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### Mainstream perspectives in "Indian Prince" by Trevino Brings Plenty

At first, "Indian Prince" comes off as an obvious list of stereotypes. One of the ways that "Indian Prince" talks back to these mainstream representations of native people is by its effects as an oral poem. My analysis of "Indian Prince" involves a breakdown of the visual and oral aspects of the poem. It is necessary to break down both of these components and look at the individual themes that are related to the mainstream media's negative image of aboriginals because the media has a way of misrepresenting aboriginals. By this I mean that several groups of first nation's people are generalized into one broad category that functions to represent natives in North America. These categories are encouraged by the mainstream use of stereotypes, and Craig Proulx helps explain this in *Reclaiming Aboriginal Justice, Identity, and Community* by acknowledging that

Stereotypes allow one group to see another as they want or expect to see them, not necessarily as they are. Stereotypes encourage us to oversimplify and ignore complexity and contradictions that might prompt us to challenge the status quo.

Through using stereotypes, people believe that particular behaviours are timeless and inevitable. (59)

The mainstream North American perspective of natives is discussed throughout this paper in relation to both the oral and visual components of "Indian Prince." It is through the combination of spoken word and visual poetry that Trevino Brings Plenty effectively challenges mainstream North American stereotypes about aboriginal men.

A large portion of this paper is dedicated to the analysis of stereotypes about First Nations individuals and culture in "Indian Prince." These stereotypes dominate the film representation of native men. One aspect of stereotyping that Trevino Brings Plenty focuses on in "Indian Prince" is the targeting of native masculinity from a mainstream North American view. In relation to the film *Reel Injun*, directed by Neil Diamond and colleagues, critic Frank Deer addresses the way that North American popular culture misrepresents native men as less powerful, less capable, and foolish in comparison to white people and native women. In "Reel Injun = Hollywood et les Indiens," Deer points out that, "As Diamond shows with numerous examples from the era of silent movies to the mid-century westerns of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood, the stereotypical Indian was a Plains Indian who wore large feather headdresses, rode horses, consumed buffalo meat and demonstrated a sort of warrior spirit." This is only one of the ways that native men are portrayed in "Indian Prince," most noticeably by the "artist, singer, dancer, poet Indian" stereotype. This image also suggests something about the rest of the stereotypes used against native men. Many of these negative images have been used as a way to keep native men one step behind white men at all times. Additionally, Sierra Adare explains that these stereotypes do in fact affect the ability of native men to

succeed in some communities: “negative ‘Indian’ stereotypes do physical, mental, emotional, and financial harm to First Nations individuals.” Recent statistics demonstrate how difficult it is for native men to get employment. According to Statistics Canada,

Even before the 2008–2009 recession, Aboriginal people—North American Indian (or First Nations people), Métis and Inuit—had a harder time finding work and faced higher unemployment than non-Aboriginal people. The gap widened following the downturn, as Aboriginal people aged 15 and older (excluding those living on reserves or in the territories) experienced sharper declines in employment rates than non-Aboriginal people did.

This summary of North American Aboriginal people shows that there has been a downside to being an aboriginal who is trying to find employment in comparison to a non-aboriginal who is in need of a job. The portrayal of native men in the mainstream media and culture persists as a racist and retrogressive past and present, and this portrait is related to Adare’s point that with financial setbacks, emotional and mental distress is inevitable.

Trevino Brings Plenty himself insists that he created “Indian Prince” out of frustration with other native men in his community. He said as much to me in an email message:

I hope this helps. This idea of the Indian Prince video started as a joke. It was a conversation my co-workers and I had about family members and community members. We just listed stuff off that we have encountered with negative lifestyles and life choices; it was more out of frustration.

This suggests something about Trevino's use of stereotypes; perhaps, natives also use mainstream stereotypes to project negative images on other native people in order to make a point about such images. In doing so, natives who use mainstream stereotypes to describe fellow natives could be trying to reclaim the identity that North Americans project on them. In *Reclaiming Aboriginal Justice, Identity, and Community*, Craig Proulx addresses the use of stereotypes which work to reclaim First Nations' identity: "Some Aboriginal people are becoming adept at taking the images and stereotypes used against them and contesting or flipping them around to make statements of personal identity" (63). Proulx's explanation of "how Aboriginal individuals and peoples construct their identities, how non-Aboriginal peoples construct these identities, and how these constructions operate within a system of differences based upon stereotypes" (62) is a possible explanation of what Trevino Brings Plenty is suggesting with his use of stereotypes in "Indian Prince." Proulx also mentions that "This 'representation' entails the recognition of, and defiance against, the processes of subjectification based on stereotypes" (63), which is exactly what Trevino does by being a native author of a video about stereotypical images of natives.

The stereotypes listed in "Indian Prince" suggest the following behaviours: laziness, selfishness, and foolishness. These are only a few images of native people that mainstream North America projects and views as negative. They are applicable to Trevino Brings Plenty's own personal description of this kind of man. In an email with Trevino, he explained to me his conception of the Indian prince:

The idea of the Indian Prince is that guy in the community who can do horrible things and still be regarded in high esteem. How much bad behavior is accepted in

the community is amazing. The Indian Prince for me is the trickster; a cautionary tale.

It seems that Trevino intended to make a list of characteristics that he has encountered in other native men, but the list is clearly exaggerated out of his frustration. At the same time, Trevino acknowledges that “There is an element of truth to stereotypes. It’s something that we have to be aware of” (Plenty). This idea of natives who use mainstream stereotypes against other native people brings up an important point about the context in which stereotypes are used. If a native uses stereotypes, are they using them in a non-racist way? Can these stereotypes then be perceived as merely complaints? One of my overarching questions is whether some of these images are even perceived as stereotypes to other natives when used in a native context? This issue will be addressed in more depth when I explore the narrator in “Indian Prince.”

While analyzing the stereotypes in “Indian Prince” it is also important to explore the meaning behind them and find out where these images came from. Some of the stereotypes in the poem can instantly be interpreted as racist, limiting generalizations about natives. The stereotype “artist, drummer, singer, dancer, poet Indians” is an obvious example. With this stereotype, we generally know that the creation of this image is the product of the colonial romanticization of native peoples. Furthermore, in a review by Stephanie Gordon, she reiterates Scott Vickers’ belief about images of the native: “Vickers notes that the image of the Indian was, with few exceptions, created by the white author and artist; in other words, the white image of Native Americans is the one that has influenced the public consciousness” (106), a statement which confirms my former point, that the image of the native as an “artist, drummer, singer, dancer, poet

Indian” has been fabricated by the mainstream overgeneralization of native individuals in relation to the visual, oral, creative, and musical aspects of First Nations’ culture. Other stereotypes in the poem aren’t as direct, however, so I think that some of these should be analyzed.

The stereotypes “just reggae Indians” and “18 money Indians” resonated with me. I chose to research these particular stereotypes because their meaning isn’t obvious to me and I was wondering what this visual oral poem is suggesting by choosing them.

Since I am already part of a mainstream North American culture, I thought that it was relevant to begin this research with my own common knowledge. Already, I associated the ‘just reggae Indian’ image with a mellow, free spirited person. I associate marijuana with reggae because it makes me think of Bob Marley, who was renowned for smoking a lot of pot. My next step was to search for answers on Google, where reggae is described as a type of Jamaican dance music which is known for promoting cannabis use. There were peace signs in the image section of ‘reggae’ on Google search. All of this gave me the impression that the ‘just reggae Indian’ stereotype is an American-fabricated image of a native pot-head who doesn’t take life seriously. The man in “Indian Prince” is depicted this way. He is represented as zoned out like a pot smoker and lazy, just as a person who doesn’t care about much would be.

At the point of the poem where the female’s voice says “one of those just reggae Indians,” her tone of voice changes at ‘just reggae.’ It sounds like she is emphasizing the mellowness that is often associated with the term ‘reggae,’ which creates an even more powerful image of a “just reggae Indian”. The narrator’s change in tone forces us

to perceive the man as mellow and slow, just as she sounds when she pronounces 'reggae.' This is understood as a negative image because native people are often associated with laziness and substance abuse. Another line in the poem, "One of those inappropriate spending perk cap Indians" might be suggesting drug use to the point of feeling numb or mellow which is associated with the "just reggae" image. These negative images might be especially pertinent to native people because in North America, a number of natives are unemployed, and so mainstream media and culture insists on the belief that First Nations people who live off government assistance spend their spare time being lazy, using drugs/alcohol, and passing out. As long as these stereotypes persist, it will continue to be difficult for native people to find employment and achieve other equal rights. Daniel Wilson discusses this perpetuating cycle in "The Income Gap Between Aboriginal Peoples and the Rest of Canada"

Aboriginal peoples are among the poorest in Canada. As this paper reveals, Aboriginal peoples also experience far greater income inequality than the rest of Canadians. They experience significantly higher rates of unemployment and lower rates of educational attainment than the rest of Canadians. And they experience higher rates of suicide, substance abuse, imprisonment and other social ills. This comes at enormous cost, both social and economic, to Aboriginal peoples and to Canada generally. (6)

Wilson's argument that the inequality between Canadian aboriginals and non-aboriginals leads to negative outcomes coincides with the stereotypes in Trevino's "Indian Prince" that mainstream media presents as true. Although there is some truth to



stereotypes, they are not necessarily true for the entire First Nations population and this needs to be acknowledged.

Just as important, I wondered what “18 money Indian” might mean. Originally, I thought that this line said “A-Team money Indian” so in the beginning I researched the meaning of ‘A-team’ on Google. I read about many different understandings of this image and I began to second guess my interpretation of the line. Since “Indian Prince” didn’t come with a script, I believed there was a chance that I had misheard the line. Whether I was interpreting it correctly or not, I assumed that there must be a negative connotation to this stereotype since the rest of the images he uses have negative overtones. At a certain point, I also felt like I was reading too much into this stereotype and that this image could easily be something that Trevino made up out of a personal joke that only makes sense to him. With this image, I really felt like I was projecting my mainstream perspective onto Trevino’s phrase and that it might not have anything to do with what I was gathering information about. I asked Trevino what he meant by the phrase “A-Team money Indian,” and he replied that I had in fact misinterpreted it. What it actually says is “18 money Indian,” which Trevino described as “when enrolled members of a tribe have monies they receive when they reach the age of 18.” Now that Trevino had clarified it for me, this was no longer the obscure image that I thought it was, but it is still important to consider why he used this phrase in his video. I thought that the “18 money Indian” stereotype went along with the “Can’t do wrong Indian prince Indians,” where Trevino might be referring to his own observation of adolescent boys in his community who received money and didn’t spend it responsibly or didn’t appreciate

it. This sense of entitlement stems from the idea that the man in the film is an “Indian prince” who “can’t do wrong.”

The stereotypical images in “Indian Prince” cluster native men into one category as if they all have universal identities, behaviours and culture. Significantly, the list doesn’t mention any specific names. Instead, each line in the poem refers to the plural term ‘Indians.’ This way, it’s easier to apply the stereotypes to all native men without considering the plurality and complexity of native people. It is through this colonial behaviour that mainstream North American media is able to project one specific native masculine identity as typical. Because of this, the mainstream media has polluted our image of native men. Such pollution is a problem because

These ideas are used to exclude Aboriginal people from access to the “good life” that non-Aboriginals enjoyed and currently enjoy. Each stereotype has a complete colonial discursive foundation underpinning it. These stereotypes refer to specific bodily, temporal, or labour characteristics that are integral elements of colonial civilizing discourse. (Proulx 60)

This is the process I refer to when I make my point that mainstream media’s image of native men has taken over any realistic and fair conceptions of native men that do actually exist.

A not so obvious stereotypical aspect of “Indian Prince” is the background music. This music seems designed to conform to the “artist, singer, dancer, poet Indians” image. The music can be described as a pounding drum beat that continues throughout the entire video except at one point. The pause occurs when the narrator says, “One of those can’t do wrong Indian Prince Indians.” Such a pause at this point makes the title

of the poem, “Indian Prince” even more obvious. Additionally, the idea of the Indian prince can be interpreted from a mainstream North American stance as a stereotype because of what the poem says about the male Indian prince who acts in the video and about all of the images that the narrator projects onto him. For instance, the actor’s appearance coincides with “One of those sweatpants or basketball shorts every day wear Indians,” and “One of those watch cable eat all the food Indians,” which is a powerful way of emphasizing the Indian prince as a stereotype and as an actual person.

The pausing drum beat might also be related to the broken image that the static creates throughout the video. The static, which makes the video image fade in and out, might be read as a metaphor for the bad communication that exists between the aboriginal and North American mainstream contexts. The pause in the drum beat may also be viewed as a symbol for the broken relationship between indigenous culture and mainstream media. Essentially, this relationship can be thought of as ‘paused’ or ‘stopped’ because of the unbearable amount of wrong information that persists about native culture and individuals.

I also think that it is important to explore how and why Trevino Brings Plenty uses the narrator as a tool to project mainstream culture’s view on native men. The video does not suggest that the actor can hear the female narrator’s voice or that he can see her. I was under the impression that since the man in the video can’t hear her voice, Trevino might be suggesting that the native man has less power or authority over an outsider’s words and use of stereotypes. By using a female’s voice, Trevino alters the experience that this video would have created if the voice reading the poem was a

man's. There are two distinct ways of interpreting the use of the female narrator in "Indian Prince."

If the narrator's voice is understood as that of a non-native woman then perhaps it could be argued that Trevino wants to emphasize his focus on the mainstream North American perspective on native masculinity. This would make "Indian Prince" a powerful oral poem because as the man watches television, there is this mainstream, non-native, female voice lingering in the background, forcing limiting images onto him. This accusing female voice is telling the Indian prince a lot more about himself than he might know, but how is he supposed to know all of this if it isn't true? The point is that these stereotypes are true from a non-native perspective but he can't understand them because they aren't real. In addition, if the speaker is a non-native woman, then the poem may be understood as a list of racist views about native men.

A different interpretation of the voice could be that if the woman narrating "Indian Prince" is native, in which case the list of stereotypes can be read as a list of complaints that native women have regarding men. Furthermore, if this is a native woman speaking, we can read Trevino's criticism of native men as a feminist critique of a certain type of native man as indolent, self-absorbed, and self-important. This is implied in his email message to me, which was quoted earlier in this paper, when Trevino states that "Indian Prince" was created out of frustration. This interpretation is also supported by the way that the girl child who suddenly appears in the video is twice ignored by the 'Indian prince'; he's behaving as if children are somebody else's concern and not his. I think that both of these perspectives are implied and both voice interpretations should be taken into consideration when analyzing this poem.

At this point, I'd like to switch gears and focus on the visual aspects of "Indian Prince." The television plays an important role in Trevino's illustration of mainstream media. I found it ironic that we watch the man in the video on a television and, assuming that we watch "Indian Prince" on YouTube, we are watching him from a mainstream channel source, and literally, from our mainstream perspectives. The man on the television certainly fits the stereotypes that North American media projects onto him, which McKay discusses in relation to the film *Reel Injun*:

When film was first introduced Native American culture was the subject of some of the first movies. In the silent era the "Indian" was a fascinating, mystical hero. Then, something changed. The "Noble Injun" became the "Savage Injun" in 1930s westerns. The portrayal was clearly damaging, with even Bugs Bunny getting his kicks from killing Natives. The First Nations person is a prop rather than a person during this time in film history.

McKay's main point here is about the objectification of native individuals. This occurs quite often throughout mainstream media, and it is problematic. The idea that a First Nations person is a 'prop' and not a human allows for Hollywood to project any image it wants onto natives and native culture, "leading to widespread misunderstandings of First Nations peoples" (Adare). These media-generated stereotypes obviously aren't meant as a joke if they've become what Proulx refers to as "timeless and inevitable behaviours" (59). Unfortunately, it is the case that media-generated stereotypes are extremely damaging to the lives of First Nations peoples, and Adare confirms my point by referring to a study as early as 1990, where "95 percent of what college students

know about Native Americans was acquired through the media, leading to widespread misunderstandings of First Nations peoples.”

The television imagery in “Indian Prince” is also interesting. The static perpetually fades in and out and this technique creates a broken image on the television from which we watch the native man. Since the North American media generally paints an inaccurate picture of native people, an overload of misrepresentations and stereotypes about aboriginals exists in our culture which are damaging to aboriginals themselves. Proulx also acknowledges this issue: “These stereotypes all comprise the interpretive repertoires underpinning the systemic racism that permeates non-Aboriginal society” (62). The inaccurate image of aboriginal cultures is associated with the brittle relationship that aboriginal communities have with mainstream media. An online publication known as “Introduction: Media and Aboriginal Culture, an Evolving Relationship” by journalist Barry Zellan explains the paradox of the mainstream media: “The media has been a double-edged sword, essential as a tool to preserve Aboriginal languages and cultures, yet potentially a tool to destroy those very same languages and cultures.” How the media can work to destroy Aboriginal languages and cultures is by presenting a false First Nations identity which thwarts any forward progress in maintaining actual First Nations cultures and identities. Thus, mainstream media is more of a destroyer than a preserver of aboriginal culture because of these damaging images of native peoples. Adare also concludes that “After publication of *Indian Stereotypes in TV Science Fiction*, ignorance can no longer be used as an excuse for Hollywood’s irresponsible depiction of First Nations peoples’ culture, traditions, elders, religious beliefs, and sacred objects,” which I think is a reasonable argument to make

about the mainstream media's continuing use of stereotypes to portray native cultures and individuals. If people are aware that these stereotypes are wrong, but they still perpetuate them, then this is a matter of racism rather than ignorance.

Given that YouTube is a mainstream media outlet, its audience is likely to be mostly outsiders to native culture. The audience is set up to be on the same side of the television as the woman who narrates the stereotypes. Naturally, we feel comfortable watching "Indian Prince" from a mainstream perspective because this is what we are most familiar with: the man on the television fits into our image of native masculinity. This says something about Trevino's choice of a mainstream audience. However, Trevino's video undermines our comfort and makes us suddenly uncomfortable with our uneducated view of aboriginal men by forcing us to listen to a list of our own images of native men. Because we hear these stereotypes spoken out loud and visualize them in the male native actor in the video, we suddenly feel stupid because any of these stereotypes could also pertain to ourselves. We feel this way because we are likely looking at the man in the video and thinking, "hey, that's what I look like on the weekend when I'm being lazy." I certainly felt this way when I first watched the video.

The image of the Indian Prince actually acting out the stereotypes is intriguing. This can be understood as part of Trevino's reclaiming of native identity. By representing his 'Indian Prince' as not responding either to the female speaker or to the audience watching him watch television, he doesn't allow the native man's identity to belong to the female narrator's voice or to the Western mainstream culture that is bound and bent to claim the image of native masculinity. In "We belong to this land: A view of 'cultural difference'" Kateri Awikwenzie-Damm explains how natives, herself included,

sometimes use storytelling as a way to protect themselves against damaging mainstream perspectives:

For many of us, writing, storytelling, performance and multi - media art are forms of activism, are creative (and therefore positive and giving) ways both to maintain who we are and to protest against colonization. In the simplest terms, we protest by dispelling lies and telling our own stories, our own histories, in our own ways, according to our own concepts of truth and beauty.

Awikwenzie-Damm is addressing a form of resistance that native storytellers use in order to 'reclaim' native cultures and identities. This can be understood in relation to what Trevino does with "Indian Prince". This video can be interpreted as a way of taking control of native identity and culture, a way of appropriating mainstream ideas and expressing them from a native perspective so that these mainstream ideologies become less damaging to aboriginal people. Furthermore, Trevino mocks these images and ideologies so as to make anyone who might believe in their validity appear narrow-minded.

On the topic of reclaiming identity, I came across an online interview between Trevino Brings Plenty and a journalist, Kevin Sampsell. Instead of using the word 'Indian' during the interview, Trevino used the term NDN. By doing so, Trevino is reclaiming his identity and native culture. He is taking the word 'Indian' back from the colonizers who created it and he is making it his own: 'NDN.' Geoff Stokes addresses the idea of reclaiming aboriginal identity in his chapter "Citizenship and Aboriginality" from *The Politics of Identity in Australia*: "A continuing political task for Aboriginal policies has been to criticize and attempt to overthrow the received European



conceptions of Aboriginal identity, and then to replace them with more appropriate ones” (159). In short, Stokes emphasizes the need for aboriginal people to re-gain authority over their identities to prevent the Westernized, Eurocentric view from perpetuating the further domination of aboriginal people (159).

Stokes also argues that “At different stages, the critique has required aboriginal people to engage with, adapt and use European political ideas like those of citizenship, justice or self-determination, while at the same time drawing upon indigenous Aboriginal traditions” (159). This is related to Trevino Brings Plenty’s use of the term ‘NDN’ because he has created his own version of a colonizer’s word. This can be understood as Trevino’s way of implying that the word “Indian” is already wrong since it misidentifies the aboriginal as someone from India. The use of the word “Indian” by early colonizers nonetheless causes confusion today in such a diverse North American population where First Nations peoples and immigrants from India reside and where both groups are referred to as “Indians.” Trevino may have used the term “NDN” to set himself and the native population apart from India immigrants in North America. Not only that, but by using the term “NDN” instead of “Indian,” Trevino might also be suggesting that “Indian” is an offensive word to use when referring to First Nations peoples because it is a colonizer’s term from earlier times, one that has persisted since the days of Christopher Columbus. Robert Berkhofer addresses the use of the word ‘Indian’ by colonizers in his text *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*.

Native Americans were and are real, but the Indian was a White invention and still remains largely a White image, if not stereotype. According to a modern view of

the matter, the idea of the Indian or Indians in general is a White image or stereotype because it does not square with present-day conceptions of how those peoples called Indians lived and saw themselves. The first residents of Americas were by modern estimates divided into at least two thousand cultures and more societies, practiced a multiplicity of customs and lifestyles, held an enormous variety of values and beliefs ... By classifying all these many people as Indians, Whites categorized the variety of cultures and societies as a single entity for the purposes of description and analysis ... for the convenience of simplified understanding. (10-11)

Thus, according to Berkhofer's description of the past and present use of the word "Indian," it is evident that the meaning of the word has stayed relatively the same over time and the overall intention of the word has become even more demeaning in the last century because of the media's and mainstream culture's portrayal of Indians. In addition, according to New World Encyclopedia, "The word "Indian" was an invention of Christopher Columbus, who erroneously thought that he had arrived in the East Indies." This is where the confusion between the identity of Native Americans and East Indian immigrants arises. Perhaps, Trevino refers to himself as "NDN" in order to separate himself from this massive racial cluster. Today, "Indian" is a colonial term that is used to undermine native people and culture and much of the mainstream North American media encourages the belief that native cultures should be viewed as one single culture.

Moreover, sometimes stereotypes are internalized and people second guess their own identity, resorting to the internalization of what they are most familiar with: the image that mainstream media and culture has of them. Unfortunately, the mainstream

media's image is usually the strongest and most prevalent image in Western culture. Robert Harding addresses this issue in "The Media, Aboriginal People and Common Sense":

A stereotype that appears frequently in the selected news articles is *Aboriginal people as unable to competently manage their own finances and services*. If this stereotype becomes a regular feature of public discourse, it is possible that some Aboriginal people may begin to *internalize* it and start to doubt their competence or potential in these areas. (326-327)

Hardings' point is relevant to my reading of Trevino's video because I am trying to explain that stereotypes are powerful enough to psychologically damage aboriginal people because of this process of internalization. When stereotypes are internalized, people become living versions of these negative images through their appearance and behaviour. At this point, they might even have a hard time deciphering who they really are beneath all the labels. In relation to Trevino's video, the man on the television seems like he has internalized some of the stereotypes that are being voiced, and the stereotypes that Trevino uses are negative images that are often forced onto native people who sometimes accept these as accurate labels in situations where they might feel undermined and helpless. Consequently, it is very important to look at this image of the native man that North American media projects through stereotypes and lies. Trevino's depiction of the Indian prince fits many of the stereotypes; the narrator recites a list: "one of those confederacy tribe lazy boy Indians," "one of those self-oppressed Indians," "one of those can't do wrong Indian Prince Indians," "one of those watch cable eat all the food Indians," and finally "one of those sweatpants or basketball shorts every

day wear Indians.” In “Myths and Stereotypes about Native Americans” Walter Fleming addresses these limiting images: “When it comes to Americans’ knowledge about Native American culture and history, one might say there are two types of people—those who know nothing about Natives and those who know less than that” (213). By categorizing mainstream culture into two specific, groups of stupidity, Fleming is emphasizing the absurdity of the North American mainstream perspective on natives. Fleming goes on to suggest that just when you thought you were dumb, you could be even dumber. He confirms what “Indian Prince” says about mainstream media and Western culture. “Indian Prince” has the powerful effect of turning us into the idiotic North American people that Fleming describes us as being.

To expand on my previous idea, the long, dreadful list of stereotypes is associated with a philosophical form known as ‘*reductio ad absurdum*.’ Richard Nordquist describes ‘*Reduction ad absurdum*’ as a philosophical method of refutation that “extends the logic of the opponent’s argument to a point of absurdity.” Trevino uses *reductio ad absurdum* as a technique to make the long, repetitive list powerful enough to show us that the stereotypes it is articulating are just as ridiculous. He suggests in his poem that his native reality involves having to contend with an interminable list of stereotypes. Trevino is clearly using the absurd list of negative images as a tool to challenge the mainstream representations of himself and other native men. By mocking the stereotypes and revealing their absurdity, he re-gains authority over his identity. Additionally, by suggesting that these stereotypes are absurd, he makes mainstream culture the butt of the joke.

With his focus on the prevalent theme of reclaiming voice and identity, Trevino is one of the many native storytellers who have taken a stand against the mainstream depiction of First Nations people. In *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision* Maria Battiste acknowledges that this is a recently acquired skill for native writers:

As the twentieth century unfolds to a new millennium, many voices and forums are converging to form a new perspective on knowledge. Many of these voices belong to the Indigenous peoples who have survived European colonization and cognitive imperialism. They represent the thoughts and experiences of the people of the Earth whom Europeans have characterized as primitive, backward, and inferior—the colonized and dominated people of the last five centuries (xvi).

The creation of “Indian Prince” could be interpreted as part of a healing process. From what I have learned about indigenous storytelling and performance poetry, I am inclined to believe that “Indian Prince” has a therapeutic element to it. In an email to me, Trevino said that “Indian Prince” was created out of frustration. By using poetry as a tool to relieve his frustration, Trevino can be understood as participating in a “healing process as a lifelong journey” (Waldram 61). “Aboriginal Healing in Canada: Studies in Therapeutic Meaning and Practice” sees oral and written narratives as essential in the process of building a new identity:

The healing process demands self-reflection, and storytelling offers the means to achieve it. Survivor stories allow clients to name their experiences and to reclaim what they have lost through the trauma. Storytelling reinforces the identification of what the client needs to address in the healing process (Waldram 61).

By writing “Indian Prince” Trevino engages in a process of coming to terms with himself and his experiences as a native man. Furthermore, the oral aspect of Trevino’s poem can also be understood in relation to traditional values associated with Native storytelling, which, according to Carabi, allows a storyteller, “who can be either a man or a woman ...[to be in] charge of keeping alive the tradition” (18). “Indian Prince” inherently conforms to the oral nature of native storytelling in that it presents a storyteller, namely, the narrator, who is ironically undermining non-native storytelling traditions about natives.

From what I have learned, it seems that there is more to “Indian Prince” than what Trevino intended. In *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* Jo-Ann Archibald explains that poetry is a type of metaphorical process that comes with indigenous storytelling: “However, the topic of Indigenous stories, which were presumably based on oral delivery and aural reception and were sometimes thought to have implicit meanings, conflicted with the academic literate traditions” (7). The metaphors in aboriginal oral storytelling are symbols which are rooted in past indigenous culture and myth. In *Reclaiming the vision*, A.C. Ross helps elaborate Archibald’s point by explaining that “Telling our stories—handing down our legends—is our tradition, not only among Lakota people but all Indian people” (7). Here, Ross implies that it is a tradition to ‘hand down’ oral stories in native cultures by teaching them to children and other members of the family. Furthermore, the symbols that Archibald refers to as metaphors are significant pieces of the past, whether they are real or not. For instance, a symbol or story might be used as a metaphor for teaching a valuable lesson to children or as an implicit suggestion to respect the elderly. Archibald

also maintains that “sharing what one has learned is an important indigenous tradition. This type of sharing can take the form of a story of personal life experience and is done with a compassionate mind and love for others” (2). “Indian Prince” does exactly this because the video is about Trevino’s personal experience with stereotypical images in his own native community. While criticizing it, Trevino also demonstrates his compassion for his native masculine identity when he makes an effort to reclaim a voice for himself and other natives.

In a way “Indian Prince” can be understood as a message that Trevino doesn’t want one person’s reputation to ruin the identity of all native men in his community. For this is exactly what mainstream media and culture has done: they have taken only a few examples of native men and have used these to create a false and damaging image of all native men.

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