Woman and Girls Trip were harbingers of a new era of woman-centric film (or at least shut up anyone claiming movies with women and non-white stars don't sell), but according to USC, we may have to cling to Diana Prince for a long time. Researchers analyzed representation in 900 films from 2007 to 2016 to track portrayals of gender, race, disability, and LGBT characters. Surprise, women