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Transforming Toxic Indigenous Masculinity A Critical Indigenous Masculinities and Indigenous Film Studies Approach to *Drunktown's Finest*

Chapter Outline

This chapter focuses on how Indigenous masculinities are depicted in Sydney Freeland's film *Drunktown's Finest*. Specifically, the chapter explores through the character of Sick Boy what it means to be man. In addition, the chapter also examines homophobia and transphobia through the character of Felixia.

The chapter begins with a discussion of critical Indigenous masculinities. The authors suggest that Indigenous masculinities counter the idea of a single masculinity. They demonstrate that through the process of colonization there has been an imposition on Indigenous men based on white patriarchy that has dictated what ideal masculine traits should be. The result has been Indigenous men have adopted Western notions of maleness that have subjugated Indigenous women and queer people. This reinforces stereotypes of Indigenous men and strengthens colonial structures that oppress all Indigenous people. Attention is then given to how Indigenous men are attempting to overcome the negative and toxic masculinities they experience, and it is argued that this is a form of decolonization.

The chapter next turns to an examination of Indigenous film studies. This section of the chapter discusses theoretical areas of study such as redfacing, the virtual reservation, and visual sovereignty. *Redfacing* being the act of performing Indigeneity by all actors, whether Indigenous or not. *The virtual reservation* is an epistemological site where Indigenous knowledges are privileged and is considered a decolonizing space. *Visual sovereignty* refers to a critical space to privilege Indigenous aesthetic strategies and access to traditionality in a political world.

Next, the chapter turns its attention to *Drunktown's Finest*. A summary of the film is provided as well as an introduction of the characters in the film. The authors go about identifying where in the film issues of masculinity arise. The authors draw comparisons from the film to academic studies that have found some of the issue identified in the film. The chapter concludes by arguing that the film universalizes problems faced by everyday people; further, they suggest the film highlights the possibilities that visual sovereignty affords to those whose lives have been affected by internalized colonialism.

Learning Objectives

- To recognize how colonization has impacted Indigenous masculinity
- To understand Indigenous masculinities
- To define *redfacing*, *virtual sovereignty*, and a *virtual reservation*

- To recognize the stereotypes that have been placed on Indigenous men
- To understand the possibilities that visual sovereignty affords

Study Questions

1. How has colonization impacted Indigenous masculinity?
2. What are critical Indigenous masculinities?
3. How have Indigenous men been colonized?
4. What efforts are being taken by Indigenous men to decolonize themselves?
5. What is redfacing?
6. What is a virtual reservation?
7. What is meant by visual sovereignty?
8. Where in the film *Drunktown's Finest* does masculinity arise?
9. What are some examples from *Drunktown's Finest* that depict similar situations that have been studied in academic works identified by the authors?
10. How does the film demonstrate the possibilities that visual sovereignty affords?

Additional Resources

Readings

- Barker, Joanne. 2017. *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*. Duke University Press.
- Gossage, Peter and Robert Rutherford. 2018. *Making Men, Making History: Canadian Masculinities Across Time and Space*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Greig, Christopher and Wayne Martino. 2012. *Canadian Men and Masculinities: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- Hearne, Joanne. 2012. *Native Recognition: Indigenous Cinema and the Western*. New York: SUNY.
- McKegne, Sam ed. 2014 *Masculindians: Conversations About Indigenous Manhood*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.

Websites

Biidwewidam Indigenous Masculinities <http://www.indigenoumasculinities.com/>

This website documents the Biidwewidam Indigenous Masculinities (BIM) project that has the purpose of building research capacity around Indigenous masculinities and identities.

Indigenous (Aboriginal) Masculinities <https://www.gapsinhealth.ca/indigenous-aboriginal-masculinities/>

This webpage documents the incorporating of masculinities as a central concept in addressing Indigenous men's health and well-being.

What the Men Are Saying: Indigenous Masculinity Revisited

<http://muskratmagazine.com/what-the-men-are-saying-indigenous-masculinity-revisited/>

This article provides an overview of what Indigenous men are saying about masculinity.