Native American Stereotypes in Film and Popular Culture

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Native American Stereotypes in Film and Popular Culture

(Indijanski sterotipi u filmu i popularnoj kulturi)

Diplomski rad

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Abstract

This paper critically discusses the film industry as well as pop culture that have shaped the way how Native Americans are viewed today. Twentieth- century film and popular culture have created countless stereotypes and misconceptions about Native Americans, portraying them through negative and disturbing images - as wild savages, bloodthirsty killers, thieves, rapists, kidnappers, beggars, less intelligent beings, scalp collectors, relentless trackers and as inferior human beings in every possible way.

Furthermore, the images that the film industry established have been used by other popular media and the entertainment industry, including team sports mascots, history books, comic books, video games and commercials. They have all continued Hollywood's legacy of stereotypes only to make profit, entertain the masses, and finally, to mentally destroy real Native Americans.

In the past Native Americans were ruthlessly hunted down and killed, deceived into selling their land, deprived of their traditional lifestyle and confined to reservations. Nowadays, Native Americans have to fight against the mainstream media that are robbing them off their own identity.

However, some films such as *Dances with Wolves* (1990) and *Powwow Highway* (1989) marked the beginning of a break with traditional stereotypes by portraying Native Americans as real, living human beings. Consequently, in the second half of the twentieth century a mental and spiritual war path of Native Americans for their cultural and religious legacy began.

Keywords: Native Americans, stereotypes, film, pop culture, Hollywood Indian, sports mascots, indigenous identity

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the depiction and stereotypes of Native Americans in film and modern pop culture. The paper is divided into three main parts and each part will deal with a certain topic.

The first part discusses the historical background that led to first negative images of Native Americans thus leading to false interpretation of the natives and giving birth to the very first established stereotypes. Moreover, it deals with the first images of Native Americans from the fifteenth century and the way how the first settlers perceived them. Furthermore, it explains the significance of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the New World that forever changed the life of Native Americans as they lost their land as well as their identity, which has continued until the twenty-first century.

The second part discusses the negative influence of the Western film genre on society and popular culture as the genre established countless negative and cruel images of Native Americans by misinterpreting and misjudging their culture and identity. Moreover, Hollywood's early Western films portrayed Native Americans as fierce and bloodthirsty warriors, rapists, kidnappers, and thieves and they associated them with many more disturbing and negative characteristics. For this purpose, the paper analyzes the representation of Native Americans and their stereotypes from the 1940s till the beginning of the twenty-first century. Although there had been countless films portraying Native Americans, only one representative and most influential film from each decade has been chosen. Those films are the necessary tools for revealing the stereotypes and misconceptions about Native Americans.

It is important to note that the second part of the paper is not a review of the selected films nor it is a summary. On the contrary, it only focuses on the scenes in which Native Americans are stereotyped thus giving a critical, detailed and analytical insight of that matter.

Finally, the last part of the paper deals with problems and stereotypes of Native Americans that are represented in our modern society such as in sport clubs, comics and many more. Because of them, Native Americans are still belittled and their culture is being made fun of only for the sake of entertainment. Dismantling the stereotypes about themselves is an ongoing struggle for identity and legacy of modern-day Native Americans as they keep dreaming of a better future.

1. The Establishment of the First Stereotypes

The sixteenth century was the age of discovery. Many Europeans undertook numerous missions and voyages in order to explore the world. Ever since Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492, this "New World" appealed to the Europeans as a perfect place to start a new life. However, the Europeans were not the first settlers in this "New World": "Long before the white man set foot on American soil, the Native Americans had been living on this land. When the Europeans came here, there were probably 10 million Native Americans who had been living north of present - day Mexico" (Two-Hawks).

Those first settlers, the Native Americans, were not always called like that. First of all, in the sixteenth century indigenous people living in North America were simply called "Indian": "The name 'Indian' was first applied to them by Christopher Columbus, who believed, mistakenly, that the mainland and islands of America were part of the Indies, in Asia" (Two-Hawks).

However, conflicts eventually aroused as the settling white man was greedy and lusting for even more power. Moreover, the sole reason for the destruction of many native tribes and nations was their rich land and its resources. As a result, the arriving Europeans cut down woods for timber and hunted down countless animals for their pelts. What is more, even the Native Americans were looked at as some sort of resources. Therefore, the white man captured, enslaved and eventually used them as a working force for the settling of the New World. Moreover, "it was the Europeans' cultural arrogance, coupled with their materialistic view of the land and its animal and plant beings that the Indians found repellent. Europeans, in sum, were regarded as something mechanical - soulless creatures who wielded diabolically ingenious tools and weapons to accomplish mad ends" (Two-Hawks).

Furthermore, Native Americans were viewed as pagan and devilish animals so the settlers had an urge to "tame" them and impose their own European religion on them. As a result, Europeans established the very first stereotypes of Native Americans. In his book *Fantasies of the Master Race* Churchill explains the colonists' view of the natives: "They acknowledge that there is a great God, but they know him not, wherefore they serve the devil for fear, after a most base manner... They live naked of body, as if the shame of their sin deserved no covering... they esteem it a virtue to lie, deceive, steal..." (4).

Since the beginning Native Americans were mistreated and many misconceptions were established. Even though Native Americans helped the very first settlers to establish their villages and helped them to survive the first winter, the settlers soon forgot what the natives had done for them. In other words, it is actually really ironic that the Native Americans helped the first Europeans in their settling the New World only to be driven away from their own sacred land.

Moreover, as the ongoing hostility among the land–protecting natives and the land–taking settlers grew, the Europeans looked for answers in their own religion in order to stop the natives from opposing their European ideas and goals. They recalled one of the Christian commandments: "Thou shalt not kill", which clearly forbids to kill human beings. However, the settlers started to alter the meaning of this commandment as they "mentally converted the victims into non - humans". By doing so, they could "claim a violation of their own commandment as a virtue" (Churchill 9). In other words, the settlers started to belittle the Native Americans in every aspect of their life. Eventually, the settlers started to perceive natives as animals that can be hunted down, thus justifying their own destruction of the indigenous civilizations.

Native Americans were mainly considered to be savage, uncivilized, wild and devilish with no sense of morality whatsoever. One of the main reasons why the settlers perceived natives like that at first is that natives were strange and unknown to them.

However, if something is unknown or strange, then one has to find a way to get familiar with it, not fear it and develop prejudices against it. The Europeans had the chance to approach the indigenous people in a more human and reasonable way, but heir materialistic and egocentric view of the world ruled out the possibility of a happy and peaceful mutual life with the Native Americans. Moreover, the stereotypes that were attributed to Native Americans because of the settlers' ignorance, fear and selfishness have remained unchanged for centuries. Thanks to the Western film genre from the twentieth century, these stereotypes became even more widespread. This all shows that the common stereotypes that are connected with Native Americans are not a modern day phenomenon. On the contrary, they have their roots in the colonization that started with Columbus.

2. Chronology of Native American Stereotypes in Film

2.1. Native Americans in Films of the 1940s: *Stagecoach*

Stagecoach. Dir. John Ford. 1939.

At the very beginning of John Ford's film *Stagecoach* we can see a stagecoach travelling through the landscape followed by cavalry men riding on horses. This marching of the cavalry men is also accompanied by some glorious and cheerful music in the background. However, immediately after they exit from the scene, the tone and music change drastically to a more malicious and dark music accompanied by drum-beatings. Furthermore, we can see some silhouettes of armed Native Americans riding on horses which are in pursuit of the cavalry men. For someone who only likes to watch films for pure entertainment and fun this scene does not reveal much, except for the fact that it is announcing a fight between some cowboys and Native Americans. However, this introductory scene actually sets the whole setting for the film that represents the white frontier man as "the good guy" and the Indian as "the bad guy".

Another scene shows some cavalry men discussing Geronimo and the Apache who are burning down farms in their vicinity. This information is given from another Native American, a Cheyenne, who hates the Apache as much as the U.S military does. Therefore, this Native American has joined forces with the cavalry and wears the same uniform as they do. At a close shot, this Native American is just standing still, stoic, does not say anything, and wears a feather in his long black hair. This scene is actually another stereotypical portrayal of Native Americans because it tells us that Native Americans are heartless and careless of each other. In other words, because of the hatred among the different tribes, Native Americans join forces with the white oppressors only to settle the differences between their tribes. Moreover, they do not care much for their own heritage and their people as they would betray them easily by defecting to the U.S. cavalry and accepting the U.S. military's orders to hunt and kill their own kin. Therefore, Native Americans are represented as treacherous individuals who have no pride, honor and loyalty.

Furthermore, there is a scene where the travelling party from the stagecoach makes a stop at an inn. Soon after that, they see some smoke signals coming from the hills and they presume that these are war signals. Moreover, they arrive at a river to cross it on a ferry, but

only to find out that everything has been burned down and everyone has been killed by the Apache. This film thus depicts Native Americans as being savage, brutal and bloodthirsty.

At the end of the film the travelling party almost arrive at their destination but not before the Apache attack them. The first sign of their attack is an arrow that kills a passenger in the stagecoach. Moreover, they attack in an overwhelming number riding on horses, shooting with their rifles and arrows. Furthermore, each one of them shouts war chants. However, even though the odds for the stagecoach are pretty bad, the passengers still succeed in killing many of the Apache. This fighting off the Apache does not look much like an actual fight scene; however, it resembles more a shooting range where living Native Americans are used for target practice. On top of that, in this scene Native Americans seem to be put in only to have something to shoot at, and it does not matter how many of them are killed, they still keep coming. They still keep coming and attacking because they are represented as a pest that has to be wiped out. Therefore, this scene is yet another example of the stereotypical misinterpretation of Native Americans.

2.2. Native Americans in Films of the 1950s: *The Searchers*

The Searchers. Dir. John Ford. 1956.

The film starts off with very loud, dark and malicious music, followed by drum beatings in the background and the whole tone of the opening scene foreshadows something bad and sinister that will happen later on. Shortly after, a cheerful and melancholic country song plays in the background, followed by some nice tunes of the guitar. This kind of cheerful music continues in the next scene where the main character Ethan Edwards returns from the American Civil War riding through the landscape. Once again, by using some sort of violent, malicious and sinister music Hollywood associated the Native Americans and their traditional drum beatings with something that is bad, dangerous and frightening. Music is a powerful tool and Hollywood uses this tool to its fullest. In other words, by associating Native American drum beatings, songs and chants with something bad, the audience is expected to immediately develop negative emotions and thoughts towards everything that is of Native American origin, which again actually leads to misunderstanding, prejudice and discrimination of Native Americans.

The next scene is played in the house where everybody is having dinner. All the family members are there and the atmosphere is friendly and warm. However, the atmosphere changes as soon as nephew Martin Powley joins the family. Ethan Edwards does not immediately recognize him and says: “I could have mistaken you for a half breed” (*The Searchers*). However, in their dialogue it is revealed that Martin is of Welsh origin and that his parents were murdered by Cherokee Indians. The Cherokee Indians took him as their child and at some time in the past Ethan saved Martin from the clutches of the bloodthirsty Native Americans. Although Martin is part of the family, Ethan still shows signs of disrespect and gives him a mean look. This scene is actually quite important because it represents the Native Americans as bloodthirsty savages in an indirect way through the character Martin Powley. In other words, whoever gets in contact with Native Americans is considered one of them, even if they are kidnapped or taken as their own children. It does not matter whether one is saved and brought back alive and well; they will never be the same person in the eyes of white society; it will always look down on them and treat them differently, although the kidnapped ones are clearly not of Native American origin. This is a powerful scene in terms of spreading discrimination and prejudices.

Some time after the dinner ranger Clayton visits Ethan's family and tells them that Native Americans have been killing their cattle. They suspect that the Comanche are responsible for this act and therefore they form a search party to find the missing cattle. After riding some forty miles they find the missing cattle all slaughtered and, according to the spear they pull out of the cattle, they are now certain that the slaughterers are the Comanche.

Moreover, they conclude that the Comanche did not kill the cattle for food, but only as a means to lure the armed men out in the open so that they could attack the farms. After realizing this horrible fact, they immediately rush home to defend their families. Unfortunately, they arrive too late – everyone has been killed and Ethan does not let his nephew Martin see his dead aunt Martha in the cabin. Ethan does this because aunt Martha has been massacred and scalped. Moreover, during the slaughter the little girl Debby and her older sister Lucy have been abducted by the Comanche leader Scar. Therefore, Ethan and ranger Clayton form a search party to find and rescue the two girls.

Again, Native Americans are depicted as murderous villains having no mercy, killing without any hesitation, burning all farms and abducting children. Furthermore, the savage leader Scar is not played by a Native American actor, but instead by American actor Henry Brandon, dressed in Native American clothes, who played Native Americans in many other films as well.

In the following scene the searchers find a Comanche grave and they do not hesitate to open it. One of the searchers says that the Comanche do not hide their graves properly because they do not fear being followed. Moreover, another searcher keeps constantly smiling at the sight of the dead Comanche. Suddenly one of the searchers stands up and throws a rock at the dead Native American. However, the most intriguing part of this scene is when Ethan draws his six-shooter and says: "Why don't you finish the job?" (*The Searchers*) and fires two shots in the buried Comanche's face. His reason for doing this gruesome act is that he states that the Comanche believe they cannot enter the spirit land without their eyes; thus they are doomed to wander forever between the winds.

This is unfortunately another very negative, racist and controversial scene which simply tells that the Comanche are nothing more than things to shoot at, just as wood and rocks. In other words, *The Searchers*, Hollywood and finally the American people who made this film have clearly shown that the life of a Native American is worthless, even in death, and that they do not deserve any respect whether they be alive or dead.

During their search the searchers have been surrounded by many Comanche warriors and their best option to survive the attack is to cross the nearby river. On the other side of the river the searchers take cover behind some logs and fend off the Comanche attack. Although the Comanche warriors attack in great numbers, Ethan and his party of only six men manage to kill many of them. This scene is similar to the fight scene in *Stagecoach* where the attacking Indians are represented as targets in a shooting range – they just keep coming and falling down from their horses, one after another. Later on, Ethan says that the best way to find the Comanche and Indians in general is to look for drums and smoke fire. This only belittles Native Americans, implying that they have no other distinctive marks whatsoever. Furthermore, after finding a camp, Ethan rushes back to the rest of the searchers. He looks pale and speechless. Later, he reveals that Lucy has been raped and then massacred.

Another interesting scene reveals Ethan and Martin trading with some peaceful Comanche. Ethan is offering various goods such as blankets and belts; however, the chief of this Comanche tribe trades a Comanche squaw for a cowboy hat with an eagle feather. Martin does not realize that he has actually bought a wife as it was a Native American custom to exchange goods for a wife in the Old West. Nonetheless, this is all part of their plan in which they try to gain the trust of the Comanche in order to find out where Scar is. Although the searchers trade fair and square, they use the Comanche only to fulfill their own goals, proving that deception and trading was one of the key points in fooling and using Native Americans in the Old West.

Furthermore, Ethan and Martin find a Comanche camp that has been devastated and burned down by American cavalry. Among the dead are men and women alike. Moreover, this scene shows us what Hollywood actually thinks of Native Americans – the best way to get rid of them is to leave none alive by showing no mercy and sympathy. The two searchers also find the dead body of the Comanche squaw that Martin bought previously. However, they are not sure if she was trying to warn Scar or if she only was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Shortly after their arrival at the American cavalry outpost, they find some white women who have been saved during the attack on the Comanche camp. These women are all traumatized and under shock because they have been abused and raped by Comanche warriors. Unfortunately, they do not find Debbie among them. Once again, Native Americans are represented as savage kidnappers and rapists.

Eventually, Ethan and Martin find Scar's camp. In the camp the Comanche are depicted as people living in tepees and wearing traditional handmade jewelry and linen

clothes with feathers in their hair. They also wear breechcloth and moccasins and they are silent and stoic most of the time. Also, the searchers meet Scar in person and they say that they have come to trade. Once more, the white people use lies and deception in order to fulfill their gorals under the disguise of trade. However, Ethan is surprised to hear that Scar is able to speak his language and immediately belittles Scar's English by saying: "You speak pretty good American, for a Comanche" (*The Searchers*). This scene actually depicts Native Americans as less intelligent and incompetent of learning new skills such as a language for example. Although Scar speaks and understands English, he is still seen as inferior. Furthermore, during their conversation Scar shows off his scalps in order to scare Ethan. As a result, Native Americans are represented as scalp collectors.

The searchers find out that Debbie, now an adolescent, has become Scar's wife, but they cannot save her just like that; therefore they camp outside Scar's village. However, Debbie finds them in their camp and says that she has become a Comanche and that they leave without her. She is dressed like a Native American and she talks to them at first in the Comanche language. Ethan, on the other hand, does not want to listen to her so he draws his gun and is ready to shoot her if it were not for Martin to shield her. Ethan despises the Comanche; he would rather see her own niece dead than living as an Indian. Moreover, with this scene Hollywood actually tells us that it is unforgiving, disgraceful and unnatural to live as a Native American and that the only way out of this Indian hell and torture is death. Furthermore, this scene may create a very negative and stereotypical image of Native Americans in general because it tells us to stay away from them as well as to forbid them to get near us.

One of the very last scenes shows a joint force of Texas rangers and the American cavalry attacking Scar's main camp. As usual, Native Americans are represented as moving targets because they do not put up much of a fight and the white man kills them with ease. Furthermore, Martin manages to kill Scar and save Debbie from the clutches of the bloodthirsty savage. However, Ethan is still not satisfied so he finds Scar's dead body and takes his scalp. Just as in the previously mentioned grave scene, the white man has no respect for the dead; thus he even mutilates the Indian corpse.

2.3. Native Americans in Films of the 1960s: *Cheyenne Autumn*

Cheyenne Autumn. Dir. John Ford. 1964.

John Ford's *Cheyenne Autumn* is a western film based on historical facts – The Northern Cheyenne Exodus of 1878. The U.S. Army wanted to subdue the Northern Cheyenne in order to take control of their rich land. The two great leaders of the Northern Cheyenne who opposed the American cavalry were Little Wolf and Dull Knife. However, after losing to the U.S. Army they surrendered and signed a treaty which promised them to live on the Sioux reservation in South Dakota. Unfortunately, they were tricked and sent to the Southern Cheyenne reservation in Indian Territory instead. That reservation was a lifeless wasteland and the "Northern Cheyenne found conditions in Indian Territory very difficult: inadequate rations; no buffalo; and lots of malaria" (*Cheyenne Autumn*). As a result, many Cheyenne died because of such conditions.

This is the background story of the Cheyenne Autumn that Hollywood altered to its own interests. For example, two of the main characters, the Cheyenne leaders Dull Knife and Little Wolf are played by Mexican–born American actor Gilbert Roland and Spanish actor Ricardo Montalban. As we can see, there are no Native Americans in any of the leading roles. Reviewer Schwartz explains: "A big mess; an epic Western that is burdensome and wooden and even though it gets the story right about the Indians and humanizes them in a sympathetic light it still fails to give them well–developed characters and further slights them by casting Latinos" ("A Big Mess"). Furthermore, John Ford put in a love romance between a school teacher and a U.S. Army captain and a lengthy poker scene. These scenes are actually unnecessary because they attract too much attention and the focus shifts from the plight of the Cheyenne to some love stories and card games; by doing so John Ford belittled the Native American history.

The opening scene shows the Cheyenne gathering together and praying to their deity the Wise One Above. They pray for rain, food and a better life in the wasteland that is called Indian Territory. Besides the empty words of the U.S. government, hope is the only thing they have left. Furthermore, the Cheyenne are depicted as people living in tepees and wearing pants and vests while the women are wearing long dresses. Also, both male and female wear their hair in braids. The physical representation of Native Americans in *Cheyenne Autumn* is pretty accurate as the real "Cheyenne wore elk, buffalo, and deer skins. Most of the Cheyenne lived in earth lodges made of a dug out hill with wood or tree bark covering the surrounding

soil. These were used until the late 1800's when the Cheyenne discovered tepees" ("Native American Studies").

The following scene shows the Cheyenne leaders Dull Knife and Little Wolf leading their people into a U.S. Army outpost in order to talk with the leaders from Washington. They want to know if and when they will be moved to a better reservation because they are getting sick and hungry. They have been waiting in the sun for over six hours till finally a telegraph message arrives. This message is actually nothing but bad news – the Committee from Washington is not coming because of bad weather and therefore they will be returning to attend an officers' ball. In other words, the Committee has no interest in the Cheyenne because they will rather have fun, drinking and eating instead of helping another human being. Moreover, the delaying of their arrival, which has lasted over a year, is just another part of their plan - the plan to destroy Native Americans by isolating and starving them to death. Besides, of the 1000 Cheyenne that came to the Oklahoma Cheyenne reservation a year before only 286 are left.

However, the only one who tries to help the Cheyenne is the school teacher Deborah. She tries to convince Captain Thomas Archer to do something about the Native American misery. Although Captain Archer is aware of the situation, he says that his only obligation is to protect the Cheyenne from harm and to provide them with clothes and food. This all shows that the U.S government has no heart for the poverty and misery that has struck the Native American people. In other words, they only pretend to care for them by saying empty words and promising lies. This fact did not occur only in the Old West, but it has continued until today – Native Americans are still seen as inferior and they do not have equal rights as the rest of the American population; they are still mistreated, misunderstood and made fun of.

An example for this is the Dawes Act from 1887 that lasted till the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. "The Dawes Act served to destroy both the reservation system and tribal organization" and "it removed nearly fifty percent of Native American land from Indian tribes and accelerated the already rapid loss of traditional Indian culture" (Hamilton). Furthermore, only with the Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 were Native Americans granted freedom "to worship their religions" and "the authority to control their own education their children are being educated in the traditional skills and knowledge of their culture" (Hamilton). Those are just some examples that depict Native Americans and their long struggle for their rights.

Another interesting scene is the one in which the school teacher Deborah prepares her cabin for a class and awaits the Cheyenne children to teach them English. In the previously described scene the children already know the alphabet, but this time none of them will be coming to class. The Cheyenne leaders prohibit them to attend classes anymore because they do not want their children to learn white man's lies. This scene implies that Native Americans are being taught the American culture and language in order to make it easier for the American government to manipulate them.

Furthermore, the Cheyenne do not want to wait any longer for the Committee to arrive so they decide to pack their belongings and leave the reservation only to return to their home in Yellowstone. Deborah also decides to join them on their journey as she wants to help the Cheyenne children. Soon after Captain Archer has noticed that the Cheyenne reservation is deserted, he rounds up his cavalry and follows the Cheyenne in order to take them back to the reservation. This again shows that Native Americans have no free will at all because the white man constantly wishes to decide what is best for them. If they cannot deal with a matter with dialogues that are filled with empty words or with treaties that promise only lies, then they resort to using brute force. Also, during the pursuit Second Lieutenant Scott mentions how the Cheyenne killed his father when he was ten years old; hence he is eager to stop them from leaving the reservation at all costs. His tone and facial expression also indicate that he hates the Cheyenne and that he would very likely shoot some of the natives as an act of revenge.

The hidden message behind this scene has become already so popular and stereotypical in a sense that whenever Native Americans kill a white man, then the white man is more than eager to take revenge on them. This mostly ends in not just killing the Indian responsible for someone dear's death, but also in a mindless killing of every other Indian that gets in their way. On the other hand, nobody mentions how the Cheyenne suffered, too; they were deceived, threatened, killed, rounded up like cattle and forcibly placed in reservations. Whenever a Native American kills a white man it is considered an outrageous, savage and unforgivable act, even if he did it only to protect his family and land. In other words, everything boils down to this – the white man is always the good guy and the Indian is the bad guy. In *Cheyenne Autumn* only the actions of the American government are justified and necessary.

When the Cheyenne reach a canyon they set up a trap in order to stop their pursuers. They dig trenches and prepare a group of warriors on horses whose task is to flank the cavalry. On the other hand, a commanding officer issues the order to fire cannons at the

escaping Cheyenne. Captain Archer tries to stop the officer because there are women and children among them. However, the officer commands the soldiers to keep firing at them. As a result, Native Americans are represented as moving targets and it does not matter if it is a child or a woman; they are all just targets to be shot down mercilessly. Furthermore, in this scene the Cheyenne are represented as wise and fierce warriors because they managed to stop the attacking U.S. cavalry. Although they are victorious at the moment, they still do not feel free. Dull Knife says that even a dog has the right to go wherever it pleases, but a Cheyenne will never have this right, implying that the life of an animal is more worthy than the life of a Native American.

Furthermore, the U.S. Army does not quit that easily so they regroup and continue to pursue the Cheyenne. On the other hand, the Cheyenne prepare an ambush in the bushes and wait for the cavalry to attack them first. Captain Archer commands his troops to take defensive positions because he wants to wait for the Cheyenne to attack them first, too. The reason for that is quite simple; the Indians are on a much higher terrain giving them an advantage in the battle. However, the young and eager Lieutenant Scott defies the Captain's orders and charges, not realizing that he is leading his men into a trap. As a result, the Cheyenne set the bushes on fire and eventually force the cavalry to retreat. Once more, this scene depicts Native Americans as wise and brave warriors as well as people who are very familiar with their surroundings and nature in general.

However, this scene is important because it shows how Scott loses his sense of duty and rational behavior in an instance as soon as he sees the Cheyenne; he turns into a mindlessly killing machine longing for some Indian blood. Moreover, this is another very powerful scene in terms of misleading and steering up the audience, especially the young ones. By sympathizing with young Scott the young audience can unconsciously develop the urge to attack Native Americans without any hesitation, as if they have to be gotten rid of for good, just like a pest.

This fact is exemplified in the following scene where two hungry Cheyenne ride towards four cowboys, begging them for food. However, the cowboys are anything but friendly; they keep talking and fantasizing of killing some real Cheyenne and collecting their scalps just as their parents did. One cowboy immediately draws his gun and shoots one of the Cheyenne while the other one manages to escape. Moreover, the cowboy shoots the dead Cheyenne again and takes his knife to scalp him. This scene is pretty similar to the scenes in *The Searchers* where they shoot at the dead Comanche in the grave and when Ethan takes

Scar's scalp. In other words, Native Americans are hunted down just for fun as if it were a sport to kill as many as possible and to collect their scalp in order to display them as some trophies.

As the news of the Cheyenne outbreak has reached Kansas City, the press immediately sees a profit in it and distorts the Cheyenne action into a declaration of war. In other words, the press uses the fact that the U.S. cavalry lost nine men during the first battle with the Cheyenne in order to justify the destruction of the savage Native Americans. However, the press does not mention the fact that the Cheyenne killed those cavalry men in self defense. Therefore, whenever Indians take arms against the white man, it is immediately misrepresented as a massacre.

At first, there are only nine dead cavalry men; however, the number is suddenly as high as twenty five, fifty, and the press eventually mentions one hundred casualties. Furthermore, the whole Wild West is in a state of alarm and all the farmers are running for their lives by seeking shelter in nearby military forts. Moreover, nobody asks how many Cheyenne have escaped from the reservation and the white man takes everything that the press says for granted. To the white population all that matters is the word Cheyenne - a word that represents something dangerous, savage, wild, threatening and bloodthirsty. Even a newspaper boy selling on the street nicknames the Cheyenne the "Red Devils". Eventually, a whole city mobilizes to hunt down the savage Cheyenne.

During some later events the Cheyenne are forced to make an important decision; to surrender to the nearby Fort Robinson together with chief Dull Knife or to continue their journey to their home in Montana with chief Little Wolf. Eventually, Dull Knife leads his people to Fort Robinson where they are given food and shelter. However, the government tells the U.S. army to send the remaining Cheyenne back to their reservation in the Indian Territory which means that they would have to travel back about 1,500 miles during winter. This scene actually represents Native Americans merely as being some objects that can be tossed around. The government does not show any mercy, pity or understanding; they only want to move Native Americans to a place where they do not disturb the white man and his business. Dull Knife and the Cheyenne are aware of this situation so they escape from Fort Robinson using rifles that they have previously dismantled and hidden among their clothes. Here, Ford's escape scene is based on actual events as on "January 9, 1879, Dull Knife and others escape, but many die in the Fort Robinson tragedy" (*Cheyenne Autumn*).

2.4. Native Americans in Films of the 1970s: *A Man Called Horse*

A Man Called Horse. Dir. Elliot Silverstein. 1970.

A Man called Horse is a story about an English aristocrat John Morgan who decides to travel to the West of the U.S.A. During his journey his camp is being raided, his scouts killed and he is captured by the Sioux. As time passes John learns their culture and language and eventually becomes a part of the tribe. Lastly, he ends as the chief of the Sioux tribe. Furthermore, this film from the 1970s is somewhat different than the films about Native Americans in the previous decades. The main difference lies in the fact that *A Man Called Horse* illustrates many other aspects of the Native American identity. In other words, the film does not only show brave and fierce Sioux warriors, but also depicts parts of their everyday life such as initiation rituals, their language and marital ceremonies.

However, at its core, *A Man Called Horse* remains a Western film packed with some adventure elements and a love story. All in all, the film manages to be quite accurate and authentic and establishes a sense of sympathy towards Native Americans, but it is essentially a film directed by a white man with white men in the leading roles.

The opening scene shows the silhouette of a Sioux warrior performing the Sundance ceremony. However, this is only the first part of the whole ceremony in which the Sioux warrior has to stand in the sun for one day. The details will be explained in one of the scenes during the film. This ceremony is very important to the Sioux tribe as they pray to the Great Spirit of the Sun Wakantanka in order to be worthy of its blessing and to give them strength. The warrior in the very first scene of the film says: “Oh, Wakantanka, Great Spirit of the Sun, source of all life, created in violence, pleasure and pain which then takes life to sustain life, continuing the eternal cycle of life and death, I stand humble and obedient before you. Make me worthy!” (*A Man Called Horse*).

Soon after, the scene shifts to the main character John Morgan shooting some prairie chicken with his scouts. However, some armed Sioux warriors hear the shots and locate Morgan’s camp. Among the warriors is also the chief of the Sioux, Yellow Hand. Although he is one of the main characters in the film, his role is played by Fiji actor Manu Tupou. After sneaking unnoticed in the camp they steal their horses and in the process kill Morgan’s three scouts with arrows and take their scalps. John, on the other hand, has been taking a bath in the

nearby river. Eventually, the Sioux capture naked John, too, and drag him out of the river. Furthermore, the leader of the Sioux tribe Yellow Hand forces John on his knees, puts a blanket on his back and calls him “horse” in the Sioux language. He leaves a yellow handprint on the captured horse as well as on John’s back and behind.

This scene has two important meanings. First of all, it shows the Native Americans in a stereotypical image as being savage and bloodthirsty. Also, they are one with the nature because they manage to sneak in the camp through the bushes and foliage without being seen. Lastly, Yellow Hand uses yellow handprints on the horse. This is significant as well as authentic because some Native tribes would put handprints on their horses to show that they were captured during a raid and that they belong to them. As a result, by putting the handprint on John, Yellow Hand tells us that John belongs to him as some raid trophy.

In the next scene John is taken to the Sioux village. There Yellow Hand gives to his people some presents that he obtained during the raid on John’s camp. Moreover, he leaves John to his mother Buffalo Cow Head so he can be her workhorse. When the night falls, the whole Sioux tribe celebrates Yellow Hand’s victorious raid at the center of the village by feasting and dancing. As a result, everybody is sleeping in their tepees, John tries to escape, but without any luck. At that point, he realizes that there are too many guards around the village so he returns by himself to Buffalo Cow Head’s tepee.

Here, Native Americans are represented not only as savage warriors, but also as a real living society that is capable of sharing, guarding their homes and having fun, too. Although they still make fun of John, they eventually treat his wounds that he got when he was being dragged away from his camp. Moreover, there is another authentic part of Sioux culture that occurs during the first village scene. In this scene, we can see an old Sioux woman crying over her dead son who has been killed by one of the scouts in John’s camp. After losing a close family member, in this case a son, the woman cuts off one of her own fingers as a sign of grief and mourning over the loss. Furthermore, as she has no one else to take care of her, she is doomed to survive the oncoming winter on her own.

After John has returned to Buffalo Cow Head, he is ordered by her to carry some wood. Immediately after this, another important scene is triggered as it shows the marital ritual of the Sioux. Here, the second chief Black Eagle wears his headdress and steps in front of Yellow Hand offering him presents as well as horses. John, on the other hand, does not understand what is going on, so the village fool Batise explains everything to him. He says

that it is in the Sioux culture to buy the wife. Similar scenes showing the buying of a wife have been presented in other films such as *The Searchers* from the 1950s. However, Yellow Hand does not accept Black Eagle's offer; neither does his sister Running Deer, who is played by Greek actress Corinna Tsopei. Once again, there is a white actress in one of the leading roles. On the other hand, Black Eagle is played by Eddie Little Sky of the Oglala Sioux tribe. He was one of the very first Native American actors to play Native American roles in films.

The character Batise is a French man who has been in Sioux captivity for five years. He also says that his parents were killed by the very same Sioux that he is living with now. Moreover, he tells John that he tried to escape; however, the Sioux cut a vital artery in his leg so he is doomed to limp for the rest of his life. This film thus portrays Native Americans as slave masters who will try to prevent any escape at all costs. In other words, this scene sends the obvious message that once someone is captured by Native Americans, one will never see their family or home again. The same slave-master imagery of Native Americans is also seen in *The Searchers*.

Batise also tells John that now he has a chance to get near Yellow Hand's sister Running Deer. This is very important because after the marriage they may be able to get a war party which John would use to escape from the Sioux village. From this point on, John tries very hard to assimilate into Sioux culture in order to gain their respect and eventually to be a recognized part of the tribe. However, John's way of thinking reveals two things. Firstly, it just shows how desperately John wants to escape because he does not belong to the Sioux; he wants to return to the white man's society instead. Secondly, John's way of thinking is just the stereotypical way of the white man's thinking in general. In other words, John is going to gain their trust and respect only to achieve his own goals by lying, pretending, deceiving and using Native Americans.

The next scenes in the film show John gathering and chopping wood, hunting and working in the field with the Sioux women. Here, the Sioux are depicted as fruit gatherers, which is another authentic portrayal of Native Americans. Shortly after that, one Sioux boy spots two scouts from another tribe and returns to the field to warn the others. John, however, decides to follow the boy and to take a look at the situation. After arriving at the spot and without further hesitation, he jumps one of the scouts and kills him with his knife. Then he sees the other scout and kills him, too. At this moment, some armed Sioux warriors arrive at the scene and John decides to prove himself by taking the scout's scalp. John's bravery pleases the Sioux warriors so they return to the village to celebrate his victory. Moreover,

John is finally recognized by chief Yellow Hand as he puts a feather in his hair making him one of the tribe.

There are two hidden meanings behind John's bravery. First of all, Hollywood shows a brave John who is earning the respect of the tribe as well as protecting it. He overcomes his fear and proves him worthy as a Sioux warrior. Secondly, John is wearing a headband although none of the Sioux around him have one. This is actually another of Hollywood's stereotypical representations of Native Americans because Native Americans rarely wear any headbands at all. In other words, Hollywood thinks that an Indian is not an Indian without his headband. Moreover, there are many more false interpretations and conceptions about the Native Americans' life such as those about the scalping. The scalping itself was used by only some tribes such as the Creek Indians and they did it only to show their bravery or to take a trophy to their home. Moreover, "the scalping in pre - Columbian America was more likely the result of raiding activity than of large - scale warfare taking place on a battlefield" (Case). In other words, Hollywood still did not understand the meaning of the scalping so they attributed this act to all Native Americans. In the end, they want us to believe that every Native American always takes scalps, that it is a common trademark of natives. However, Hollywood forgets to tell us that the white man scalped too; bounty hunters were hired and large sums of money were paid for Native American scalps such as the Apache. Marder explains: "The Europeans had thought the Indians first-hand the horror of viewing the mutilated remains of their families . . . and the settlers approved the practice of scalping by offering rewards to those Indians who could prove they killed their enemy" (107).

Now that John is a part of the Sioux tribe, he makes a marriage proposal to Yellow Hand's sister Running Deer by offering the two captured horses. However, John does not have the same scars as Yellow Hand, which means that John has to go through the Sundance ceremony in order to make the marriage valid and sacred. Therefore, John makes a vow to courage similar to the very first opening scene of the film. He has to stand in the sun all day and night till sunrise. John eventually enters the great meeting hall of the chief where he addresses the chief and the medicine men telling them he is ready to endure any kind of pain. Little does he know that the ceremony is going to be painful indeed. A medicine man then approaches him and pierces two hooks through his pectoral muscles. After that, ropes are attached on the hooks and he is hung from the roof while being spinned in circles and the whole ritual is accompanied by drum beatings and singing. Eventually, he is put down for he successfully underwent the Sundance ceremony.

It is important to note that the Sundance ceremony is the most important ceremony of the Plains Nations and *A Man Called Horse* manages to capture the essence of this ceremony in a very authentic and believable way. A reviewer explains: "This scene was sufficiently close to home that many found its portrayal on the big screen quite offensive" ("Ten Little White Indians"). Reviewer Shea gives the film "high marks for really striving to keep the situations authentic" ("A Man Called Horse"). Also, Frederick Schwatka, an U.S. Army Lieutenant and explorer from the nineteenth century witnessed and described the original Sundance ceremony:

> Each one of the young men presented himself to a medicine – man, who took between his thumb and forefinger a fold of the loose skin of the breast - and then ran a very narrow - bladed or sharp knife through the skin - a stronger skewer of bone, about the size of a carpenter's pencil was inserted. This was tied to a long skin rope fastened, at its other extremity, to the top of the sun - pole in the center of the arena. The whole object of the devotee is to break loose from these fetters. To liberate himself he must tear the skewers through the skin, a horrible task that even with the most resolute may require many hours of torture. (qtd. in "Sun Dance")

The following scene shows the whole Sioux village dancing and singing at a camp fire. After that, chief Yellow Hand escorts Running Deer to John's tepee and leaves her with him as their marriage is now blessed and sacred. At that point, Running Deer puts a blanket on John indicating that they want some privacy now and they enter the tepee together as husband and wife. Running Deer has undergone the Rite of Purification beforehand. This ritual is a significant undertaking to cleanse the mind and the spirit. At the time when John is in the process of the Sundance ceremony Running Deer is sitting naked in a sweat lodge. There, she is enclosed in darkness and in the middle of the sweat lodge there is a small fire pit. This is another scene in which Hollywood manages to mimic a Native American ceremony. This ceremony is called the "Purification ritual or Sweat Lodge ceremony in which the individual undergoes a rebirthing process" ("Sun Dance").

Some time passes and Running Deer is eventually pregnant. Moreover, John has fully assimilated into the Sioux culture and many scenes show that he is actually happy, living the life of a Native American. However, John often calls Running Deer Little Freedom and in one scene he says that he is going to escape the village together with her. In other words, Hollywood depicts the life among Native Americans as unacceptable, unnatural, disgraceful

and horrible. Moreover, John never actually shows true feelings of love for Running Deer as he only thinks of her as a one-way ticket leading out of the village. Again, the white man deceives and uses the Native American for his own selfish interests.

However, the very last scenes show an attack on the village by a hostile tribe. Yellow Hand is killed during the attack, and so is Running Deer. Furthermore, at one point the Sioux warriors are surrounded by the enemy, but John tells them to take their bows and arrows. With John's defensive strategy and directions the Sioux manage to drive the rivaling tribe away. Also, as chief Yellow Hand has fallen in battle and because John is part of the chief's family, John becomes the new chief of the Sioux tribe. This Hollywood scene, however, implies that the Native Americans are helpless and vulnerable without the guidance of the white man, which makes them look like scared and disorganized children. The last scene shows John putting Running Deer's moccasins on her scaffold burial and leaving with a handful of Sioux warriors.

2.5. Native Americans in Films of the 1980s: *Powwow Highway*

Powwow Highway. Dir. Jonathan Wacks. 1989.

Jonathan Wack's *Powwow Highway* is far more than just another film about Native Americans. It has three main distinctive features that distinguish it from the rest of films such as *The Searchers* or *A Man Called Horse*. First of all, it is not a classic Western where white settlers battle against savage Indians as the setting is placed in modern times, on a reservation in the 1980's. Secondly, the lead roles are played by Native American actors Adolfo Martinez, Gary Farmer and Amanda Wyss. This is of course a huge turning point in the presentation of Native Americans in film industry because now we have actual Native Americans playing Native American roles. Lastly, the story is told from the perspective of Native Americans and how they see themselves living on the reservation. Furthermore, *Powwow Highway* "creates a tension between stereotypes and reinventions – between Hollywood genres and Native traditions – and by doing so enriches the film" (Anderson).

The very first scene of *Powwow Highway* shows a Native American warrior riding on horseback through the landscape at dawn and the whole scene is accompanied by chants and drum beatings. This scene is actually a vision that Philbert experiences as he desperately wants to earn his warrior name. He is an introspective, kind person who is seeking pride and identity through traditional and mystical means of gathering power. In other words, Philbert is on an identity quest and he represents Native Americans as being spiritual, which is a stereotypical image. He is trying to find his place as a Cheyenne in the reservation that is struck by poverty. Likewise, the very first scenes depict the life of Native Americans on a reservation as we can see them drinking alcohol, playing billiard and smoking in a bar.

The second main character Buddy Red Bow is a Vietnam War veteran and a social activist. He tries to help the reservation stand up on its feet and to get his people out of poverty. At one point, he debates with a greedy developer who is trying to get the tribes' vote for a mining program. Buddy is not easily fooled by developer Youngblood and says that only the company will benefit from the mining program whereas the Cheyenne tribe will be tricked into giving away their natural resources form the reservation. This scene reminds us of the countless broken promises from the Old West where the U.S. government tricked natives into selling their own sacred land.

A similar situation occurs when Philbert buys a used car at the local car shop. Philbert asks how much the car costs whereas the salesman asks: "How much have you got?"

(*Powwow Highway*). This sentence indicates that the salesman wants to trick Philbert into giving more money than the car is worth. He pays with some drugs, booze and money and treats his new car as a "pony" naming it Protector. Once again, this scene depicts some of the hardships that Native Americans have to struggle with on the reservation - drugs, alcohol and poverty. However, "the film's comic spirit happily sweetens and offsets myriad political, social, and cultural problems faced by the Cheyenne" (Anderson) which is the case in many other scenes. Another problem faced by the protagonists is the police as Philbert bails out Buddy's sister Bonnie from the prison. Not only do they have to elude the police, but Philbert also frees Bonnie by tearing down the prison wall, just as he has seen it in an old cowboy film on the television.

Powwow Highway, as well as other two significant films, *Smoke Signals* and *Skins*, remain beacons for what could be because all three films have Native Americans as the main characters. Moreover, *Powwow Highway* is praised for its respectable and sympathetic presentation of Native Americans as it depicts their identity and existence in the here and now. Blades says:

> Within are echoes of our old cultures and of the post-Columbian conquest as well as a true-to-life reflection of the tug-of-war between the traditional and modern which all Indians have faced since the first European offered the first steel blade for a slab of venison. These films go farther than any which have reached the mainstream to explore how we as Indians, in our diverse and often contradictory and self-contradictory ways, try to demystify a world in which buckskins have long since been replaced with denim. ("Sidekicks and Savages")

Although *Powwow Highway* does portray Native Americans as fully developed and complex characters with their own personality, it still remains a film about the conflict between Native Americans and the white man. This conflict is depicted though activist Buddy Red Bow and the federal government and police. The film *Smoke Signals*, on the other hand, "does not center on Indian and white conflict, but instead focuses on Victor's internal struggle with his feelings about his father. In fact, white characters play a very minimal role throughout the film" (Blades).

2.6. Native Americans in Films of the 1990s: *Dances with Wolves*

Dances with Wolves. Dir. Kevin Costner. 1990.

Dances with Wolves is a groundbreaking film and one of the best films ever made. In the year 2007 *Dances with Wolves* was selected for preservation in the U.S. National Film Registry by the Library of Congress. Moreover, the film is significant because it marked "one of the more sympathetic portraits of Native American life ever shown in American cinema, and introduced the American public to Lakota Sioux folklore, traditions and language" (*National Film Registry*).

Costner's film does an even better job in representing Native Americans than *A Man Called Horse*, proving how the stereotypes of Native Americans have changed from being the bad guys to being the good guys. The Sioux Indians portrayed in this film are represented as compassionate, noble and friendly people; they only live in peace with nature and protect their homes. Also, the cast of the film consisted of many Native American actors such as Graham Greene, Rodney A. Grant, Floyd Red Crow Westerman, Tantoo Cardinal, Jimmy Herman, Nathan Lee Chasing His Horse, Wes Studi and Michael Spears, playing both secondary as well as leading roles. Another improvement over films such as *A Man Called Horse* is that the main character First Lieutenant John J. Dunbar does not do any selfish acts by deceiving or using Native Americans. He only wants to understand them, learn their way of life and eventually become a friend of the Lakota Sioux.

However, the other side of the coin tells us that *Dances with Wolves* "disproved the reputation Western films had acquired in the latter years of the 20th Century for being money – losers" (*National Film Registry*). This simply means that the film industry lost interest in films portraying Native Americans because there was no profit in them anymore. The reason for this is quite obvious as the audience had enough of classic savage Indian Western films. Therefore, Hollywood shifted to the noble, compassionate and good Indian by introducing more of the Native American life, culture, language and portraying a more complex image of natives. Moreover, one might think that Hollywood makes films such as *Dances with Wolves* and other films with Native Americans only for fun, entertainment and possibly profit and awards. Besides, *Dances with Wolves* is a "remarkably successful film as it made over $400 million dollars" ("Alan's Reviews").

The opening scene shows First Lieutenant John J. Dunbar lying in a military hospital due to a serious leg injury. The doctors discuss whether to amputate John's leg and take a

coffee break before the surgery. However, John decides to take his life in his own hands and rides to the battlefield in order to get killed as he sees no meaning in life anymore. The film takes place during the American Civil War and John is on the side of the Union Army. On the battlefield he charges two times near the Confederate front lines and by doing so he distracts them, allowing the Union Army to attack. Little does he know that his foolish act of charging the enemy all by himself actually elevates him to the status of a living hero. As a result, the general gives him a citation for his bravery -- a horse named Cisco and the freedom to choose his post. Without hesitation, John decides to go to the western frontier. He first arrives at Fort Hays and reports for duty to the commanding officer. The officer reads his request of deposition and asks John if he is an Indian fighter. This is so stereotypical because as soon as someone hears the word "frontier" he immediately associates it with Indians. Therefore, he sends John to the most western part of the frontier, to Fort Sedgwick.

John travels to Fort Sedgwick together with the peasant Timmons who knows the way. During their journey, John finds a broken wagon and a skeleton pierced with an arrow. It is quite obvious what the scene implies -- the settler who tried to live on the frontier has been killed brutally by savage Indians. Moreover, at one point John asks whether there are any Indians nearby and Timmons says: "Indians? Goddamn Indians! You just as soon not see them unless they're dead. They're nothing but thieves and beggars!" (*Dances with Wolves*). This is another stereotypical image of Native Americans implying that every Indian should be dead as they are just a pest and nuisance in the world. Eventually, they arrive at Fort Sedgwick but find it abandoned and devastated. Again, Timmons notes that nobody is there anymore because they have either run for their lives or they have been killed by Indians. However, John decides to rebuild the post again and sends Timmons back to Fort Hays.

While rebuilding the post, he finds some decaying remains of a deer in the nearby river, fishes it out and burns it. Unfortunately, the smoke has attracted the attention of some hostile native warriors. They discuss how many soldiers are posted there; however, they quickly decide to leave them be because they are afraid of the soldiers' rifles. One Indian, on the other hand, rides alone to confront the soldiers as he would rather die than to let the white man do as he pleases in his land. However, the next scene shows Timmons making dinner over his camp fire and only then it is obvious that the Indians saw Timmons instead of John. The Indian eventually kills Timmons with several arrows and takes his scalp, too. Moreover, the rest of the Indians take Timmons' wagon and horses.

Dances with Wolves thus depicts Native Americans who are fiercely protecting their

land from the invading white settlers, repeating the savage image of the Native Americans. Once again, Native Americans are portrayed as scalp collectors, thieves as well as people enjoying to mutilate the white man's body.

The following scene shows John coming out of the river when he sees a Sioux warrior. At first, he is scared and tries to hide behind the hill; however, as soon as he hears that the Indian is trying to capture his horse Cisco, naked and brave John runs towards the Indian. The Sioux, on the other hand, gets scared as well and rides off. Later on, in the Sioux camp, they discuss John's presence. The eager and young warrior Wind In his Hair makes fun of the white man by saying that they are bad riders, lousy shooters and that they would not be able to survive the oncoming winter; thus he suggests to kill John. However, the very same Sioux warrior who tried to steal John's horse Cisco, tells the tribe that it is better to establish contact with John. The name of this warrior is Kicking Bird and he believes that John is not afraid of them as he is living alone in this wilderness and therefore he has some kind of power. Moreover, he says that John may be someone to negotiate with.

In this scene, we can see two images of Native Americans. The first image is the usual stereotype of Native Americans; they are savage, blood-thirsty war-mongers and they want to chase the white man away from their land. Kicking Bird, on the other hand, represents the other image - a Native American who is reasonable, wise, calm and noble as he wants to establish friendly contact with the white man. This seems to be a revolutionary undertaking in Native American film history – the creation of a complex Indian character with human and social attributes - the portrayal of a "good Indian". Moreover, all the Sioux dialogue in the film is spoken in their native tongue accompanied by English subtitles.

The translation of the Sioux dialogue is a very welcome act because it breaks the feeling of alienation. In other words, the audience will no longer listen to a native language and speculate what is going on, and therefore belittle their language and think of them as some animals with no developed communication. Finally, the audience will understand that Native Americans are humans just like the rest of us and that they have their own language just as we do.

The next scene shows John in his full Union Army gear in search of the Sioux tribe in order to establish a friendly contact. During his travel he finds a white woman dressed in Sioux clothes. She has badly injured herself with a knife and as John tries to help her, she suddenly panics and passes out. Later on, it is revealed that her name is Stands with a Fist and

that her parents were killed by the hostile and aggressive Pawnee tribe when she was young. As a result, Kicking Bird took her in as his own daughter. Moreover, her background reveals that not all Native Americans are bad and that many other tribes battled each other, not only the white man as it was portrayed in the previous decades of Western films. John takes Stands with a Fist with him and continues to search for the Sioux tribe.

Shortly after, he arrives at the Sioux village and a woman says "Wasichu". This word in the Sioux language has sometimes the "connotation of a greedy or dishonorable person, because many Sioux perceive white people as being rather greedy and dishonorable" ("Setting the Record Straight about Native Languages"). Moreover, this fact is true as many generals and traders deceived Native Americans and tricked them into selling their own land. Furthermore, the white man established his empire in the American East at first and later on expanded all over the American West in pursuit of gold, riches, buffalo trophies and land. Therefore, this word is a very authentic description of the white man in the nineteenth century. Using this word, *Dances with Wolves* shows that, once more, the film industry has broken the traditional stereotype of Native Americans as always being the bad guys.

In the Sioux village John carries the unconscious woman and says that she needs help. However, Wind in His Hair takes the woman and shows him to leave while dragging her away from him. Kicking Bird, however, is fascinated by John as he sees in him something good and noble. Therefore, he visits John in order to establish a friendly relationship. John welcomes the Sioux warriors and gives them some sugar and coffee. Moreover, he is starting to like Kicking Bird because he is patient and seems eager to communicate. During the second visit Kicking Bird gives John a buffalo hide. As a result, John writes something interesting in his journal: "Nothing I've been told about these people is correct. They are not beggars and thieves or the bogeymen they've been made out to be. They are polite guests with a familiar humor I enjoy" *(Dances with Wolves*). This is another scene that portrays Native Americans as good and friendly people.

Some later scenes show John in the Sioux village talking with Kicking Bird. Moreover, Stands with a Fist is invited, too, in order to break the language barrier between them as she knows English. After they have been introduced to each other John returns to his fort and says that he is happy to be back home. This could also be a stereotype of Native Americans by indirectly implying that the white man only feels safe in his own white home.

During that night, John is woken up by a buffalo herd and he immediately rides to the Sioux village. At first, he is treated as an enemy, but Kicking Bird stops them from harming

him. John then speaks the word "Tatanka", which means buffalo, and shows them where they are. Soon after, everybody treats him as a friend and the next day the whole Sioux tribe follows the tracks of the buffalo herd. However, the buffalos have been killed by white traders just for the price of their hides and tongues. This scene is not only authentic and accurate, but it also portrays the white man as being the bad guy.

At nightfall, the Sioux tribe prepares for the oncoming hunt by dancing and singing. John shows yet another sign of confusion as he is keeping his distance from the natives. He is sleeping alone outside the village because he still does not know where he belongs, although the Sioux have accepted him already.

The following scene shows John hunting buffalos together with his Sioux friends. During the hunt, he saves a Sioux youth from a charging buffalo by shooting it with his rifle. More and more he gets accustomed to their culture and eventually learns their language with the help of Stands with a Fist. However, this seems unnatural as a white woman teaches John the Sioux language. Hollywood likes to keep films interesting and in order to get the audience's attention, they often put in some love stories for good measure and *Dances with Wolves* is no different. By doing so, the focus shifts from Native Americans to the romantic relationship between John and Stands with a Fist, who eventually get married. As a result, the story of the Sioux and their life gets in a way belittled and is seen as less important: "This brought about much criticism at the release of the film as some felt there was a degree of racism involved and in fact this is a weak point in the script. While this could have theoretically occurred it is certainly less likely than Dunbar meeting a Native American woman and falling in love" ("Alan's Reviews").

Furthermore, Stands with a Fist tells Kicking Bird that she is actually happy living among the Sioux tribe, which is similar to the character of Debbie in *The Searchers*. Furthermore, she wears a long deer dress, her hair is all messed up and her face is dirty. This is another stereotype of Native Americans in which Hollywood describes them as being dirty and having messed up hair. However, all of the other Sioux in the film have clean faces and they wear their hair in long braids or loose.

By showing the Lakota Sioux the location of the buffalo, hunting them down with his rifle, and by saving one of the Sioux youth, John is more than welcome in their village. Therefore, he sits at the camp fire and the tribe urges him to tell about his buffalo hunt. As we can see, this is another scene portraying the life of Native Americans showing how storytelling is an important part of their everyday life. Moreover, John gives Wind in His Hair

his soldier vest, but the proud and brave Sioux warrior immediately gives him something, too, namely his decorative jewelry that he wears around his neck. Also, a warrior trades his hunting knife for John's soldier hat. This is a nice scene because it depicts one aspect of the Native American life; if you want something from someone else then you have to give him something in exchange, too.

As the Sioux warriors prepare for a war path against the hostile and rivaling Pawnee tribe in order to defend their families and land, John wants to ride with them. However, Kicking Bird asks him to stay and protect his family, which is also a very important and honorable thing to do. Those scenes are all welcome because they change the way the audience perceives Native Americans. They portray them as present-giving, family-caring, land-protecting, and honorable people.

A later scene shows the Pawnee attacking the Sioux tribe. However, the Sioux are well prepared because John returned to them with rifles that he stashed in his Fort Sedgwick. This scene has two significant meanings. Firstly, it shows that the white man is capable of helping and protecting Native Americans. The second meaning is linked to the first one; the white man is depicted as the hero and the natives as helpless children. Moreover, only with the help of John are natives able to survive any threat making them dependent of the white man.

John, now dressed as an Indian, returns to his fort to get his journal before the whole Sioux village moves to its winter camp. However, John's fort has been occupied by Union Army soldiers and as soon as they see John they shout "Indian" and open fire without any hesitation. They capture him while shooting his horse Cisco. They also beat John and order him to reveal the Sioux location, but John refuses to do so. This is actually another stereotypical image of natives that has been shown for so long, implying that the Indian has to be shot at sight. However, Wing in His Hair and some Sioux warriors kill the soldiers escorting John to the prison in Fort Hays thus saving him and returning him to the winter camp.

In the very last scene of *Dances with Wolves* John decides to leave the Sioux camp together with his wife Stands with a Fist. He leaves them because the white man will be looking for him and advises the tribe to move their camp, too. Eventually, Union Army soldiers arrive at their camp with the help of Pawnee trackers only to find it already deserted. Moreover, this Pawnee scene portrays Native Americans selling their own people out by joining the white man's army in order to hunt down their own kind. Lastly, the final scenes of

the film have a symbolic meaning, too, because they foreshadow the disappearance of the Plains Indians. Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* "depicted the grace and inner spirit of North America's first people . . . and the film production is being hailed by critics and Natives for its honest and effective portrayal of a society too often slandered by Hollywood's fairy-tale approach to aboriginal history" (Ross).

2.7. Native Americans in Films from 2000 onwards: *Skins*

Skins. Dir. Chris Eyre. 2002.

Skins is a film directed by Chris Eyre who is also famous for making the film *Smoke Signals* in 1998. However, the film *Skins* is also significant because it is "one of the very first motion pictures directed by, written by, and starring Native American talent" ("Skins"). Furthermore, *Skins* is similar to *Powwow Highway* in a number of ways. First of all, it is not a classic Western where white settlers battle against savage Indians as the setting is placed in modern times. Here, Native Americans are living on the fictional Beaver Creek Indian Reservation in South Dakota which resembles the actual Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Secondly, the lead roles are played by Native American actors such as Eric Schweig, Graham Greene, Gray Farmer, Noah Watts and Michelle Trush. This is of course a huge turning point in the presentation of Native Americans in film industry because now we have actual Native Americans playing Native American roles just as in *Smoke Signals* or *Powwow Highway*. Lastly, the story is told from the perspective of Native Americans and how they see themselves living on the reservation. *Skins* "won the 2003 IFP Independent Spirit Awards, and is considered a raw and realistic portrayal of life on a modern Indian reservation, a place where alcoholism is nine times the national average and Mount Rushmore is considered a blasphemous desecration of sacred mountains" (Lippert).

The story describes the relationship between Rudy and Mogie, two Sioux brothers living on a reservation where joblessness, alcoholism, mockery and violence are common. Just as in *Powwow Highway*, Mogie is a Vietnam War veteran who is struggling with his identity and trying to find his place in the world. This fact from *Skins* is symbolic and stereotypical as it shows that Native Americans fight the white man's battles only to earn for their living. Secondly, it also portrays natives as having no honor and loyalty towards their tribes because they have joined the "white enemy". In contrast, Buddy from *Powwow Highway* served the army, too, however, he deals with his problems by trying to help his native community. Mogie, on the other hand, is emotionally scared and turns to drinking. His younger brother Rudy is quite the opposite as he manages to become a law officer. Therefore, Mogie represents Native Americans who have countless problems such as poverty, alcoholism and lack of confidence, but Rudy represents all natives who managed to rise in the American society as lawmen, law officers, doctors and more.

Skins is not just another film about Native Americans, it is a film that depicts the real life of real Native Americans who have to deal with all sorts of hardships. However, hardships such as alcoholism and poverty are also accompanied by some mystical and spiritual stories. One of those stories tells about Iktomi, the trickster spider, that plays all sorts of tricks on someone. Brussat explains: "Native Americans told trickster tales about playful figures that did unmentionable things, were unruly and sexual, and spit in the face of tradition". Also, *Skins* is about "what happens when a trickster spirit takes hold of a serious and self-righteous Native American and propels him on a strange and spooky ride" ("Film Review: Skins"). Here, Rudy is the one who is being played by the trickster spirit. It happens for the first time when he was a child and a trickster spider had bitten him. Later on, Rudy is running after a suspect who is revealed to be the trickster spirit, but this time in the form of a young man. Suddenly, something dark awakens in Rudy as he follows this young man and beats him with a baseball bat. Furthermore, this is one of the most intriguing themes that *Skins* deals with. It depicts Rudy as a vigilante who pursues his own idea of justice. On top of that, he drains even more anger from the horrible and harsh conditions in the reservation. As an act of retaliation and fury, as well as because of the trickster spirit's influence, he burns down a liquor store as he does not want to see his fellow men suffer any longer from alcoholism.

Another dominant theme is the theme of the European expansion. Mount Rushmore represents the western expansion as America's founding fathers were carved into the mountain sacred to the Sioux. On the other hand, this monument reminds Native Americans of the European colonization and their aggression, the desecration of the sacred tribal grounds, the misery and poverty that is surrounding natives. Moreover, Mount Rushmore represents the U.S. government that has made Native Americans merely a shadow of their former self; natives have lost everything except their identity. Finally, *Skins* and *Smoke Signals* are both comic and tragic and they "paint a stark portrait of what happened when vast numbers of an entire race of people were systematically marginalized and, in many cases, destroyed in the name of, and for the purposes of, white expansionism" (Lippert).

2.8. Final Thoughts on the Stereotypes of Native Americans in the Film Industry

Hollywood is a huge film industry that has made countless films and all sorts of genres. However, one of the most interesting genres ever is the Western film. The Westerns portray the life of American settlers inhabiting the New World of North America. Those settlers are almost every time depicted as brave, noble and honest people who fight against the invading Native Americans of the Old West. This is the frontier life in which native tribes are described as savage and bloodthirsty warriors. Moreover, Hollywood has attributed to Native Americans many other negative traits through images of savage and ruthless killers, rapists, scalp collectors, kidnappers, thieves, relentless trackers, uncivilized and dirty, less intelligent, beggars.

However, Hollywood's most dangerous and disturbing stereotype of Native Americans is the following one - Native Americans are a disturbance, stepping stone and nuisance that needs to be gotten rid of because they hinder the development and settling of the white man; thus the best way to get rid of them is to kill every last one of them, as they are no human beings; they are animals. Good examples of that stereotype are the films *Stagecoach*, *The Searchers* and *Cheyenne Autumn*.

Furthermore, Hollywood created an iconic hero, one of the greatest film heroes of all time - John Wayne. He is the embodiment of all stereotypes and misconceptions that are associated with Native Americans in the film industry. His actions against the Indians are all violent and ruthless. One of the best examples is the grave scene from *The Searchers* where he shoots a dead Indian in the face. Furthermore, his actions are all excused by telling us that this is the right behavior. By killing many Indians, John Wayne embodied the idea of the unstoppable American. Native Americans, on the other hand, are the bad guys that stopped the "real" Americans from settling "their" own country.

The 1970s, however, marked a change of Native American stereotypes. *A Man Called Horse* is one of those films that actually created a new image of native tribes by portraying their everyday life and giving them human characteristics. In that film natives are described as social, family-caring, organized and village-protecting people. Although *A Man Called Horse* represents a remarkable progress in Hollywood's portrayal of Native Americans, some stereotypes have continued on such as the scalping and kidnapping.

Non–native actors playing Indian roles in film had to wear those headbands even though the Plains Indians did not wear headbands. The reason for that was that without

headbands their wigs would fall off during stunt scenes. As a result, the masses started to believe that all Native Americans really had those things on their heads. Another misrepresentation that Hollywood spread is the fact that all Indians wore feathered war bonnets. In fact, "the beautiful wide spreading, feathered war bonnets were developed by the Plains Indians. In the old days the bonnet was only worn on special occasions and it was highly symbolic. Its beauty was of secondary importance for its real value was in its power to protect the wearer" (*Soul Food Cafe*). Accordingly, Hollywood misused the symbolic meaning of Native American headwear in order to keep it simple by saying that all native tribes wear war bonnets. Another misconception is that it portrayed all Native Americans as living in the desert of the Southwest, although Native Americans lived on the whole continent.

Finally, films after the 1980s have continued to present Native Americans as real people, people with feelings, thoughts, values and beliefs. *Powwow Highway*, for example, shows the life on an Indian reservation and the relationship between the people living there. Also, it is set in modern times creating a feeling of familiarity, and it focuses on the future of Native Americans rather than on the past. Films such as *Dances with Wolves* and Michael Mann's *The Last of the Mohicans* continue to break the traditional stereotypes established in the beginning of the twentieth century by focusing more on the natives' culture, tradition and language. Moreover, they portray native tribes as being the good guys and the white men as being the bad guys. Additionally, many secondary and leading film roles are now played by Native American actors.

Although some stereotypes of Native Americans have remained or have a new form, it is an undeniable fact that the representation of Native Americans in film has dramatically changed; they are now represented as human beings just like everybody else living on the same planet Mother Earth.

3. Native American Stereotypes in Pop Culture

3.1. Stereotypes in Pop Culture

If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indian, he can live in peace...
Treat all men alike. Give them all the
same law. Give them all an even chance
to live and grow. All men were made by
the same Great Spirit Chief.
They are all brothers. The Earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it....
Let me be a free man, free to travel,
free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself, and I will obey every law, or submit to the penalty.

(Heinmot Tooyalaket, qtd. in "Native American Wisdom Quotes")

This wonderful wisdom quote by Heinmot Tooyalaket clearly shows that the Native Americans are full of understanding and aware of the white man's presence. They accepted the white man a long time ago and offered him peace, showing that Native Americans only want to live in peace and harmony with everyone. Furthermore, they want to be treated as equals to all other men who live on this planet for the Earth is the home of all people and they are all brothers. As equals, they should learn to accept each other and understand that they are all different - with a different culture and heritage, different looks, values and beliefs.

However, the most important thing is to accept the differences, as Heinmot Tooyalaket says. After accepting the differences we can create a society where everybody lives in peace and harmony, and has the freedom of choice. This freedom is as important as life itself because it gives people the free will to be what they are according to the principle "live and let live", letting others live their lives as they see fit. Unfortunately, Native Americans do not have this freedom as they used to have. They are mistreated and judged in a very negative, disrespectful and even destructive way.

One of the major reasons for that are the numerous stereotypes that were created by the film industry. In the first part of this paper we have seen that the film industry portrayed Native Americans as fierce warriors and savages, often depicting them as some less intelligent beings without any heart or soul, whose only purpose is to destroy and to be destroyed.

However, those are not the only stereotypes. There are other stereotypes out there that are more and more widespread, far more harmful and humiliating. Those stereotypes can be found throughout the pop culture in which we live and the most prominent ones are present in education, sports and comics industry.

3.1.1. Common Stereotypes among Children and the Youth

Children and all other young learners are constantly subject to the manipulation of the mainstream media and popular culture. They are also influenced the most because they have not yet fully gained the necessary knowledge to understand the world around them. Therefore, they will acquire the stereotypical images of Native Americans at an early age. For example, most children depict a Native American as someone wearing feathers or someone living in a tepee. Also, they associate Native Americans with Thanksgiving and the Pilgrims. Young learners will use such images mainly because they have learned them in school. *The Council on Interracial Books for Children* provides some good examples for the stereotypes in pop culture well established among the young population:

> Indians are often equated with "things". Alphabet cards say: "A" is for "apple", "B" is for "ball"…"I" is for "Indian". Pick a different word so Indian people are not associated with things. Also, when studying Native Americans focus on the various tribes, such as "Hopi, Apache or the Sioux". Lumping all Native Americans together does not allow children to see the diversity. There are separate nations and Native groups with different names, languages, and cultures. Watch out for portraits of Native groups as having few words (ugh, how). Be sensitive to statements such as "You act like a bunch of wild Indians", or "Sit like Indians". ("Stereotyping of Native Americans")

Furthermore, media such as films, video games or comic strips for example, have a huge impact on children because they easily shape the way how children perceive the world around them. In other words, a child may have never heard of Native Americans before, let alone seen a real living Native American. *The Media Awareness Network of Canada* has given us some statements that children and the youth have to be very careful about such as:

> Hollywood's portrayal of the American West essentially used Native tribes as a malignant presence to be wiped out or reined in, or depicted as a form of local "wildlife". Westerns and documentaries have tended to portray Natives in stereotypical terms: the wise elder, the aggressive drunk, the Indian princess, the loyal sidekick, obese and impoverished. These images have become known across North America. Portrayals of Native characters as primitive, criminal, violent, rapists, deceptive, lower intellect, or as passive and full of childlike obedience, extended to

> TV, movies, novels, radio talk shows and comics. ("Stereotypes of Native Americans in North America")

These images do not present children with an accurate portrayal of Native people. In other words, the diversity of Native American tribes would take years to study and, even then would not be covered entirely. For this reason, it is important that teachers study Native Americans in a way that allows children to see the diversity and uniqueness of the individual tribes. Moreover, it is important to teach our children that Native Americans are not mere characters from the past; they are alive, they are among us, and they are human beings just like everybody else. Therefore, by spreading the truth and learning about the true identity of Native Americans, and by eradicating all established stereotypes, children and adults alike will learn to treat someone who is different from us with respect.

3.2. Representation and Stereotypes of Native Americans in Education

Another important aspect of spreading racial prejudices and stereotypes is the educational system. First of all, the educational system is part of the pop culture in general because everything we learn in school is in a way reflected on the society we live in. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that education is very important in order to successfully progress in life. This education that is vital for our future is gained only in schools. Schools will provide us with the information and knowledge we need in order to do something with our lives. Therefore, it is essential to be educated and that the information we hear at school is of vital importance to us, so that we can put that knowledge to a good use.

However, education is not just about gaining knowledge, both practical and theoretical; it is also about understanding the world around us. For example, in school we learn things such as geography. Geography teaches us the names of the states, landmarks, people's habitats and so on. Without geography and maps it would be hard to understand where Native Americans live today. Therefore, geography tells us that for the most part Native Americans live in reservations. One example are the Cherokee who currently reside in "all or part of fourteen countries of what is now the northeastern portion of the state of Oklahoma. There is also a Cherokee reservation in North Carolina for the Eastern Band of Cherokees" (Conley). Likewise, history is important, too. History teaches us about cultural, ethnic, technological and social achievements throughout human history. By acknowledging history we, "as human beings, can always look on the past, examine the present, and prepare for the future of humanity by sharing our cultural stories" (Pewewardy, "Renaming Ourselves"). This means that we have to accept history as it is and stick only to the facts. Moreover, in order to understand the present and to prepare for a better tomorrow, we have to know the whole truth about past events. This also implies that we do not have the right to change the historical facts as we see fit.

Sadly enough, history is in many cases written by the winners that actually cover up all historical facts. The reasons for such a distortion of truth are mainly political or in some cases to justify the actions of the winners. On the other hand, the losers or the defeated are completely ignored and everything they have to say is irrelevant and not true. A good example of this are the numerous treaties that tricked Native Americans to actually sell their lands, or the facts that Native Americans were forced to leave their lands. The following

Native American saying about the white man's warfare sums up such a one-sided presentation of history:

> When a white army battles Indians and wins,
> it is called a great victory, but if they lose,
> it is called a massacre.
>
> (Chiksika, Shawnee, qtd. in "American Indian Quotes")

This Native American quote tells of the American hypocrisy, deception and the American desire to cover up the truth. For example, history books only tell us about the great generals of the Wild West and their heroic deeds, such as Lt. Col. G. A. Custer. "History describes Custer as a headstrong impulsive professional soldier who developed his reputation as an 'Indian fighter' for leading bloody campaigns against Native Americans" (Cook). Moreover, the future generations and many children alike learn in school that Custer was a true American hero who was fighting for a safe and peaceful Wild West. However, every coin has two sides; nobody teaches us that he started those bloody campaigns first and that he wanted to deprive Native Americans of their land by force, by pursuing and killing them recklessly.

In 1868 Custer attacked the Cheyenne, whose chief was Black Kettle, and the conflict is known as the Washita Massacre. Another example is The Sand Creek Massacre that started only because Native Americans, the Cheyenne and Arapaho, refused to sell their lands and to settle on reservations. Eventually, Colonel John Chivington ordered his army to attack the Native Americans, who only sought to live in peace with the white man. Chivington also ordered to take no prisoners and "to kill and scalp all, big and little, and - despite the white flag of truce flying - Chivington and his men killed and then scalped ninety-eight Cheyenne women and children, mutilating their bodies" ("United States History").

Therefore, those two historical events, as history books teach them, will only lead children to believe that Native Americans were actually bad guys who savaged the lands of their ancestors and that the only way to deal with those savages was to get rid of them. Moreover, with this negative representation of Native Americans children will most likely act very unfriendly or even aggressively towards any Native American they encounter, even if they have not met any Native American personally.

Another historical event that contributes to the stereotypical view of Native Americans is the discovery of America. Most history books tell us that in 1492 the great explorer Christopher Columbus discovered America as well as the indigenous people that had been living there: "the year 1492 seems to have triggered the 'Western world' mythology that has come to dominate the entire globe's economics, politics, and academics, imposing itself as the natural, unquestionable norm of human existence" (Pewewardy, "Renaming Ourselves"). On top of that, in October each year people all over the United States celebrate Christopher Columbus, who discovered America and opened new trade routes.

However, the problem is that at school children are manipulated at an early age by all those history books that only tell them what the educational system of the United States wants them to know. They only learn facts such as that Christopher Columbus "discovered" America and that he also "discovered" Native Americans as well as that they lived primitively in the woods and that they had barely clothes on them. Moreover, this is also the reason why the word *discover* is put in quotes: by learning that Christopher Columbus "discovered" Native Americans, children will most likely refer to Native Americans as "things". With those facts in their minds children form the image of all indigenous people at an early age. As a result, it is very likely that whenever they encounter Native Americans they will immediately connect them to all sorts of stereotypes and thus humiliate as well as discriminate them, and even view them as less intelligent, wild or some sort of lesser beings.

Furthermore, according to Pewewardy, in order to change the stereotypes and attitude towards Native Americans, every single person has the right to know what actually happened in the past: "students in schools cannot be expected to understand the realities of modern American life and the prospect for future generations without understanding the popular images of the past and the present" ("Renaming Ourselves"). Therefore, children and everybody else have to stop thinking for a moment about Christopher Columbus' bravery, courage and perseverance and look at his discovery in a more detailed way.

First of all, we know now that Columbus never set foot on North America and that he landed on a small island in the Caribbean. On this island he encountered a pacifist race, the Taino people, and for Native Americans, the world after 1492 would never be the same. Columbus started to enslave all of those indigenous people, "transported them to Spain, put them to work in mines and plantations, and his marauding band hunted Indians for sport and profit – beating, raping, torturing, killing, and then using the Indian bodies as food for their hunting dogs" (Weatherford). Therefore, the white man's first encounter with Native

Americans was bloody and cruel; it was all about abusing and killing all natives.

According to Pewewardy, Columbus' discovery of the New World marked the beginning of the stereotypes of Native Americans as well as their everlasting enslavement and manipulation by the white man as he robbed Native Americans of their freedom and free will ultimately leading to their doom:

> This illusion of Western world superiority has functioned implicitly and at times brutally explicitly, to facilitate the conquest and enslavement of native peoples, the exploitation of their labor and the natural resources, and the genocidal destruction of whole cultures and peoples. Christopher Columbus sets this modern framework of 500 years of colonization of the Indigenous Peoples of North America and defines the outer limits of that legacy, which is the total destruction of Indigenous culture. ("Renaming Ourselves")

Unfortunately, those are just some of the facts that many children do not learn from their history books. Those facts are often omitted from popular American history books and courses because Columbus is considered a hero by many, even today. However, it is important to stick to the historical facts and tell the whole truth about Christopher Columbus, Gen. Philip Sheridan, Colonel John Chivington and Lt. Col. G. A. Custer in order fully explain the position of Native Americans in the past as well as in the present.

3.3. Native Americans as Sports Team Mascots

So far we have been introduced to many stereotypes promoted by the mainstream media and the educational system. As a part of the educational system and pop culture, team sports mascots and logos are also to blame for the stereotyping of Native Americans. The term *mascot* is defined as:

> a term for any person, animal, or object thought to bring luck. Mascots are also used as fictional, representative spokespeople for consumer products. In the world of sports, mascots are also used for merchandising. Often the choice of mascot reflects a desired quality; a common example of this is the 'fighting spirit,' in which a competitive nature is personified by warriors or predatory animals. ("Mascot")

As a result, many sport clubs and schools take the names and trades of Native Americans and incorporate them in their teams without thinking what problems this may stir up. For example, some teams use generic Native American names, such as Indians, Braves, or Chiefs, while others adopt specific tribal names like Seminoles, Cherokees, or Apaches. Moreover, Eagles, Tigers, Cougars, Warriors, Lions, Panthers, Indians, and Bears are the most common sports team mascots' names.

Interestingly, the animal names used as mascots are also the names that have been hunted down throughout the centuries. Hunters killed those animals because of their fur and traded them for money. It is even more disturbing to see names such as Warriors and Indians as mascot names because they, too, have been hunted down just like animals. Native Americans have been shot countless times in countless Western films before, and now they are being hunted down in sports. In other words, the stereotypical image of Native Americans as animals has only experienced a change in the setting; first it was the frontier, now it is the sports stadium.

The article "American Indian Sports Team Mascots" explains the continuing exploitation of Native Americans

> Native Americans have been subject to devastating diseases, lies, deceptions, broken treaties and massacres at places like the Great Swamp and Gnadenhutten, Sand Creek and Wounded Knee. Furthermore, they have been subject to forced relocations, stolen lands, and discrimination of every kind, and they have been deprived of Native

> languages, religions, and cultural beliefs. Now, Native Americans are placed on a par with wild animals that also serve as symbols, mascots, nicknames, and logos for America's sporting fun and games. ("American Indian Sports Team Mascots")

Again, this mockery is another blow to the Native Americans' dignity, pride and identity, which the American society constantly uses to disrespect, belittle and humiliate the indigenous people of America. As a result, many people who have never seen a Native American before will most likely view them as "animals", and even the ones who have already met a Native American may change their attitude towards them in a very negative and disrespectful way. Whenever someone talks about Native Americans, they will immediately picture the mascot of a sports team in their mind and laugh because many of them are portrayed in a very cartoonish way. This all goes to show that Native Americans are subject to mockery and that their purpose is only to entertain the crowds.

According to Pewewardy, the portrayal of Native Americans in sports has many forms. "Indian mascots exhibit either idealized or comical facial features, and 'native' dress ranging from body length feathered to more subtle fake buckskin attire or skimpy loincloths" ("The Deculturalization"). Moreover, some sports teams and supporters use some Native American trades such as tomahawks, feathers, face paints, symbolic drums and pipes. However, they also make use of Native American behaviors, such as the "tomahawk chop", dances, chants, drumbeating, war-whooping, and symbolic scalping. As a result, sports teams and supporters alike use Native American trades and behaviors in order to strengthen the battle spirit of their teams and to frighten the rivaling teams.

However, the main reason why face paints, feathers or drums are used are the well established stereotypes promoted by the mainstream culture. Native Americans are still stereotyped as fearsome and bloodthirsty savages and warriors that scare their victims with war chants, tomahawks and other fear evoking elements. However, this use of Native American trades is not only an imitation, but also a mockery that belittles all items of great spiritual significance. Many Native American tribes "painted their bodies and faces for rituals, dances and for battle. The designs painted were believed to hold magic powers for protection. Colors and images were also used to make the warriors, chiefs and braves to look more ferocious" ("War Paint"). However, teams and fans trivialize face paints and use them only for entertainment.

Many mascots, such as Chief Illiniwek, wear huge and impressive war bonnets in order to impress the audience and to intimidate the opposing sports team. However, a war bonnet was a very honorable headdress and not everybody could wear it; it had to be earned through brave deeds. Moreover, "hand crafted with tall feathers and skillfully decorated, this headgear was considered something of great honor and great power was attributed to them" (Thomas). As a result, sport team mascots dishonor the war bonnet as well the sacred feathers thus belittling the cultural and religious legacy of Native Americans. Pewewardy explains:

> Native Americans would never have associated the sacred practices of becoming a warrior with the hoopla of a pep rally, half - time entertainment, or being a side-kick to cheerleaders. Once again, the use Native American mascots makes a mockery of Indigenous cultural identity and causes many young Indigenous people to feel shame about who they are as human beings, because racial stereotypes play an important role in shaping a young person's consciousness. ("The Deculturalization of Indigenous Mascots in U.S. Sports Culture")

Many Native American activists and groups have fought for their rights in order to prevent the use of their names and trades in sports teams which have frequently made fun of their Native American identity. As a result, "many school team names have been revised to reflect current sensibilities, though professional teams like the Kansas City Chiefs, the Atlanta Braves, the Cleveland Indians, Chicago Blackhawks and the Washington Redskins continue. Also, some controversial upper-level Native American team mascots such as Chief Noc–A Homa and Chief Illiniwek have been discontinued; others like Chief Wahoo and Chief Osceola and Renegade remain" ("Stereotypes of Native Americans in North America"). The following statements are taken from the web page of AISTM (American Indian Sports Team Mascots), in which many Native Americans and students alike have given their opinion on the use of Native American sports team mascots:

> I am not a sports team mascot. With all due respect to the teams who want to honor me by having a Native American mascot, it's outdated. It's the wrong way.
>
> Billy Mills, Oglala Lakota - U.S. gold - medal winner in the 10,000 meters at the 1964 Olympics and inspirational spokesman.

> We simply chose an Indian as the emblem. We could have just as easily chosen any uncivilized animal.
>
> Eighth - grade student writing about his school's mascot.

> The ridicule, mockery and utter racism Native Americans are subject to because of the use of Indian mascots are intolerable.
>
> Tex Hall - President of National Congress of American Indians.

> People have a tendency to try to make us different. We're not. We're just like all other high school kids.
>
> Chris Dunshee - Principal of Red Lake High School, Minnesota.

However, many people are still blind and manipulated by the mainstream media and many schools and sports teams continue to use Native American names and mascots. By doing so, they still continue to mock the Native American culture and identity. However, people often do not realize how offensive mascots can be and see nothing wrong in their use. For example, Jim Arganbright, Athletic director at Coshocton H.S., Coshocton, Ohio, which uses an "Indian head" doormat to compliment its ethnic slur nickname, stated: "We don't view it as looking down on the race. . . We're not trying to make light of anyone or certainly not ridiculing anyone" (*American Indian Sports Team Mascots*). Similarly, Sam Cook, Principal of Watkins Memorial H.S. Pataskala, Ohio, declared: "The high school's mascot is a student dressed in a buckskin outfit who wears a mask with a big nose, large lips, large eyes, big cheeks and long, black hair. If we thought it was offensive, we wouldn't do it" (*American Indian Sports Team Mascots*).

As we can see, Native American mascots are harmful and offensive not only because they are often negative, but also because they remind Native Americans of how the mainstream media looks down on their identity. Furthermore, those mascots reduce hundreds of Indigenous tribal members to generic cartoon characters. Because of that "most children in America do not have the faintest idea that Native Americans are real human beings" (Pewewardy, "The Deculturalization"). The use of Native American names and trades in sports thus leads to "subjective feelings, such as inferiority, which are an integral part of consciousness, and work together with the objective reality of poverty and deprivation to shape a young person's worldview" (Pewewardy, "The Deculturalization").

3.4. Native Americans and Comics

"A comic book is a narrative artwork in the form of separate panels that represent individual scenes, often accompanied by dialog, usually in word balloons, emblematic of the comic book art form, as well as including brief descriptive prose" ("Comic Book"). The very first comics such as *Famous Funnies* from 1933 had funny dialogues and cartoonish characters. People liked those comics because they provided them with fun and entertainment and it was a good way to kill time. However, over the years comic books have evolved into more serious artworks dealing with even more serious issues such as war and politics.

Moreover, "comics have delivered a diverse but stereotypical sampling of minority characters, including Native Americans" ("Comic Book"). As a result, the mainstream media have used comics as a new way to promote stereotypes and racial discrimination of Native Americans, mainly because millions of people like to read them, especially the younger population, thus ultimately leading to an even more widespread and stereotyped depiction of Native Americans.

The influence of comics on popular culture is undoubtedly big. First of all, there are still many people who have never seen a Native American before, and it is very likely that their first encounter with a Native American may be in the fictional world - through a comic book. While reading those stereotyped comics, people will mostly get negative impressions of Native Americans because those comics represent indigenous people of America only as savages, a wild bunch and fierce warriors. Native Americans are regularly portrayed as being stubborn, volatile, ill-mannered and as being too proud, almost arrogant.

Native American characters are also stereotypically illustrated in comic books as characters wearing feathers in their hair and face paints, as well as wielding tomahawks and bows. However, comics also depict some positive characteristics of Native Americans such as strength, speed, stamina and sturdiness. Although those traits are positive and deserve respect, there is not much respect for Native Americans as human beings at all. In other words, Native Americans in comics are only stripped down to those characteristics, without exhibiting any other human behavior such as love, passion, faith, or friendship. Comic books neglect the fact that Native Americans have far more character than meets the eye, and that they are not just warriors; they are human beings, too. Furey explains: "For the most part, Native Americans are portrayed in a less than favorable light. The concepts of the wild savage, shamanism and mysticism are the most prominent concepts in the nation's culture, and comic writers use

those concepts because it saves them the burden of creating a more complex Native American character" ("Native Americans in Comics").

There are many Native American heroes in comics that embody those stereotypical images, for example Silver Fox (Native Canadian, from *X - Men*), Little Raven (Sioux, from *Batman*), Elisa Maza (Hopi, from *Gargoyles*), Warpath (Apache, from *X - Men*), and Wyatt Wingfoot (Keewazi, from *Fantastic Four*), to name just a few. As we can see, all of the characters have Native American names that refer either to names of animals or to some physical attributes. For example, the Native American character Forge from the *X - Men* comics, is a mutant with an unsurpassed brilliance in technology as well as a weapon specialist. Here again, the Native American in comics is presented as someone who is good with weapons.

Although Forge is a Native American of the Cheyenne nation, he primarily relies on his technological knowledge and forgets about his Native American past, along with the fact that he used to be a medicine man. Furthermore, Forge joins the army and serves in the Vietnam War. During this war "his comrades are killed by enemy troops and in anger, he uses their spirits to summon a band of demons to destroy the opposition" ("Forge"). Moreover, Forge orders a B - 52 bombing on his position in order to send the summoned demons back to the underworld. However, Forge pays a huge price – he loses his right leg and his right hand.

Again, Forge's story tells us that Native Americans are depicted as brave warriors, since Forge risks his own life for his fallen comrades, but they are also depicted as warriors with mystical abilities that allow them to summon spirits.

Another Native American character is Thunderbird, who comes from the world of the *X - Men* comics, just as Forge. He is born into an Apache tribe and his real name is John Proud Star. As a teenager, Proud Star discovers that he "possesses the mutant abilities of superhuman senses, strength, speed, stamina, and sturdiness" ("Thunderbird"). Later on, he joins the Vietnam War and eventually joins the *X – Men* team. However, Thunderbird turns out to be so "volatile and ill mannered that he constantly disrupts the team's synchronization. He often finds himself going head to head with Cyclops, the appointed leader of the *X – Men*" ("Thunderbird"). Furthermore, during a mission Thunderbird refuses to get off of a falling plane. Eventually, the plane explodes and he dies because of his stubbornness.

In conclusion, the depiction of John Proud Star is as stereotypical as his name; he represents Native Americans as being stubborn and as people who take too much pride in themselves. Moreover, he represents Native Americans as individuals who are volatile and who like to oppose the government and authority. Finally, the character of Thunderbird clearly tells us that Native Americans are doomed to fall because of their stubbornness. This could also be symbolic, because it means that Native Americans have to accept the American government and their laws, in order to have a future in the American society.

Although these characters are fictional, they are based on real stereotypes that the mainstream media established. There are countless readers and fans of the comics, many of whom will get negative impressions of Native Americans and eventually confuse the fictional Native Americans with the real ones.

Conclusion

This paper attempted to critically discuss film industry as well as pop culture that have shaped the way how Native Americans have been viewed throughout the twentieth century until today. As a result, countless stereotypes and misconceptions have been established primarily telling lies about America's original inhabitants. They have made the audiences and masses believe in a false reality, attributing Native Americans with very negative and disturbing traits, portraying them as thieves, rapists, kidnappers, beggars, less intelligent beings, relentless trackers and even saying that they are not human beings at all. However, the most common images of Native Americans are those of wild savages, bloodthirsty killers and scalp collectors.

The stereotyping of American Indians started with their first encounter with white settlers five hundred years ago when they were attributed many negative, cruel and mocking characteristics. Ever since, Native Americans have fought against those images and stereotypes. The white man never even tried to understand native tribes let alone accept them as equal human beings. However, the 1970s and especially 1990s marked a change in the stereotypes of Native Americans. The films started portraying Native Americans as real people - people with feelings, thoughts, values and beliefs. It was a revolutionary turning point in Hollywood portrayal of Native Americans. Still, some stereotypes of Native Americans have remained or have a new form even in the twenty-first century, but it is an undeniable fact that the representation of Native Americans has dramatically changed over the years.

However, the negative images established by the film industry have been used by other media such as team sports mascots, history books, comic books, video games and commercials. They have all continued Hollywood's legacy of stereotypes only to make profit, entertain the masses, and finally, to mentally destroy the real Native Americans. Native Americans in the past were ruthlessly hunted down and killed, deceived into selling their land, and moved to reservations by brute force. Any kind of freedom or free will was taken away from them.

Nowadays, "mental" weapons such as commercials, sports team mascots or comics are used to damage Native Americans and their identity. As a result, the once proud and noble indigenous nations have become homeless, alcoholics, jobless and they still live in poverty.

Today's Native Americans are isolated, made fun of, belittled, ignored and almost forgotten, all because of the mass-produced images that have shaped their lives. They have been turned into myths, stories and legends so that their identity can be interpreted and portrayed as the mainstream media sees fit.

In the past Native Americans fought against the invading white man. Those fights, however, were fights for the sacredness of their land and their cultural identity. Five hundred years later, Native Americans still fight for their identity and dream of a better and just future for their children and the future generations:

> And when the last Red Man shall have perished, and the memory of my tribe shall have become a myth among the White Men, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe. Let him be just and deal kindly with my people, for the dead are not powerless. Dead, did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds. ("Chief Seattle's 1854 Oration")

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