

ONE LITTLE, TWO LITTLE, THREE LITTLE
STEREOTYPES: A HISTORY OF NATIVE CULTURE
AND IMAGERY IN AMERICAN CINEMATIC
CARTOONS

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Abstract: The first depiction of Native Americans in American cinematic animation appeared in 1924. Over the course of the near one hundred years since that first depiction, federal Indian policy and the portrayal of Indians in popular culture changed. The paternalistic assimilationist views of the early-and mid-twentieth century gave way to tribal self-determination in the late-twentieth century and into the twenty-first. In addition, attitudes toward the portrayal of minorities in popular culture progressed in the United States during this period. As these changes occurred, animation underwent transitions in style and content. The ages of animation include the Silent Age (1906-1928), the Golden Age (1928 – 1960s), the Dark Age (mid-1960s – early-1980s), the Renaissance Age (mid-1980s – mid-1990s), and the Millennium Age (1995 – present). The animation industry is dominated by white males; as such, the portrayal of Native Americans in cartoons lacks Indian agency. The result is the creation and perpetuation of stereotypes that have lasted for nearly one hundred years. Indians in cartoons range from mindless villains, to noble savages, to shrewd casino executives bent on getting revenge against the white man. The power of these stereotypes is multiplied by the broad audience that cartoons reach that includes children who view these images during their formative years. The purpose of this study is to chronicle the history of Native American depictions in animation, analyze how and why they changed, and evaluate their impact on American attitudes toward Indians. This study expands the field of popular culture studies on Native American imagery by focusing on a neglected medium in historical scholarship.

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INTRODUCTION

For generations, American popular culture has included constructed portrayals of Native Americans and their culture. The stereotypes and historical misrepresentations perpetuated by these portrayals has not gone unnoticed by academics. However, most of the research conducted on the portrayal of Native Americans in American popular culture during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries focuses on live-action depictions in cinematic or televised Westerns. With few exceptions, the study of constructed Native American identity overlooks the animation genre. This is a woeful shortcoming. Animation is one of the most prolific mediums of popular culture in post-nineteenth century America. It dominates movie box offices, fills countless hours of television, and seeps into areas of American life beyond simple entertainment. The first animated cartoon to introduce Native American characters was the 1924 short *Alice's Wild West Show*, and since those first Native Americans graced the screen, animation has continually struggled to provide accurate or positive portrayals of Native

Americans.² This study explores the history of Native American depictions in American animation from its earliest incarnations into the twenty-first century, and examines how cartoons have created and reinforced stereotypes and historical fallacies.

The format of this study is chronological, based upon the commonly used ages of animation. These include: the Silent Age, Golden Age, Dark Age, Renaissance Age, and Millennium Age.³ As with many topics in history, these eras have somewhat amorphous periods of existence. Respectively, the ages run from 1906 to 1928, 1928 through the late-1960s, the early-1960s to the mid-1980s, the mid-1980s through the 1990s, and post-1995 to present. The examples of Native American depictions selected from each of these ages are limited to mainstream cartoons intended for mass consumption. As a study of popular culture, this study relies on selections meant for a broad audience that adhere to the cultural norms of the age in which they were produced. This process only minimally affects the Millennium Age, when the proliferation of computers and the internet allowed independent animators to produce works that reached a more niche audience. The selections included are not comprehensive but do offer a complete understanding of the stereotypes and cultural interpretations of Native Americans in animation over the entire history of cartoons in the U.S. In instances where cartoons series are discussed, the individual episodes that illustrate that show's treatment Native American characters and cultures serve as examples.

² *Alice's Wild West Show*, by Walt Disney (Los Angeles: Disney Brothers Productions, 1924).

³ A single source citing all of these does not exist. Various authors cover these periods independently. The closest to provide a complete assessment of the ages of animation excluding the Millennium Age appears throughout Leonard Maltin and Jerry Beck, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: New American Library, 1987).

In addition to the discussion of cartoons in each of the ages of animation, this study includes brief analysis of changes in federal Indian policy and major developments in Native American society throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. These policy changes and social developments are included to provide a broader context for general position of Native Americans in American society in the periods discussed. What these changes demonstrate is that Native American issues are often more dynamic and complex than what finds its way into animation. Often in animation, as well as other mediums of entertainment, Indians are presented as frozen in time and lack agency. However, in the American political and social landscape, Native Americans have been active participants in shaping their position in society and the consistent focus of government policy shifts.

A standard facet to historical studies of animation concerns the need to defend the relevancy of the medium. The foundation of popular culture studies came in 1964 with the publication of Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel's *The Popular Arts*. It argues that popular culture mirrors the "attitudes and sentiments" that already exist in society and provides "a set of symbols through which these attitudes can be projected."⁴ This methodology separates popular culture from high culture by accentuating that high culture often centers on intellectual or artistic endeavors rooted in the past or the future that do not actually speak to the cultural climate of the day. Over four decades later, the debate surrounding the value of popular culture as a historical research tool continued. In *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization*, sociologist John Storey asserts that the reluctance to embrace popular culture in research stems from the belief

⁴ Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel, *The Popular Arts* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 103.

that “intellectuals find it difficult to come to terms with the egalitarian implications of mass consumption, since intellectual culture is based upon the assumption that knowledge can only be achieved through the asceticism of disciplined education.”⁵

Storey’s analysis broaches the concept of lived experience. Although scholarly attitudes toward popular culture has warmed in recent years, intellectuals and academics do not often share the same lived experience as the general public. Often, this makes some scholars reluctant to embrace popular culture as a respectable basis of academic study.

This particular study deals with layers of popular culture. The general reluctance to take popular culture seriously is compounded by the fact that many of the examples come from television. Television is generally viewed as a lesser form of entertainment, lacking the social commentary and mindfulness of other mediums. This assumption overlooks a key factor that James Shanahan confronts in *Television and Its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research* (1999) where he employs the cultivation theory concept. Developed in 1976 by George Gerbner, cultivation theory suggests, as Shanahan states, that “watching a great deal of television will be associated with a tendency to hold specific and distinct conceptions of reality, conceptions that are congruent with the most consistent and pervasive images and values of the medium.”⁶ Cultivation theory provides the framework for this study. The depictions of Native Americans and their culture in cartoons developed into standard stereotypes and tropes that appeared consistently throughout the ages of animation. Filmmakers, authors, animators, and other popular culture producers played roles in creating Native American imagery and tropes, but the

⁵ John Storey, *Inventing Popular Culture: From Folklore to Globalization* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), 69.

⁶ James Shanahan and Michael Morgan, *Television and Its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2001), 3.

American public's acceptance and regurgitation of them made them stereotypes. The consumption of these stereotypes and tropes by multiple generations of audiences imprinted a false image of Native Americans on children and adults. The old saying is "you don't get a second chance to make a first impression", and for Native Americans their first impression on American audiences is often through flawed cartoon representations.

Narrowing the focus to cartoons in popular culture exposes its own set of biases. A general sentiment exists that animation does not hold the same importance as other facets of popular culture because it is "kids' stuff," but that could not be further from the truth. Animation is a well-established medium of American popular culture that appeals to audiences of all ages. The "kids' stuff" mentality not only factors into the historical examination of cartoons, but also into the proliferation of cartoons in general. Animation studios actively reject this label by creating content with a broader appeal. The notion that animation is for children arose in the late-1960s when television networks abandoned prime-time animated shows and cartoon shorts disappeared from theaters as pre-show entertainment to feature films. The reality of the situation is that animation as only "kids' stuff" spanned only twenty years of its more than a century's long existence.

Although animation's relegation to Saturday mornings only accounted for two decades of its existence, the impact of that move continues to affect the medium. Few published works examine the history of animation, but most of those that do exist address the lack of academic and societal respect for the genre. One of the most comprehensive works about animation is Giannalberto Bendazzi's *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation* (1995). Bendazzi's volume discusses animation from across the globe

through the 1970s. In a discussion about the need for animation to be taken more seriously in the academic world, Bendazzi argues that because of the age association issue, academics often “compare animation to toys.”⁷ Bendazzi’s work exposes how this sentiment is inherently flawed. Cartoons, while often silly, require artistic skill and commonly contain as much social commentary as the most revered works of art.

The general lack of respect for mainstream animation is discussed in Leonard Maltin’s insightful book *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (1987). Maltin presents a unique perspective into the history of animation. He is not an academic historian; rather Maltin is a famous movie critic who wrote his book out of a pure love of cartoons. The passion for his subject shows in his work. He chronicles the rise of animation after the Silent Age and concludes in the mid-1980s, just before the dawn of the Renaissance Age. In his discussion of mainstream cartoons, Maltin argues that there was a “snob barrier that prevented the Hollywood cartoon from receiving serious attention.”⁸ Maltin suggests that this snob barrier enacted from cartoons’ unpretentiousness and commercial success. The unpretentiousness allowed people to write cartoons off as silly and devoid of social commentary. The commercial success argument is more abstract. Often, works of popular culture -- whether they be movies, music, cartoons, or television shows -- are unfairly criticized if they gain massive popularity. This speaks to the bias discussed by John Storey in *Inventing Popular Culture*, which claims that popular culture suffers from a lack of academic respect because of its perceived middling nature associated with its popularity.

⁷ Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), xxi.

⁸ Leonard Maltin and Jerry Beck, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: New American Library, 1987), vi.

The lack of respect cartoons have received as conveyors of social commentary and culture is disappointing given their pervasiveness in American popular culture. M. Keith Booker explores this issue directly in his book *Drawn to Television: Prime-Time Animation from The Flintstones to Family Guy* (1999). Booker points out that cartoons enjoyed a major impact on American popular culture through the development and proliferation of timeless characters.⁹ Booker's argument places animation closer to literature than to live-action forms of visual media. Cartoons have a staying power beyond that of movies or television shows and are passed from generation to generation.¹⁰ Just as there are classic works of literature that withstand the test of time, there are cartoon characters and franchises, like Disney and *The Simpsons*, that are cultural juggernauts. These franchises have reached generations of children and adults, and show no signs of fading into the past. Booker's argument about the trans-generational aspect of cartoons also negates the "kids' stuff" critique so often levied at the genre.

Apart from defending cartoons as a cultural barometer, this study also requires an explanation why cartoons so effectively convey social and cultural issues. An examination of this question within the field of animation history reveals a lack of research. The animation subgenre that does include research into this question is prime-time animation. The book *Prime Time Animation: Television Animation and American Culture* (2003) offers several essays that explore the cultural relevance of American prime-time cartoons. The common theme throughout the study is animation's ability to break the bonds of reality, allowing it to destroy existing narrative conventions and

⁹ M. Keith Booker, *Drawn to Television: Prime-Time Animation from the Flintstones to Family Guy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 185.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, ix.

reshape them into stories that can confront the social issues of the day without seeming too sanctimonious.¹¹ The main comparison presented in *Prime Time Animation* involves cartoons versus live-action situational comedies. The difference between the two is that by presenting stories that exist outside reality, cartoons avoid the “very special episode” stigma that occurs when situational comedies address serious issues. Cartoons can address cultural issues without having to directly confront the viewers’ sensibilities. They can be covertly subversive.

Cartoons’ reliance on shattering the bonds of reality constitutes one of the most important aspects of their success in portraying American culture. The edited volume *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (1999) examines how Disney used the practice of altering reality to not only produce cartoons, but transform the American cultural landscape. In the book’s introduction, Eric Smooden discusses how the construction of the Disney theme parks is a perfect example of how the company manipulates and capitalizes on American cultural trends. The goal of Disney is to create the perfect America and one needs to look no further than Main Street U.S.A. at Disneyland to find it.¹² *Disney Discourse* contains a section written by Julianne Burton-Carvajal titled “South of the Border with Disney”. Carvajal makes one of the most important observations about cartoons as it relates to this study. She argues, “Precisely because of their assumed innocence and innocuousness, [and] their inherent ability... to defy all conventions of realistic representations, animated cartoons offer up a fascinating zone within which to examine how a dominant culture constructs its subordinates.”¹³ This

¹¹ Carol Stabile, *Prime Time Animation Television Animation and American Culture* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 9.

¹² Eric Smoodin, *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 20-22.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 135.

is precisely what cartoons do with Native Americans. An underlying aspect of animation in the U.S. is that it is a genre dominated by white males, which means that depictions of Native Americans in cartoons are representations of the dominant culture's view of Indians.

The question becomes: what makes Native Americans unique in popular culture? The answer lies in the notion that Native Americans are a fabricated people in popular culture. For instance, Native Americans and the American West are inextricably linked to one another in the U.S. It is a link that is inherently flawed. Native Americans predate the European arrival in the New World and lived in every region of America long before Hollywood relegated them to the plains and vistas of the West. Native Americans' relegation to the West is fallacy; however, it persists in popular culture and the white American cultural conscience. The persistence of this connection stems from the idea that both the West and Native Americans are not places or actual people. Rather, they are constructs of the white American imagination. The concept that Native Americans are constructed characters makes them a natural subject for animated cartoons that are free from the restraints of reality. In animation, a medium dominated by white males, Indians become whatever they need to be in order to fulfill their narrative purpose. Over the course of animation's existence, these constructs have ranged from Indians as villains, to the noble savage, to the modern casino Indian.

Of course, Native American are not characters. They are real people. This may seem like an absurd statement, but it is necessary. Popular culture has attempted to destroy the reality of Native Americans for centuries, creating stereotypes and tropes that remove reality and replaces it with the dominant white culture's perceptions of what

Indians need to be. Frank Bergon and Zeese Papanikolas argue in *Looking Far West: The Search for the American West in History, Myth, and Literature* (1978) that the before “it was a place, [the West] was a conception.”¹⁴ This sentiment also applies to Native Americans. Much of the scholarship that focuses on the construction of the West in popular culture applies to Indians as well. The West is a setting and Native Americans are actors who act as benchmarks for the progress of white society’s conquest of the West.

The idea of the West in American culture serves a purpose. In *Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture* (1998), Richard Aquila argues that the popular culture West serves as an example of how Americans view themselves. The West “reflects the American experience not so much as it really was, but as how Americans would like it to be.”¹⁵ Again, this concept can be extended to the American perception of Native Americans. Centuries of land thievery and detrimental federal policy are the facts of history, but the constructed popular culture Indian serves as a symbol what Americans need Native Americans to be. This need changes over of time. In the early years of animation, Indians were villains that represented obstacles to progress. This fit well within the Progressive ideology of educating Indians and bringing them into white society. As time progressed and American culture became more sensitive to the portrayal of minorities in popular cultures, Indians became protagonists in cartoons. The idea of the culturally malleable Indian is examined in *Shape-Shifting: Images of Native Americans in Recent Popular Fiction* (2000) by Andrew Macdonald, who states that the focus of his study is not Native Americans because they do not exist in popular fiction. He contends

¹⁴ Frank Bergon and Zeese Papanikolas, *Looking Far West: The Search for the American West in History, Myth, and Literature* (New York: New American Library, 1985), 2.

¹⁵ Richard Aquila, *Wanted Dead or Alive: The American West in Popular Culture* (Urbana, Ill.: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1998), 11

that it is more fitting to refer to Native Americans as American Indians since their image, culture, and history are constructs of American society.¹⁶ The implication is that actual Native American culture exists, but remains unknown to mainstream society since popular culture has created an Indian that fits its predominantly white audience's needs.

The creation and use of Native American stereotypes and culture to justify, defend, or contextualize white American culture is a well-researched topic in American history. One of the earliest volumes examining this issue is Robert Berkhofer's 1979 book *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. Berkhofer contends that one of the reasons that Indians are so malleable in American culture is because Indians are always "alien to the White."¹⁷ He implies that white America does not understand Native American culture. This makes it easier to simply create Native American characters and cultures that fits what white society can understand. The result is often the creation of a culture stuck in time and unable to overcome deeply rooted stereotypes.

The concepts discussed by Berkhofer have been explored by other historians. One of the seminal works on the white America's usage of Indian culture is Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian* (1999). Deloria suggests that Indians have been used by various generations of white Americans to define their own place in American history and culture. By using Indians to define their place within American history, white Americans also find ways to come to terms with the historical destruction of actual Native Americans. One of the key creations of white Americans was the idea of the noble

¹⁶ Andrew Macdonald, Gina Macdonald, and MaryAnn Sheridan, eds., *Shape-Shifting: Images of Native Americans in Recent Popular Fiction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), xi.

¹⁷ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), xv.

savage. Deloria points out the oxymoronic nature of this term. It serves to idealize the authenticity and innocence of Indians, while also incorporating the concept of savagery that justifies despising and eradicating them.¹⁸ Deloria's discussion of the noble savage is important because, excluding the Silent Age, the noble savage stereotype is a constant in animation. Of the various stereotypes and tropes associated with Native American in all of popular culture, it is the most resilient to societal progress.

Cartoons are important to this constructed notion of Native Americans because they last for generations. It may be difficult to find some of the more egregiously racist depictions of animated Indians on network television in the twenty-first century, but those cartoons remain accessible to new generations through the internet. It is not only the overtly racist depictions that matter. The subtle stereotypes and tropes associated with Native Americans persist in popular culture and animation. Raul Chavez explores the persistence of these stereotypes in *Childhood Indians: Television, Film and Sustaining the White (Sub)Conscience* (2010). Chavez asserts that racist and demeaning images of Native Americans persist in American popular culture despite a focus on multiculturalism and diversity in media. He finds that the underlying cause of this persistence is that white America feels justified in holding onto these images because of a perceived need of paternalistic guidance. This differs from white America's views toward other minorities largely because of the guilt associated with the historical treatment of Native American. In addition, he believes that a major reason for the continuance of these ideas is because young Americans have consumed them through their television diet.¹⁹

¹⁸ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 7.

¹⁹ Raul S. Chavez, *Childhood Indians: Television, Film and Sustaining the White (Sub)conscience* (Charleston: CreateSpace Independent Publ., 2015), 9.

The conveyance of stereotypes through cartoons is particularly powerful because many of the viewers who see the images do not have the proper context to understand why they are offensive and accept them as reality. In *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (1996), S. Elizabeth Bird broaches the subject of context in her discussion of Disney's *Pocahontas*' song "Savages". When viewed in the full context of the movie, coupled with a basic understanding of European settlement in the New World, the song "Savages" is not particularly offensive. It uses the derogatory term "savages", but it is meant to juxtapose the innocence of Native Americans against the savagery of Europeans. The dangerous assumption is that the audience understands how the animators intended the song to be interpreted. This issue arises in the Renaissance and Millennium Ages of animation when cartoons reclaim their place as entertainment for all ages. The renewed focus on adult viewership is often accompanied by an assumption that racist depictions of Indians are supposed to be satirical.

One of the most useful works in regard to this study is Michael Sheyahshe's *Native Americans in Comic Books* (2008). The correlation between comic books and animation is obvious. Both are visual mediums constructed without the restraint of reality, and both industries are still dominated by white American males. In addition, as Sheyahshe states, "cultural problems of representation remain constant over the years" in cartoons and comic books.²⁰ Where the two diverge is accessibility. As a literary medium, comic books require various levels of literacy depending on the complexity of characters. It would be incorrect to say that no one revisits old comic book series, but one

²⁰ Michael A. Sheyahshe, *Native Americans in Comic Books: A Critical Study* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008), 190.

is far more likely to ingest older cartoons than older comics through mainstream outlets. Nevertheless, Sheyahshe provides the foundation for the exploration of stereotypes in this study by applying the Raymond Stedman's rules of Native American stereotypes to Indians in comic books.²¹ In order to determine whether a Native American depiction is a stereotype, the questions that must be asked are: "Is the vocabulary demeaning?"; "Do the Indians talk like Tonto?"; "Do the Indians belong to the feather-bonnet tribe?"; "Are comic interludes built upon "firewater" and stupidity?"; "Are the Indians either noble or savage?"; "Is the tone patronizing?"; and, "Is Indian humanness recognized?"²² This study concludes that there are no mainstream cartoons that pass this litmus test, but there are those that demonstrate a growing awareness of insensitive portrayals of Native Americans and have attempted to address them.

The necessity of this study is that cartoons are an underrepresented aspect of scholarly inquiry into popular culture. Their omnipresence from generation to generation among American youth, coupled with their rich history of adult-focused shows, means that they have reached countless Americans. Their outward innocuousness and absurdity can be deceiving. They are meant to be accessible to anyone and, as such, embody the most basic understandings of American culture. Their innocence is what makes them powerful. When this concept is applied to Native Americans, the result is the continued proliferation of stereotypes that have gradually died out in other more scrutinized mediums of popular culture.

²¹ Stedman's original exploration of Indigenous stereotypes can be found in his 1982 book *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture*. Due to the popular culture aspect of this study, Sheyahshe's update of these rules is more relevant.

²² Sheyahshe, *Native Americans in Comic Books*, 200-202.

CHAPTER I

ESTABLISHING THE ANIMATION GENRE AND EARLY NATIVE AMERICAN STEREOTYPES ON FILM

Twenty-two years before Mickey Mouse appeared in *Steamboat Willy*, Englishman J. Stuart Blackton in 1906 debuted what is considered to be the first animated cartoon, *Humorous Phases of Funny Face*. The crudely drawn cartoon featured about three minutes of a live-action human hand drawing various men in humorous situations, from blowing smoke into the face of an attractive woman to performing as a clown.²³ Despite its artistic shortcomings, it has the honor of being the first. Blackton produced his animation using a zoetrope machine that he personally customized to allow for a fluid movement and longer run time than the simpler zoetrope animations from the past. Zoetrope machines utilize a spinning wheel to show images in rapid succession and have existed in one form or another for over five thousand years.²⁴

²³ Rachel Low, *A History of British Film 1918-1919* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1971), 3.

²⁴ Ryan Ball, "Oldest Animation Discovered In Iran." *Animation Magazine*, March 12, 2008, accessed on October 15, 2017, www.animationmagazine.net/features/oldest-animation-discovered-in-iran.

In times more recent to Blackton's, the zoetrope machine was considered a novelty, typically found at fairs, boardwalks, and other entertainment venues. It was a humble beginning for a genre of entertainment that would become a staple of children and adults' lives the world over.

Two years after Blackton debuted his cartoon, Frenchman Emile Cohl produced the first motion picture animation, *Fantasmagorie*, in 1908. Like Blackton's cartoon, this too was crudely drawn, resembling the work of someone doodling, and devoid of color and sound. This seemingly innocuous short piece of animation launched an entire entertainment platform. The images that appeared on the screen were magical to early viewers. Cartoonists across the world realized that the art form had a new medium of production and took advantage of this using animation for optical illusions and the wonderment of audiences of all ages.²⁵ Cohl's greatest contribution is that he removed animation from the confines of a device that people could consider a novelty. By shooting his animation on film, Cohl demonstrated that cartoons could be much longer in runtime, and have greater depth than had been originally believed.²⁶ A longer runtime meant that the genre now had marketability beyond the boardwalk, paving its way into the theater.

In the United States, Winsor McCay pioneered the genre of animation with his animated short *Gertie* in 1914.²⁷ Although McCay had previously produced cartoons called *Little Nemo* (1911) and *How a Mosquito Operates* (1912), *Gertie* changed the

²⁵ Donald Crafton, *Before Mickey: The Animated Film 1898-1928* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1993) 59.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 62

²⁷ Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (Chicago, Plume, 1987) 11.

narrative nature of cartoons. The subject matter of the cartoon was innocuous enough featuring a live-action McCay presenting his animated dinosaur Gertie to a small audience of onlookers. What differentiated *Gertie* from previous cartoons was that it developed a narrative through the use of intertitle cards directing the friendly dinosaur to do various actions on screen. It was a simple concept, but it added a layer to the cartoon experience. The animation itself was no more advanced than his predecessors, but McCay demonstrated that cartoons could create emotion through movement and advance the narrative in the same manner as the silent films of the day. Like their live-action film counterparts, these early-animated shorts laid the groundwork for more than a century's worth of visual entertainment that has become a powerful tool for creating popular culture. But where does the American Indian fit into this picture?

When J. Stuart Blackton produced his first animated short in 1906, three engrained images of the role of Indians in American culture already existed. One of the longest standing perceptions of Native Americans in the United States manifests itself in what Michael Sheyahshe refers to as the *Mohican Syndrome*.²⁸ It is an expansion upon the concept of the noble savage which first appeared in John Dryden's seventeenth-century play *The Conquest of Grenada*.²⁹ Stripped to its core, the concept of the noble savage alludes to a purity or nobility of American Indians in contrast to their white counterparts. The Mohican Syndrome is a retrofitted term that takes its name from James Fennimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* and can refer to the romanticizing of any

²⁸ Michael Sheyahshe, *Native Americans in Comic Books: A Critical Stud.* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008), 13-14.

²⁹ Robert Berkhofer, "The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present," in *Native American Representations: First Encounters, Distorted Images, and Literary Appropriations*, edited by Gretchen Bataille (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1980), 45.

indigenous peoples, real or imagined. In the realm of American artistic work, concepts of greed and corruption from the modern world are replaced by an understanding that Indians were a purer form of human existence. The concept of the noble savage was so well tread by the nineteenth century that it had already inspired its own satirical response by way of Charles Dickens's essay "Noble Savage" that appeared in the *Household Words* journal in 1853. Of course Dickens's critique of the noble savage trope embodied all the racism and cultural insensitivity that one would expect from an upper-class Englishman in the mid-nineteenth century.³⁰ When used as a narrative device in a non-satirical manner, the concept of noble savage portrays native culture in a positive, albeit simplistic, manner. The clear downside to this portrayal is that it deprives Indians of agency. Indigenous culture as portrayed by the noble savage concept is simply there to act as a counter to the dominant white culture it is contrasting. This means that no real agency exists, since it is the actions of white society that define what is perceived as good or evil.

In the years before the mainstream film movement, another Native American archetype was solidifying itself in the American entertainment world, Show Indians. The popular Wild West shows of Buffalo Bill Cody and others helped propagate Native American culture, dress, dance, and life as a form of entertainment. The Wild West shows were popular from the 1880s through the 1910s, and provided Americans with a glimpse into Indian culture through riding exhibitions and traditional dances. While many historians and critics dismiss these Show Indians as little more than caricatures of their

³⁰ Charles Dickens, "The Noble Savage," *Household Words* VII, no. 168 (1853): 337-339.

culture, they did have, at least, a modicum of agency over their own portrayals.³¹

Although Indians may have had agency in Wild West shows, it is important to remember that in the early eras of animation agency over characters ultimately emanated from the animators and writers. Not until the latter-twentieth century was any credence given to consulting groups depicted in animated form. White male animators and writers dominated early animation and continued to be the arbiters of cartoons' content well into the late-twentieth century. The dominance of this white male culture often deprived Indians of any sense of agency. The same can be said for any characters of color.

Animation was, and remains largely a white male dominated field. In addition, animation has to be viewed through the lens of what it truly is, escapism entertainment. While the cartoons of today have gotten increasingly critical of society and challenged past cultural insensitiveness, those of the early and mid-twentieth century often relied on rehashing the same one-dimensional characters and traits. This, however, does not mean they are not important in the development of the American popular conscience. Almost anyone can think to their childhood and remember a conception about life they believed to be true to only find out cartoons had led them astray. As stand-up comedian John Mulaney jokes about, most people who grew up watching cartoons believed that quicksand would be a much bigger problem in life than it really is.³²

Nowhere was the one-dimensional aspect of Native Americans in animation and early film more prevalent than in the other prevailing stereotype of the day, Indians as villains. It is a simple concept at heart. Indians were the bad guys. They killed the heroes.

³¹ Lester George Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883-1933*(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1999), 8.

³² John Mulaney, *New In Town*, directed by Ryan Polito (2012; New York: Comedy Central, 2012), DVD.

The obvious predecessors to animated Indians were those drawn and written about in the dime novels, story papers, and pulp magazines of the late-1800s and early-1900s. Devoid of any sense of remorse toward American expansion into native lands, these popular pieces of literature often depicted Indians as godless savages, hell-bent on destroying the valiant American conqueror. They were, plain and simple, bad guys, one-dimensional and to be feared because of their deeply held hatred toward the white man. Of course, no discussion arose as to why there might be hatred in the first place, but that did not matter. The establishment of one-dimensional villains has never paid heed to going deeper than an immediate guttural disdain for those cast in that role.

The Indian as villain was not limited to mindless marauding and hatred though. Native Americans represented a philosophical villain as well. In this instance, villain did not directly correlate to evil or threatening, but an enemy to progress and society. In the short essay “The Noble Savage”, Dickens wrote that the concept of a noble savage was fallacy and that savagery, in any sense, should be “civilized off the face earth.”³³ With those words, Dickens essentially explained why Indians were the bad guys. It was not the immediate threat they may pose in some contrived attack, but the threat their culture posed to the progress of yet-to-be-checked white civilized society. The fear of savages was not that they were savage, but ultimately that they represented something different than the established cultural norm, even if that norm in the form of western-themed books, movies, and cartoons involved hyperbolic violence not rooted in actual history.

In late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century America, Progressive reformers adopted the essence of Dickens’s sentiment regarding Native Americans. The most

³³ Dickens, “The Noble Savage,” 338.

concise summation of the Progressive vision of Native American became the now infamous line from Captain Richard H. Pratt of the Carlisle Indian School who said “Kill the Indian in him, and save the man.”³⁴ Pratt’s statement is simple in language and despicable in practice. The Progressives were social tinkers who believed they could use the scientific method in order to engineer a version of America that fit within their Jeffersonian ideal of what society should be. That ideal was white, capitalistic, and, most importantly, controlled. Certainly numerous tribes had adapted to the capitalist aspect of what Progressives considered civilized, but they still rebuked the idea of giving up their non-white customs and certainly did not want to be controlled. In the decades to come, Native Americans would be controlled, perhaps not in real life, but in the mainstream narrative.

Of these three perceptions of Indians, the image that won out in the early days of live-action film was a conglomeration between the noble savage and the Progressive viewpoint of the Indian as an obstacle to progress. Some of the earliest film depictions of Native Americans offered a relatively sympathetic view. For instance, in a series of three films, *The Redman and the Child* (1908), *The Indian Runner* (1909), and *The Redman’s View* (1909), pioneering filmmaker D.W. Griffith used Native Americans in the role of the protagonist against overzealous white expansion in the West.³⁵ Griffith’s use of Native Americans in a positive light is somewhat surprising given his glorification of the Ku Klux Klan in his seminal work *Birth of a Nation* (1915). There were elements of the

³⁴ Richard Pratt, "The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites," in *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian," 1880-1900*, ed. Francis Paul. Prucha (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 271.

³⁵ John White, *Westerns* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 11.

noble savage trope present in these films, but it was still a more compassionate narrative than what was to come in the 1920s. In addition, Thomas H. Ince, the father of the modern movie studio, released his film *Across the Plains* (1911) depicting an Indian protagonist fighting off an aggressive white settler whose own daughter stands with the tribe against her father. The real villain of Ince's film was alcohol, as the movie was part of the growing temperance movement of the 1910s.³⁶ Of course, the temperance movement itself was part of the larger Progressive ideology, which believed that alcohol abuse was one of the evils keeping Native Americans from reaching their full potential.

The concept of Indian agency also found a home in some of the early silent westerns of the 1910s and 1920s. Similar to the Wild West Shows, many Indians, especially the Cheyenne and Sioux, took advantage of the growing western genre. Nearly twenty percent of all American cinema created in the 1910s consisted of westerns. Thomas Ince, instrumental in giving Native Americans roles in film, utilized them in many of his movies including, *The Invaders* (1912).³⁷ The film was of particular importance because it stressed the notion that the true invaders were white Americans who had seized Indian land at the cost of culture and honor. Although a rehashing of the noble savage archetype, it demonstrates a clearer focus on the aggression of white settlement. Sadly, the idea of portraying Native American culture positively in any sort of mainstream medium would practically disappear following these early films. It was not a permanent disappearance, but a notable one.

³⁶ "Synopsis of Current Films," *The Nickelodeon* (Jan-Mar 1911), accessed April 26, 2017, <http://archive.org/stream/nickelodeon05elec#page/n11/mode/2up>.

³⁷ White, *Westerns*, 14-15.

Indian agency, the noble savage, and the idea of providing the Native American perspectives through film would not disappear completely from the world of cinema, but by the 1920s, a new type of Indian had firmly ascended, the villain. The Indian as villain was nothing new to the world of American popular culture. In the mid-1800s, the Beadles Dime Novels began their run with *Maleska: Indian Wife of the White Hunter* (1860), which not only depicts Indian savagery, but goes as far as to have the mixed-race son of the Indian wife and white hunter kill himself upon discovering his mixed heritage.³⁸ The mere thought of having blood tainted by that of a wild savage proved too much to bear. In the world of cinema, James Cruze's *The Covered Wagon* (1923) was a watershed moment that firmly established the dominant role of Native Americans as villains in both film and cartoons. *The Covered Wagon* is considered to be the first epic film not directed by Griffith and the tone of the film differed markedly from those that came before it. Although many of the Indians in *The Covered Wagon* were played by actual Native Americans, the plot of the film differed from those of D.W. Griffith, Thomas Ince, and others. Now Indians were simply a horde or savages standing in the way of the wagon train. Gone were the days of the decade past of filmmakers questioning the morality of westward expansion. The notion that white settlement of the West was the truly noble endeavor, and that the savage was nothing more than obstacle to progress, emerged triumphant.

The movie trope introduced in *The Covered Wagon* that became a mainstay of Westerns was the concept of circling the wagons while wild Indians stormed from the hillside shooting arrows with abandon. This image became so pervasive that it replaced

³⁸ Martyn Lyons, *Books: A Living History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 156.

the real history of wagon trains. Wagons often encamped in circles or squares, but rarely as a defensive shield from Indian attack. Rather, the circling of wagons often had more to do with corralling animals and creating a break from the strong winds or dust storms on the plains.³⁹ Historical accuracy aside, this film created a line of demarcation that made it clear who were going to be good guys and bad guys in westerns. Building upon the legacy started in *The Covered Wagon*, legendary filmmaker John Ford once stated: “Y’know, I’ve killed more Indians than Custer, Beecher, and Chivington put together.”⁴⁰ It did not matter if he was statistically correct or not; what mattered is that Ford, and those like him, had thoroughly engrained the idea of the Indian villain into the American popular conscience. In the 2009 documentary *Reel Injun*, Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond argues that this imagery of the Indian villain, usually on the losing side of the battle, proved so pervasive that those of native heritage themselves often grew up believing they were the bad guys.⁴¹ White audiences have not dealt with this feeling in the realm of popular entertainment until recently. Continually being cast as the villain or a buffoon creates an air of cultural oppression and inferiority that stunts the development of pride in one’s own culture. Psychologically, if a person identifies culturally as those perceived as the villain, there will eventually be issues of self-esteem that develop. Given the concerted efforts by the American government to rid Indians of their Indianness, any additional messages that devalue Native American culture woven into popular culture only further the damage.

³⁹ Lyons, *Books: A Living History*, 156.

⁴⁰ Susan Tavarnetti, "Writing Indian Stereotype: The Role of the Screenplay in American Westerns," in *American Indians and Popular Culture. Media, Sports, and Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Hoffman (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012), 41.

⁴¹ *Reel Injun*, dir. Neil Diamond (Montreal: Rezolution Pictures, 2009).

By the 1920s, westerns and animation had grown in popularity, yet there had been little crossover between the two. The dominant cartoon series of the day were Felix the Cat, Farmer Al Falfa, Mutt and Jeff, Out of the Inkwell, Krazy Kat, and the Windsor McCay Cartoons. These cartoons universally avoided western settings and Native Americans.⁴² Even the rural-centric Farmer Al Falfa focused predominantly on interactions between the protagonist and an antagonist animal. The lack of Native American characters did not mean a corresponding lack of racism or insensitive portrayals. One needs look no further than Mutt and Jeff's *Darkest Africa* (1921) or *Slick Sleuths* (1926) for a prime example of cultural insensitivity. Adapted from the Mutt and Jeff comic strips, several of the animated adaptations featured the racist depictions of Africans that is closely associated with the minstrel show.⁴³ Yet, despite clearly no hesitation existed to lean on stereotypes and one-dimensional characters, Native Americans remained absent from these early cartoons, even those that that were focused on the West like the Mutt and Jeff short *Westward Whoa!* (1926).⁴⁴

The absence of Indians from early animation when they were so prevalent in live-action films has a reason. In order to understand the absence of Native Americans in animation, one has to consider who was creating these cartoons and the simple logistics of early animation. First, the majority of early cartoonists were located in the northeastern United States and typically of a European background, which potentially precluded them from having a knowledge or interest in the West. Clearly an interest in subjects of the

⁴² It is relatively impossible to say that there were no mentions or depictions of Native Americans in these cartoons since many have been destroyed and there are no record of them; however, of those that exist there are no clear examples of Native American characters.

⁴³ *Mutt and Jeff: The Original Animated Odd Couple*, dir. Ray Pointer (Los Angeles: Inkwell Images, 2005), DVD.

⁴⁴ Similar to the Farmer Al Falfa cartoons, this Mutt and Jeff cartoon used animals as the main antagonists.

Wild West existed given its popularity in the live-action medium, but it did not translate over into the work of early animators. Analyzing the cartoons of the day reveals that most of the cartoons portrayed an urban setting and dealt with issues that people living in cities might encounter on a daily basis. If the cartoons were set in foreign locales, they tended to be of a much more exotic nature, like Africa or India.

The second argument pertaining to the lack of western scenes is simply that animation remained a rudimentary art form. Animation was not the feature form of entertainment and animators rarely were allowed to explore beyond the simplest of movements and settings. This was not for a lack of want, but purely budgetary reasons. Filmmakers shooting westerns had bigger budgets, could shoot on location, and developed a familiarity with the material over time. When compared to the rough and tumble Westerns of the silver screen, the action in early cartoons was quite simplistic. In the world of animation, creating backdrops takes time and time means money. Animators routinely reuse settings in order to facilitate quicker and cheaper production. Basically, if the cityscape backdrop works and allows for the creation of various entertaining narratives, then there is no reason to waste time creating western settings.

Finally, although Westerns were pervasive in the cinema, they remained a niche genre. The animated shorts produced during this period were typically shown before whatever film was showing at the cinema. Therefore, producing cartoons with a broader appeal made sense. Most theaters were located in cities or larger towns, which meant that their audiences, even if not New York urbanites, would understand the general setting of the cartoon. There also remains the fact that a man falling down an open manhole cover

is funny no matter what film the viewer is about to see, whether it be a Cecil B. DeMille drama or D.W. Griffith epic. Often in animation, bare necessity rules the day.

Although much of the animation landscape remained fairly primitive during the 1920s, there were changes emerging in the industry. In the United States these began with the gradual introduction of studios devoted to cartoons; chief among them was the Disney Brothers Studios. Walt and Roy Disney got their start in animation working for the Laugh-O-Gram Studio. Laugh-O-Gram produced shorts to accompany feature films devoid of a target audience. Cartoons were produced to be innocuous enough to be viewed by children and adults alike. A staple of the early Laugh-O-Gram cartoons were scenes of dancing couples with crude sight gags that appealed to audiences of all ages. Despite their simplicity, these Laugh-O-Gram cartoons were important as many of Walt Disney's future endeavors appeared in them. Cartoons that would become classics, like *Cinderella*, and *Alice in Wonderland* had their genesis under the Laugh-O-Gram moniker. Even *Puss in Boots*, which would become a Pixar creation in 2011, was a subject of these early Walt Disney drawn creations.⁴⁵

The Laugh-O-Gram Studio's roster of talent in 1921-1923 included a veritable who's who of early animation pioneers: Friz Freleng, Ub Iwerks, and Carmen Maxwell who are responsible for creating Bugs Bunny, Mickey Mouse, and Bosko respectively. The burden of having this much talent under one roof ultimately led to the demise of Laugh-O-Gram. High salaries, rivalries, and conflict over the direction of the company proved too much to overcome. Shortly after Laugh-O-Gram went out of business, Walt

⁴⁵ Giannalberto Bendazzi, *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009), 62.

Disney sold his last movie camera and bought a ticket to Hollywood where he changed the face of animation in America.⁴⁶

Not only would Disney change the face of animation in America, but he would also provide one of the first depictions of Indians in cartoons. While Laugh-O-Gram Studios was in business, Disney, along with Ub Iwerks, produced the short ten-minute film *Alice's Wonderland* (1923) that would become the basis of the first major series of shorts produced by Disney's future Hollywood studios. These shorts became the *Alice Comedies*, a series of fifty-seven films, of which thirty-nine still exist. The *Alice Comedies* were a live-action and animation hybrid focusing on the adventures of Alice, played by Virginia Davis. Within the series, Alice's adventures were meant to lightly mimic those from *Alice in Wonderland* although any similarity was metaphorical.⁴⁷ In reality, the stories of Alice more closely resembled a child-friendly version of other heroine-driven serials like the *Perils of Pauline* (1914) and the *Exploits of Elaine* (1914).⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the story-telling device Disney adopted for Alice was effective and would allow animators to present more complex storylines without overstepping the limits of animation.

The *Alice Comedies* provide one of the earliest examples of the way animators would portray Indians in American cartoons for decades to come. In *Alice's Wild West Show* (1924), the protagonist Alice regales her friends with stories of her adventures in

⁴⁶ Leonard Maltin and Jerry Beck, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 29.

⁴⁷ Any reference to the actual *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll still fell under the protection of federal copyright law, which, at the time protected published works for the lifespan of the author plus fifty years.

⁴⁸ Raymond William. Stedman, *The Serials: Suspense and Drama by Installment* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 11-14.

the Wild West. Before the animated portion of the short begins, a brief live-action scene features a small white boy wearing a homemade headdress; Plains Indian-style of course. It seems innocuous enough until one realizes that this character is serving lemonade that acts as a stand-in for alcohol. Associating the Indian character with alcohol in this way is a modest jab at Native American culture. It serves the purpose of linking Indians to alcohol and referencing prohibition. If this scene were not enough to demonstrate the attitude toward ethnicity of the day, the next one drives it home. Alice is soon confronted by the appropriately named Irish gang leader Tubby O'Brien. Again, lending credence to the concept that these early cartoonists wrote what they experienced, Irish villains were common in early silent films and animation. Following the confrontation with O'Brien, Alice takes matters into her own hands and informs the audience, via title card, that she will tell them about her "experiences in the wild and wooly west."⁴⁹

In the next few seconds, audiences are introduced to what must be considered the earliest surviving portrayals of Native Americans in cinematic animation.⁵⁰ This singular cartoon introduces many of the standard tropes and characteristics that would come to define Native Americans in animation for decades to come, ranging from the music, to dress, to physiological appearance. Innocuous in nature to the audience of the day, and even perhaps the audience today, the importance of these early images of cartoon Indians cannot be overstated. Disney produced this cartoon and became the leader of the medium.

⁴⁹ *Alice's Wild West Show*, by Walt Disney. (Los Angeles: Disney Brothers Studios, 1924).

⁵⁰ While there may have been other brief allusions to Native Americans in cartoons this is the first cartoon to feature Indian characters tied to any form of action that still remains available for viewing.

Show business is a copycat industry and what worked for Disney, was sure to work for whoever else entered the genre.

Even before the first cartoon images appear on the screen it is made clear that Indians are on the warpath because the audience hears the rhythmic drumming and whooping that has become synonymous with Native Americans in film. The numerous sources concerning movie and television Indians fail to provide any terms for what exactly to call this music, but everyone knows what it means when they hear it. In films it is usually associated with rampaging Indians. While this cinematic score music shares similarities with the war chants of numerous tribes, it is clear that it is not an authentic representation of any actual Native American music.⁵¹

The origin of the music that represents Indians on screen is difficult to determine. In the late nineteenth century, American and European composers began to take interest in Native American musical themes. What slowly emerged in film and classical music was a hybrid of classical music structure and traditional Native American music. One manifestation of this hybrid is American composer Arthur Nevin's *Poia: Blackfoot Indian Legend, an Opera in Three Acts* (1910). In analyzing the sheet music and instructions for Nevin's opera, it is clear that he is utilizing the driving beat of Indian war songs, but augmenting them with traditional classical lyrical melodies.⁵²

The percussive beat of many traditional Native American songs was easily adaptable to western music. A quick listen to any of numerous tribal war songs uncovers

⁵¹ An exploration of Apache, Cherokee, Comanche, Lakota, and Navajo war chants reveals several syncopation similarities and a reliance on disjointed vocal rhythms coupled with a standard 4/4 beat.

⁵² Charles Skilton, "Realism in Indian Music," in *Studies in Musical Education and Aesthetics 14th Annual Meeting St. Louis, Mo 1918*, ed. Karl Gehrken (Hartford: Association, 1919), 110.

a relatively uniform 4/4 beat. This is the simple basis for any driving march or popular piece of music. What proves problematic is the vocal syncopation and chord progression. The most common modern example of “Indian” music is the much-maligned *War Chant* of Florida State University, known colloquially as the Tomahawk Chop. *War Chant* embodies all the classic elements of the music associated with Indians. It has the straightforward 4/4 beat, but replaces the unpleasing syncopation and parallel fifths of the actual war songs with flowing lyrics that adhere to a smoother perfect fourth chord sequence. Native Americans are not alone in suffering the bastardization of their music. The same general concept has been applied to what is typically referred to as the “China Medley”, which is what often accompanies the arrival of Chinese characters in classic films and cartoons when a simple gong did not suffice.

Ultimately, the music that has become synonymous with Indians in film has no concrete origin. It simply shares too many elements with music used in western classical music associated with war and conquest. The level of difference in a film score between a Roman march for conquest and a looming Indian raid is negligible at best. That does not mean it is not an important element of the creation of the Indian stereotype. As used in *Alice’s Wild West Show*, the aggressive tempo, major chord structure, and punchy notes clearly indicate that trouble is on the way. Trouble being what becomes synonymous with Indians in both film and cartoons.

Following the now cliché “Indian melody,” some of the first animated images of Native Americans appear on the screen. Instantly, contemporary viewers will notice a host of stereotypes. The scene starts just like Westerns of the day. A pack of Indians, riding wildly, rains a hail of arrows on a fast-moving stagecoach. No context whatsoever

is given for the pursuit. The scene has no plot other than Indians on the warpath. The idea of broken treaties or the encroachment of white settlers has been replaced by a simple formula of good versus bad. Our hero, Alice, is perched on top of the stagecoach shooting bullet after bullet with abandon to fend off the attackers.

The warpath music plays, the arrows fly, and the visual representation of Indians are ensconced in stereotypes that will follow them in cinema for decades to come. First, the Indians in pursuit wear feathers in their hair. In this case, there is no full Plains Indian headdress that became the standard in animated and live-action depictions. Instead these Indians have a single feather riding motionless in the back of their hair. Although featured prominently in the *Alice* short, the single-feather adornment was nothing new to the world of entertainment. One of the earliest stage examples of this form of costuming occurred in John Augustus Stone's *Metamora; or, the Last of the Wampanoags* (1829).⁵³ A drawing of the original actor from the play shows him in full "Indian" regalia complete with headband and feather. While the headwear of tribes varied, the feather and headband combination was not common, especially in times of intense physical activity like a battle.

The concept of the Indian headband became standard in depictions of Native Americans in popular culture. This image proved so pervasive that in the 1960s the counter-culture movement, which appropriated Native American culture, donned headbands in hopes of getting closer to their conceptions of pristine indigenous

⁵³ Sally Jones, "The First, but Not the Last of the "Vanishing Indians": Edwin Forrest and the Mythic Recreations of the Native Population," in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, ed. S. Elizabeth Bird (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), 13-14.

cultures.⁵⁴ Many of those wearing these headbands were unaware that this look was really a product of costuming necessity. Whether in *Metamora* or any number of Hollywood Westerns, the Indian headband was meant to be functional. It solved the problem of keeping feathers in place and holding on wigs while filming scenes. It had no actual cultural significance to the Indians being portrayed on screen.⁵⁵ That image though, has become so engrained in American culture that even with the many steps forward in understanding indigenous history, it remains the standard device when depicting Indians in both fictional, and supposedly historic, settings.

The second major feature of the Indians in *Alice's Wild West Show* is their physical appearance. Before going into the physical appearance, it is important to stress that this is an analysis of cartoons. By their nature, cartoons exaggerate physical appearance, and in the less enlightened years of the early-twentieth century this often meant creating physical archetypes that took basic features and accentuated them. In the case of Native Americans, two distinct physical features became synonymous with animated portrayals, bulbous noses and round faces. Plenty of Native Americans do have bulbous noses and round faces, but there are also plenty of other people of other ethnicities with those same features. Throughout the years, the aquiline nose has been used when depicting warriors or great leaders. An examination of the great statues of Rome or George Washington's profile on an United States' quarter reveals the same aquiline nose that was used when carving drug store cigar Indians. In animation, the aquiline nose was exaggerated, becoming the bulbous nose.

⁵⁴ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 163.

⁵⁵ *Reel Injun*. Directed by Neil Diamond, Rezolution Pictures, 2009.

The issue is not whether there is validity in the exaggerated features rather that it became the defining look of Indians in cartoons. The problems with creating stereotypes of physical identity are multi-faceted. On the surface, a joking exchange of “funny, you don’t look Indian”, may seem innocuous, but it has real world ramifications. For instance, ancestral anatomical features change over time through the mixing of cultures. While this seems obvious to many people, it does not always register when it comes to economic, cultural, or political issues. For instance, in 1993 in an interview concerning bringing Indian casinos to New York, Donald Trump stated that “They don’t look like Indians to me.”⁵⁶ Starting with *Alice’s Wild West Show*, American audiences were inundated with an image of what Indianness was supposed to be; yet it was an image that was only based on a sliver of reality. Ultimately, what *Alice’s Wild West Show* represents is a culmination of all the previous Indian archetypes manifesting themselves in the earliest animated depiction of Native Americans.

At the end of the 1920s, the Silent Age of Animation came to a close with the release of Walt Disney’s *Steamboat Willie* (1928) that successfully synced animation with music and sound effects. The era of silent cartoons provided few examples of Indians in animation, but the overall period of silent cinema played an important role in developing the archetypes and tropes that became synonymous with Native Americans in cinematic cartoons. The transition from sympathetic figures facilitated by the noble savage motif, to the depiction of Indian as villains dominated the cinematic world for

⁵⁶ Gillian Brockell, ““They don’t look like Indians to me.” Donald Trump on Native American Casinos 1993,” *The Washington Post* video, 5:52, July 1, 2016, accessed October 16, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/they-dont-look-like-indians-to-me-donald-trump-on-native-american-casinos-in-1993/2016/07/01/20736038-3fd4-11e6-9e16-4cf01a41dec_b_video.html.

decades to come and remains a contentious issue today. What the era lacked in examples of Indians in animation is made up for in laying the foundation for interpretation. The chapters that follow will demonstrate that the depiction of Native Americans in cartoons, unlike live-action films, had no pre-existing alternative. There were few Native American animators and no consultation with tribes to clarify cultural issues. The absence of Native American participation created a cultural misrepresentation of Indians in cartoons that animators would reinforce for decades to come. Without any semblance of Indian agency in animation, cartoons continually and perpetually reinforced the same stereotypes well into the late-twentieth century.

CHAPTER II

FROM VILLAIN TO DUPES: NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE GOLDEN AGE OF ANIMATION

In 1928, the release of *Steamboat Willie* ended the Silent Era of animation and introduced the oft-touted Golden Age. This period spanned from roughly 1928 well into the 1960s, overlapping with the ominous sounding Dark Age of animation. This era saw the development of many of the classic cartoon franchises that are still seen today, from Looney Tunes, to Popeye, to the Disney classics that pioneered feature-length animation. Underlying this era was a tremendous amount of change within the United States and abroad. The New Deal, World War II, the Cold War, and the early Civil Rights Movement all influenced popular culture; yet animation remained frozen in time when it came to its depiction of American values and cultural identities. This era saw the emergence of new attitudes toward Indians by way of the Indian New Deal in the 1930s, only to be replaced by the assimilationist attitudes of the past that re-emerge in the mid-1940s in the form of Indian termination policy. Despite the changing discourse about

Native Americans in Washington D.C., the depiction of Indians in animation remained relatively uniform. With few exceptions, cartoons of the Golden Era portrayed Indians as villain, or, a new type of villain, the bumbling buffoon. This chapter explores political and cultural developments for Native Americans in the United States and juxtaposes them to depictions in cartoons. In addition, it compares the depictions of Native Americans in live-action film to animation. This analysis exposes that, while this may be considered the Golden Age for animation due to its proliferation into popular culture, it is, in reality, a gilded age of animation when it comes to the development of cultural awareness and identity for Native Americans.

The outbreak of the Great Depression led to a drastic change in U.S. policy toward Native Americans because of the creation of the Indian Reorganization Act championed by John Collier. Since 1887, federal policy toward Native Americans had manifested itself in the form of the Dawes Act. Congressman Henry Dawes, who proposed the act, believed in the power of Indian citizenship and private property ownership. In order to be civilized, Dawes thought that Indians should “wear civilized clothes... cultivate the ground, live in houses, ride in Studebaker wagons, send children to school,... [and] own property.”⁵⁷ Those who supported the Dawes Act believed tribal life was holding Indians back from becoming effective citizens. Noted Indian anthropologist of the day Alice Fletcher contributed to writing the Dawes Act. Fletcher argued that with the Dawes Act the “Indian may now become a free man; free from the thralldom of the tribe, freed from the domination of the reservation system; free to enter into the body of our citizens.” She went as far as to say, “This bill may therefore be

⁵⁷ Jon S. Blackman, *Oklahoma's Indian New Deal* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), 23

considered as the Magna Carta of the Indians of our country.”⁵⁸ The Dawes Act was proto-Progressivism. It is social tinkering meant to reshape and refine Native Americans into a supposedly superior model of white civilized society.

The Dawes Act stressed that communal ownership of property was keeping Native Americans from adequately assimilating into mainstream American culture. The proponents of the act lauded the benefits of private land ownership over communal ownership and pointed to the fact that disseminating land to individual Indians was far better than the old American policy of broken treaties and land confiscation. Not all American leaders agreed with these sentiments. Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado warned that “to despoil the Indians of their lands” would make them “vagabonds on the face of the earth.”⁵⁹ For Teller, the true reason for the Dawes Act was to justify taking Indian lands and opening them for white settlement. It was greed shrouded in the name of progress. Teller relentlessly fought against American land acquisition in the name of greed. He became an outspoken opponent of U.S. intervention into Cuba during the Spanish American War by authoring the Teller Amendment, which stated the U.S. had no intention of annexing Cuba.

Despite the opposition to the Dawes Act, it passed and was signed into law by President Grover Cleveland on February 8, 1887. The effect of the act was devastating for Native Americans. The amount of Indian-owned land decreased from 138 million acres in 1887 to 48 million acres in 1934.⁶⁰ In addition to the loss of land, the Curtis Act

⁵⁸ Eve Darian-Smith, *Religion, Race, Rights: Landmarks in the History of Modern Anglo-American Law* (Oxford: Hart Pub., 2010), 184.

⁵⁹ D. S. Otis and Francis Paul Prucha, *The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Books on Demand, 2007), 18-19.

⁶⁰ Brian K. Landsberg, ed., "Indian General Allotment Act (Dawes Act, 1887)," in *Major Acts of Congress*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 190.

of 1898 not only extended the Dawes Act to the Five Tribes, but eliminated self-government and tribal courts. The situation only worsened with the passage of the Burke Act in 1906, which created a twenty-five year probationary period in cases of citizenship involving land allotments.⁶¹ The act was inherently paternalistic. It gave the Secretary of the Interior sweeping powers over Indians who accepted land allotments. This included the ability to declare potential individual Indians too incompetent to own land and determine the legal heirs of allotted lands.⁶² The end goal was to foster citizenship among Native Americans. However, it came with the caveat that citizenship was reliant on assimilating into modern society in a way acceptable to the federal government. Consequently, many Indians did not have the ability to utilize the power of their vote or appeal to their representatives in land or other political disputes in any arena of politics, from local to federal matters, due to the lack of citizenship during the probationary period.

The arrival of the Great Depression brought an end to the Dawes Act-era of U.S. policy toward Native Americans. Beginning in the 1920s, a new kind of Indian policy reformer appeared. These reformers knew that U.S. policy had failed Indians and that the Dawes Act had done more damage than good. It was clear that private land ownership was nothing more than greed in disguise. The election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, and his subsequent introduction of the New Deal, brought about the opportunity to try something different.

⁶¹ Patrick Russell. LeBeau, *Term Paper Resource Guide to American Indian History* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 2009), 160-161.

⁶² M. Kaye Tatro, "Burke Act 1906," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, 2009, accessed November 28, 2017, <http://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=BU010>.

The champion of what became known as the Indian New Deal was Roosevelt's Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, John Collier. Collier advocated ending the tenants of private ownership touted by the Dawes Act in favor of re-accentuating tribal life. At heart, he was a cultural pluralist. Collier's interest in Native Americans began in 1920 when artist Mabel Dodge introduced him to Pueblo Indians in Taos, New Mexico.⁶³ After studying the Pueblo for a year, Collier cultivated his ideas concerning the plight of Native Americans under the Dawes Act. Collier's interpretation of what was wrong with Indian policy held that the departure from tribal life and culture that was leading to a depressed state for many Native Americans. In 1923, Collier published the article "Plundering the Pueblo Indians" in *Sunset* magazine.⁶⁴ The article painted a picture of the Pueblo as a resilient people who had survived for centuries, but now were on the precipice of destruction due to land-grabbing interests and poor federal policy. Over the course of the next decade, Collier continued to challenge the Dawes Act and was joined by many others who felt that there had to be a better way.

President Roosevelt came into office knowing he wanted to change the course of Indian policy. Roosevelt planned to appoint an Indian as Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but was talked out of it by Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana who said that he did not know of an Indian capable of the job. Following Wheeler's dissuasion, Roosevelt turned his sights to either Harold Ickes or John Collier. Both were qualified for the position having backgrounds in researching Indian issues. Fortunately

⁶³ Laurence M. Hauptmann, *The Iroquois and the New Deal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 27.

⁶⁴ John Collier, "Plundering the Pueblo Indians | NEH," J. Willard Marriott Digital Library, January 20, 2010, accessed November 1, 2017, <https://collections.lib.utah.edu/details?id=1151861>.

for Collier, Ickes took the position of Secretary of the Interior. Despite having some personal issues with Collier, Ickes advocated that he be given the commissionership of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.⁶⁵

On June 18, 1934, a little over a year after taking office, John Collier began overseeing the implementation of the Indian Reorganization Act. The preamble explained the intent of the act: “To conserve and develop Indian lands and resources; to extend to Indians the right to form businesses and other organizations; to establish a credit system for Indians; to grant certain rights of home rule to Indians; to provide for vocational education for Indians; and for other purposes.”⁶⁶ The fundamental aim of the act was to return a level of tribal agency to Native Americans. In fitting with Collier’s views on Indian relations, tribes would have the right to organize for their common welfare. The act did not return lands already sold into private ownership to Native Americans, but it did provide that lands resting in the hands of the federal government could be given back to tribes over time. Compared to the Dawes Act, the Indian Reorganization Act represented a major step forward in federal Indian policy. But its implementation and reception proved far from perfect, and it was not well received by those it was intended to benefit.

Keeping with the spirit of tribal action being the cornerstone of Indian recovery, Section 18 of the Indian Reorganization Act required that tribes approve the act within one year of its effective date. Collier was confident after his experiences living among and study of Native Americans that the act would be eagerly accepted. This was not the

⁶⁵ Elmer R. Rusco, *A Fateful Time: The Background and Legislative History of the Indian Reorganization Act* (Wilbur S. Shepperson Series in History and Humanities) (University of Nevada, 2000), 177-180.

⁶⁶ Vine Deloria, ed., *The Indian Reorganization Act: Congresses and Bills* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002), 20.

case. In total, 172 tribes approved the act, while 73 rejected it.⁶⁷ The problem was that Indian New Deal, just as its predecessors, was a paternalistic measure handed down to Native Americans by white society. In 1986, the founder of the American Indian Historical Society, Rupert Costo, reflected upon the Indian Reorganization Act and echoed the prevailing sentiment of many of the tribes that opposed it. Costo argued “Collier did not invent self-government: the right of Indians to make their own decisions, to make their own mistakes, to control their own destiny.” The criticism seems aimed at the act, and part of it was, but the real problem was Collier. The prevailing view of Collier was that he was an idealist dictator.⁶⁸ Collier failed to realize what reformers before him, and those after him failed to realize; there is no such thing as “an” Indian. The Indian Reorganization Act, like similar acts before it, treated all Indians and tribes exactly the same regardless of location, history, or culture. When Collier spoke of tribal autonomy, progress, and education, he believed that all tribes strove for the same goals. For Collier, like other Americans, Indians were simply monolithic Indians.

Despite its shortcomings, the Indian New Deal did help Indian communities weather the storm of the Great Depression, and Collier’s views on cultural pluralism were, if misguided, still a welcome departure from the previous held notions of outright assimilation. Unfortunately for Native American tribes, Collier’s views would not last past the end of World War II. During the 1940s, conditions on many reservations worsened. The U.S. Senate commissioned a survey of these reservations in 1943 and

⁶⁷ Alysa Landry, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt: A New Deal for Indians," Indian Country Media Network, October 09, 2016, accessed November 15, 2016, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/franklin-delano-roosevelt-a-new-deal-for-indians/>.

⁶⁸ Brian W. Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1991), 333-336.

found that the Bureau of Indian Affairs had not effectively administered tribal affairs and that federal protection of tribal unity was not working.⁶⁹ The result of this survey was the impending two decades of the policy of termination.

Fueled by changing attitudes toward cultural pluralism and a rise of conservatism after World War II, termination became the preferred method of dealing with what many in the federal government considered the continuing Indian problem. In short, Collier's experiment in tribalism had failed and it was time again to force assimilation onto Native Americans.⁷⁰ Whereas the core goal of the Indian Reorganization Act had been to encourage Indians to embrace tribal life, the goal of termination was to force Indians to embrace modern urban life. This act resembled the Progressive Era belief that modern white society was better than tribal life. From 1945 to 1956, the federal government enacted numerous laws designed to encourage Indians to accept modern life and migrate to urban areas. This included the termination of tribal sovereignty. Between 1953 and 1964, over 100 tribes were terminated, over a million acres of land removed from trust status, and thousands of Native Americans lost their tribal affiliations.⁷¹ It was a concerted policy of assimilation, and would be the prevailing attitude toward Native Americans throughout the Golden Age of animation. This assimilationist attitude seeped into animation where Native Americans characters were cast as cultural outsiders in either villainous or ignorant roles.

⁶⁹ Paul G. McHugh, *Aboriginal Title: The Modern Jurisprudence of Tribal Land Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 35.

⁷⁰ Peter Iverson and Albert Hurtado, eds., *Major Problems in American Indian History* (Lexington, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1994), 484-484.

⁷¹ "Land Tenure Issues," ILTF, accessed July 10, 2015, <https://iltf.org/land-issues/issues/>.

When Walt Disney Studios released *Steamboat Willie* in November of 1928, the general public was gleefully unaware of the momentous changes to the world that were on the way. Within a year of the short's release, the American stock market collapsed and the Great Depression followed. What was financially disastrous for many became an economic and popularity boon for the animation and film industry. The hard times and suffering of the Great Depression made the escapism of entertainment a necessity. As live-action film boomed, so too did animation. Audiences demanded cartoon shorts before the movies they had paid their hard-earned money to see, and the up-and-coming animations studios were happy to comply. Slowly over the course of the next decade, Native American characters found their way into more and more cartoon shorts, but almost universally as one dimensional in their depiction.

The following pages will analyze eight cartoons spanning from 1933 to 1960 that act as excellent examples of the solidification of Indian character stereotypes during the Golden Age of animation. The discussion of these cartoons explores the studios behind them, how Native Americans were depicted, and where they fit in the broader popular culture landscape at the time.

The analysis of the Golden Age requires discussion of a group of cartoons known as the "Censored Eleven", Looney Tunes cartoons that feature racist depictions of African Americans produced between 1931 to 1944. A brief look at the titles of a few of the cartoons provides a good indication as to why their content has been banned by Warner Brothers Pictures. They include: *Uncle Tom's Bungalow* (1937), *Jungle Jitters* (1938), *Coal Black and de Sebben Dwarfs* (1943), and *Goldilocks and the Jivin' Bears* (1944). Because of their racist depictions of African Americans, Warner Brothers banned

these cartoons from any future release in 1968. Although these cartoons did find their way onto low-budget DVD and VHS tape releases that Warner Brothers could not control, there has only been one official theatrical showing of them since 1968.⁷² This raises the question of why cartoons depicting racist depictions of African Americans warranted banning, but those with clearly racist depictions of Native Americans were allowed to remain available for public consumption. The answer is difficult to surmise. Trying to quantify one form of racism over another is a dubious practice to say the least. The discussion of the various cartoons in this chapter and those to come sheds light on why Native American stereotypes persist, whereas others slowly fade into the past.

By the early 1930s, Walt Disney Studios was already the standard-bearer in the animation industry, but there were plenty of other studios looking to capitalize on the craze. One of these was Van Beuren Pictures that started when Amedee J. Van Beuren purchased Fables studio in 1928. Fables was one of the earliest animation studios, founded in 1920, but was not able to weather the expenses of converting from silent animation to sound. While the Wild West was not a common subject of the animation industry in the 1920s, the industry itself was fairly wild. Soaring costs, loose contracts, staff poaching, and dubious business practices led to constant upheaval. Van Beuren Pictures tried to produce animation inexpensively. Instead of cultivating new narratives, their cartoons relied on rehashing stories from the past. They were not the first studio to capitalize on pre-existing intellectual properties, but relied on it more than other companies. The result of their pilfering of pre-existing narratives was the creation of the

⁷² Brian D. Behnken and Gregory D. Smithers, *Racism in American Popular Media: From Aunt Jemima to the Frito Bandito* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, an Imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, 2015), 100.

Aesop's Fables series of cartoons.⁷³ From this series the first example of Golden Age animation of Native Americans emerges.

Produced in the 1933, *Aesop's Fables "Indian Whoopie"* starring the Van Beuren Pictures character Cubby Bear serves as one of the earliest examples of Native American imagery in Golden Age animation. The character of Cubby Bear was one of Van Beuren's attempts to capitalize on Disney's successful serialization of animated characters, but did not have the same mass appeal as Mickey Mouse, Pluto, or Goofy, who had all been introduced by 1933. Even before the first animation appears on screen, the sound of the cartoon begins and it is the all-too-stereotypical "Indian Melody" discussed in the previous chapter. The music sets the tone that this cartoon will feature Indians of the villainous variety. The animated portion of *Indian Whoopie* starts with Cubby Bear sitting at a table reading a book that is soon revealed to be the story of John Smith and Pocahontas, which is an oft-visited narrative in animation. It is rarely, if ever, handled with the care and sensitivity it deserves. Fortunately, in the context of this particular cartoon, the mentioning of Pocahontas and John Smith has only a cursory level of importance.⁷⁴

Soon, the hero of the cartoon, Cubby Bear, falls asleep and finds himself in the woods in the guise of John Smith collecting firewood with the help of his woodpecker companion. The background score of this portion of the cartoon is a jaunty adaptation of the children's nursery rhyme "Ten Little Indians," serving as a reminder of how musical cues can clearly establish the tone of a cartoon. The audience is introduced to the first

⁷³ Barrier, Michael. *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) pp.34-5

⁷⁴ *Indian Whoopie*, dir. Mannie Davis (New York: Van Beuren Studios, 1933).

Indian on screen while Cubby Bear sleeps in his tent snoring wildly. Hunched over, sneaking behind rocks, with a tomahawk in hand and two feathers on his head, the animated Indian that was introduced ten years prior in *Alice's Wild West Show* has reappeared. Spurred by nothing more than the sheer presence of Cubby Bear, this lone Indian scout heads to a tree that absurdly has a telephone embedded into it. Even in this absurd scene there is a stereotypical insult toward Native Americans. The Indian who is trying to reach the chief has to pay for his phone call; instead of using a coin, he uses the beads holding up his pants until they are all gone forcing him to resort to wearing a barrel. The use of beads as currency is a continuous trope in animation, one that likely stems from a confluence of myth and misinformation surrounding the alleged Dutch purchase of Manhattan Island from the Lenape for \$24-worth of beads in 1626.

The first look at the tribe in the cartoon renders tropes that will appear repeatedly in animated depictions of Native Americans. The chief, presumably Chief Powhatan, is shirtless, overweight, and adorned in a full Plains Indian headdress. As for Pocahontas, she falls firmly into the category of Indian maiden. Just like her successor in the 1995 version of the story, she is overtly sexualized, resembling a Roaring Twenties flapper dancing suggestively while other members of the tribe beat wildly on drums in the background. On the phone, Chief Powhatan, speaks and introduces another recurring trope. During the Golden Age of animation the prevailing language of Native Americans in cartoons was the stereotypical “how” and “ugh”. There is no real consensus as to why this type of speech became synonymous with Indians. The prevailing interpretation suggests it stems from a bastardization of existing greetings in various Indian languages. The use of “ugh” has its origins in James Fennimore Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Tales*.

Popular theories highlight the Muscogee language's use of "hvo" as an informal affirmation toward a speaker, or the Sioux phrase "Háu kola," that translates to "Hello friend" as the basis for the use of "how" in Indian dialog.⁷⁵

Informed of the interloper, the chief sends his tribe on the warpath. With arrows and tomahawks flying at will, Cubby Bear attempts to fend off the marauding tribe the best he can. In the mass of humanity that is the Indians on the warpath another stereotype appears. At the end of the train of Indians there is a depiction of an effeminate male Indian. Instead of whooping with his hand over his mouth like the others, this Indian is high-step strutting and powdering his nose. It is, of course, a gay stereotype. Shortly after this scene, the same Indian fires an arrow at Cubby Bear only for it to be sent back his way, flying toward his protruding rear end and, seemingly to his delight, between his legs. It is unlikely that this was recognition of Native American reverence for two-spirited people.⁷⁶ More likely, it was a cheap play for laughs at the cost of chiding effeminate males. Eventually, Cubby Bear is overwhelmed by the Indian forces, tied up, and sentenced to death by the chief. With no reasoning whatsoever, Pocahontas pleads for his life to be spared, and just as she goes to embrace him, Cubby wakes up from his dream. It is a jarring ending to a cartoon that had to that point built a somewhat coherent narrative.

This cartoon fits in broader scope of Native American portrayals because it establishes stereotypes that became so prevalent in the genre. Clearly, the Indians in this cartoon are villains, but importantly, they are villains without any causation for their

⁷⁵ Joanna Hearne, *"Smoke Signals": Native Cinema Rising* (Lincoln (Nebraska): University of Nebraska Press, 2012), 213.

⁷⁶ For a discussion of gender identity and sexuality among Native Americans see *Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality* ed. Sue-Ellen Jacobs (2005).

actions other than the mere presence of a white person. The image of the overweight chief, the Indian maiden, the “ugh speak”, and the dancing and wild drum playing all became re-occurring tropes in cartoons.

While attitudes toward Native Americans changed in federal government over the 1930s, the attitudes toward them in popular culture remained relatively the same. By the late 1930s, Indians were a mainstay in live-action Westerns. As antagonists, Indians somewhat disappeared in the early 1930s in favor of darker content in Westerns focusing on outlaws or other unsavory characters. The major rebirth of Indians as antagonists in Westerns can be attributed to John Ford who used Indians to create a horror film-like psychological threat in his classic 1939 films, *Stagecoach* and *Drums Along the Mohawk*. In Ford’s films, Indians clearly serve as the villains standing in the way of white progress in the West. Cartoons, however, did not enjoy the luxury of long running times to establish psychological narratives, but they still hit upon deep-rooted aspects of Indian villainy in the American psyche.

The best example of this is Fleischer Studios’ series of Popeye cartoons. Headed by Max Fleischer, this studio produced two of the most iconic characters of the Golden Age of animation, Popeye the Sailor and Betty Boop. Having begun its corporate existence as Inkwell Studios, Fleischer Studios quickly rose to become arguably the second most prominent animation studio of the 1930s. Unlike, Walt Disney, Max Fleischer lacked a keen sense of business acumen that held his company back at times. An example of Fleischer’s business shortcomings is that the studio’s number one asset, Popeye the Sailor, was only on loan from King Features Syndicate, which owned the

rights to the Popeye comic strip.⁷⁷ What Fleischer lacked in business sense he made up for in innovation and artistic expression. Fleischer's cartoons are widely regarded as some of the most psychologically stimulating and innovative of the day.⁷⁸

One of the limitations that both live-action and animation studios faced in the 1930s concerned the implementation of the Motion Picture Production Code. Prior to 1934, only loose restrictions existed on the content of media produced for cinematic consumption. This all changed in 1934 when studio heads in Hollywood decided that it would be more beneficial to adopt a voluntary code of censorship than to risk federal intervention. One of the reasons for the proliferation of more violent films in the latter-1930s was that the Code typically concerned itself with issues of sexuality.⁷⁹ Fleischer pushed the post-Code limits in his cartoons by continuing to use adult themes and sexuality.

What Popeye the Sailor represented in Fleischer's cartoons was masculinity pure and simple. He was the protector of his woman Olive Oyl and was never in the wrong. This concept inserted Popeye into situations with Native American antagonists. In the history of Golden Age Popeye cartoons, three examples of Indian antagonists exist: *I Yam What I Yam* (1933); *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh* (1938); and *Wigwam Whoopee* (1945). All three shorts feature similar tropes, but it is *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh* that warrants the closest scrutiny.

⁷⁷ Leonard Maltin and Jerry Beck, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 83.

⁷⁸ Ray Pointer, *The Art and Inventions of Max Fleischer: American Animation Pioneer* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Publishers, 2016), 5, 65-70.

⁷⁹ Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Pre-code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema, 1930-1934* (Columbia University Press, 1999), 337.

Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh starts with what, by now, should be understood as commonplace when dealing with Indians in animation, the sound of the “Indian Melody”. Living up to his reputation as a skilled animator, the cartoon is beautifully animated with flowing scenes that are far beyond the works of those demonstrated in Van Beuren’s *Indian Whoopie*. The animated scenes begin with an homage to one of the most iconic tropes of Native Americans on film, the smoke signal. Out of nowhere a single Indian climbs the towering pillar of smoke and peers over the horizon, and the audience quickly learns what he is looking for, a squaw for his chief. At this point the cartoon introduces one its most enduring aspects, *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh*’s song, which is sang to the tune of the standard Indian melody.⁸⁰

*Me, Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh,
Gotta have a squaw!
Oh, heap big warrior,
Better look around!*

*Me, Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh,
Not a kid no more!
Oh, bide my time with squaw
And settle down!*

*I gotta have 'em princess!
So we'll make 'em pow-wow!
Me gotta find 'em princess!*

*Me, Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh,
Gotta have a squaw!*

Just as the chief in *Indian Whoopie*, *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh* is portrayed as overweight, having a giant bulbous nose, and a full Plains Indian headdress. Following the completion of the song, the cartoon cuts to Popeye and Olive Oyl making their way

⁸⁰ *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh*, dir. Dave Fleischer, by Willard Bowsky and George Germanetti (United States: Paramount Pictures, Inc., 1938).

across the prairie by way of stubborn donkey. Through a series of circumstances, Olive Oyl finds herself kicked by the donkey into the company of Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh. The chief immediately begins to pamper his newfound “squaw” by adorning her in beads and a two-feather headdress. Popeye, now carrying the donkey on his back, stumbles upon the tribe and sees Olive Oyl fawning over the chief, to which Popeye mutters “We ain’t got no time to see no circus.” What ensues is a classic Popeye plot in which he must overcome the newfound suitor for Olive Oyl’s affections. In this case, the chief challenges Popeye to prove himself as a warrior. He demands that Popeye build a fire with two sticks and shoot a bow and arrow effectively before he will agree to a duel for Olive Oyl’s hand. One of the hallmarks of Popeye cartoons is the side-dialog that constantly flows from Popeye. In this instance, not only does he make reference to Indians being part of a circus, but he mentions getting the “scalp treatment” and rounding up the Indians “single file, Injun style.”

As the cartoon continues, Popeye is bested by the chief in a tomahawk duel due to interference from other Indians and finds himself wrapped to a stake surrounded by fire. As is common in a Popeye cartoon, fortune smiles upon Popeye as his can of spinach falls into the fire, heats up, and pops into his mouth. With his vitality in place, Popeye quickly proves himself superior to his Indian antagonists by building a fire out of two full-size logs while running on top of one and creating a full-size tree bow and arrow. The culmination of all this is that Popeye wallops the chief with one final blow that not only knocks the chief off of his chair, but flips the headdress onto Popeye. This results in the chief bowing in front of Popeye as if he was his new leader. The cartoon ends with Popeye singing the following lyrics to his theme song:

*I licked 'em, and how wow!
There'll be no more Pow-wow!
Says Popeye The Sailor Man!*

With those closing words, Popeye less-than-eloquently summarized what white society had been trying to do to Indians for centuries, defeat them and eliminate their culture. This cartoon came out in 1938, which was right in the heart of the Indian New Deal. America was supposedly changing its stance toward Native Americans to one of increased acceptance of cultural pluralism and the benefits of tribal life. But this was not reflected in popular culture. American film, literature, and cartoons developed a narrative of white superiority over the inept and villainous Indian. In his memoir *Buffalo for the Broken Heart: Restoring Life to a Black Hills Ranch*, American wildlife biologist Dan O'Brien argues that white Americans have long used Native Americans as a foil to help facilitate the construction of the American Adam. The eradication of Indian savagery, he asserts, served as a tool to create a pure American that exuded masculinity.⁸¹ While this may not have been the intent of Fleischer Studios when it released *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh*, along with others featuring similar stories, it certainly reinforces this depiction. Popeye acts as the epitome of white American masculinity. He does not just right injustices, he rights those injustices in which he has a vested interest. For Popeye it was Olive Oyl; for white America it was land and the propagation of its version of civilized society.

In 1939, Fleischer Studios released the last theatrical Betty Boop short called *Rhythm of the Reservation*, which featured a few unique aspects that add to the

⁸¹ Peter L. Bayers, "'A New American Adam?': White Western Masculinity and American Indians in Dan O'Brien's *Buffalo for the Broken Heart: Restoring Life to a Black Hills Ranch*," *Western American Literature* 49, no. 4 (2015): 375-397, accessed September 3, 2016.

developing narrative of Native Americans in cartoons. If one was to conduct an informal poll of people and ask them what they thought about Indians in animation from the Golden Age what would just as likely come to mind as the villainous Indian is the idea of the dumb Indian. This is certainly the case in *Rhythm of the Reservation*. The basic plot of the cartoon is similar to many other Betty Boop cartoons, Betty catches the eye of a lustful male, leading to trouble between that man and his significant other. On route to a performance, Betty pulls her jalopy full of musical instruments for Betty Boop's Swing Band up to the Wigwam Beauty Shoppe that has a sign recommending that customers try their "scalp treatment." Boop is unfazed by the sign and seems to be genuinely titillated to find Indians on her route.⁸²

A few key differences from the cartoons previously discussed emerge here. In this short, the Indians are firmly placed within the confines of present-day 1939. This is not a time traveling fantasy like *Indian Whoopie* or an undefined timeframe like *Big Chief Ugh-Amugh-Ugh*. Upon seeing Betty, the main male Indian character is immediately infatuated with the scantily clad white beauty. This cartoon also enjoys the distinction of not depicting a single Indian as a villain; even the unnamed Indian protagonist's wife is not depicted in an overly-negative way. She is simply shown being rightfully perturbed that her husband gave away a tom-tom drum to Betty and fallen for her. Instead of villainy, this cartoon relies on the trope of the dumb Indian.

When Betty arrives at the Indian settlement, her car is full of musical instruments, and during her initial exchange with the shop owner her car is plundered by the other Indians. Instead of being mad at these Indians for stealing her instruments, Betty is

⁸² *Rhythm of the Reservation*, dir. by Dave Fleischer, (United States: Paramount Pictures, Inc., 1939).

amused and, on several occasions, says how “cute” they look. The Indians use the instruments in a variety of ways ranging from floating down a river in a guitar case, to using a trombone to pump water from a stream, to stamping out arrows using the symbols of a trap set. The implication here is clear; these Indians have no idea what to do with these modern items. They are ignorant and need the white protagonist Betty Boop to show them how to use the instruments. This depiction also indicates that these Indians have undergone some level of assimilation. The entire settlement revolves around the capitalistic ventures of a beauty shop and trading post, and several of the Indians are drawn wearing ties or non-indigenous clothing, yet modern instruments are completely foreign to them. The overall message of the cartoon is that music is unifying. The animators avoid the easy choice of including the Indian melody and opt for big band jazz. Betty Boop, through her goods looks and music, further assimilates Indians into modern American culture.

What makes it difficult to understand the importance of a cartoon like this is its innocuousness and relatively benign treatment of Native Americans. This does not compensate for the fact that it still posits a narrative that subjugates Indian culture. It portrays Indians who have failed to adapt. They may not have been rescued from their culture by the Progressive reformers of the past, but that does not mean that they should not be. Whereas Popeye expressed the prominence of white culture over Indians with his fists, Betty does it with big band music, which was a staple of 1930s white culture. It can also not be overlooked at how equally demeaning the idea of being cast as dumb is to the idea of being a villain. Accentuating the idea that Native Americans are dumb or ignorant makes it easier to justify attacking their culture. In this instance, stupidity basically serves

as another form of villainy that has to be eradicated by white society. Betty Boop never comes out and calls the Indians she encounters ignorant; rather she says how “cute” or “darling” they are. She creates a condescending hybrid of the noble savage and the dumb Indian. Other words often used to circumvent calling Indians dumb include “innocent” or “primitive”.⁸³ Whatever the terms used, portraying Indian culture as inferior to white culture implies that it is acceptable to attack and destroy it.

World War II changed the purpose of cartoons in many regards. Once simply entertainment, cartoons now served not only to entertain but to educate and justify American exceptionalism. For Native Americans, by the time the United States entered WWII, attitudes toward the Indian New Deal had soured and full blown assimilation by way of termination was on the horizon.

The next cartoon example from the Golden Age reflects this transition in policy. It takes the familiar trope of Indian as villain but applies it in a clearly post-Progressivism manner. The cartoon is *Electric Earthquake* (1942) from the Fleischer Studios 1940s run of Superman cartoons. The Superman series produced by Fleischer are regarded as some of the best cartoons of the Golden Age and were highly influential to the iconic character of Superman. For instance, *Electric Earthquake* marks the first time that Clark Kent ripped his shirt open to expose the Superman “S”.⁸⁴ In addition, Max Fleischer believed that drawing Superman leaping did not look good on film so he pushed Action Comics to

⁸³ Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2000), xvii.

⁸⁴ Gerald Beritela, "Super-Girls and Mild Mannered Men: Gender Trouble in Metropolis," ed. Terrence R. Wandtke, in *The Amazing Transforming Superhero!: Essays on the Revision of Characters in Comic Books, Film, and Television* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 68.

allow Superman to fly; thus, it was Fleischer's cartoons that gave Superman one of his most iconic powers.⁸⁵

Electric Earthquake was the seventh of the Fleischer Superman cartoons, and in order for the plot to make sense altered Superman's biography to place him in New York City rather than Metropolis. The opening scene of *Electric Earthquake* takes the viewer deep beneath the surface of Upper New York Bay to expose a series of electric wires attached to various posts around Manhattan Island. Next, an elevator appears rising from the headquarters of the villain and when it reaches the top, the man that steps out is an Indian. What makes this Indian different though is that he is not adorned in a headdress or drawn as any form of savage. Instead, he wears a fine three-piece suit and hat with the only signs of his Indianness being his skin color and aquiline nose. This is a far different Indian from any other depicted in a Fleischer cartoon.

The next scene finds the Indian villain standing in front of Daily Planet editor Perry White and reporters Lois Lane and Clark Kent. The unnamed Indian asserts that Manhattan Island still belongs to his people and that it should be evacuated immediately. Clearly, this villain alludes to the purchase of Manhattan Island from the Lenape discussed previously. The line that comes next from Clark Kent perfectly fits within the sentiments of many white Americans of the day. He says: "Possibly, but just what do you expect us to do about it?" This simple line accentuates one of the fundamental issues with the portrayal of Native Americans in popular culture, which is that Indian culture is treated as an antiquity.⁸⁶ Kent acknowledges that there are potentially grievances, but

⁸⁵ Brian Cronin, "Comic Legends: When Did Superman First Fly?" CBR, December 03, 2016, accessed November 02, 2017, <http://www.cbr.com/comic-legends-when-did-superman-first-fly/>.

⁸⁶ Dippie, *The Vanishing American*, 123-125.

Lane and White's reaction demonstrate those grievances are a thing of the past and that society cannot be halted because of them. The modern world does not have time to correct the sins of the past and it is time to move forward. This message played out in real life just a few years after the debut of this cartoon with the end of the Indian New Deal and the arrival of termination. The concept of Native Americans returning to the tribal ways of the past gave way to a renewed effort for assimilation. To this day, the idea that Indian culture is either vanishing, or has vanished, proves incredibly detrimental to efforts of creating cultural awareness. Overcoming over 100 years of concerted efforts to assimilate and erase a culture is not easy to reverse.

The conclusion of *Electric Earthquake* relies on standard Superman comic book fare. Lois Lane snoops her way into trouble, the villain unleashes havoc upon New York City, and Superman plunges below the waves to save the day and capture the bad guy. The value of this cartoon though truly lies in its unique depiction of a Native American character placed outside of traditional garb of loin clothes and feathers, but still driving home the same message that Indian culture was the villain, even if shrouded in modernity.

The Superman cartoons were the last series to be produced by Fleischer Studios. In what amounted to a corporate takeover, the Fleischer brothers lost control of their company in 1942 through underhanded tactics by Paramount Pictures, which rebranded the studio as Famous Studios. The key animators and writers remained, but the Fleischer brothers left and without them the intellectual aspect of the cartoons gave way to more

standard fair and often lower quality productions.⁸⁷ The next example illustrates the lowered animation standards.

Heap Hep Injuns was released in 1949. The title alone hints at an insensitive portrayal of Native Americans within the cartoon. *Heap Hep Injuns* was part of Famous Studios' reintroduction of the *Screen Songs* series of shorts originally produced by Fleischer Studios in the 1920s. These cartoons featured a background narrative and were capped with a song that was typically part of the public domain or purchased at low cost. In the case of *Heap Hep Injuns*, that song was the 1909 release, *My Pony Boy*.⁸⁸

The cartoon starts like so many before with a glancing shot of tipis and the Indian melody playing. In this instance, the Indian melody does not indicate a sense of action; rather it is a subdued version foreshadowing that this particular short may not be about marauding Indians. Within a few seconds of the opening screen shot, a now well-trod joke appears once again. A sign on a tipi reads "Barber Shop: Free Scalp Treatment". Unlike previous examples, this cartoon features a voiceover from a narrator. The voiceover starts with: "Before the white man came to this great continent it was inhabited a stalwart race of people known as Indians. Though they were all brothers under the red skin, the Indians were divided into tribes..." As the narrator continues another sight-gag appears, a marquee that reads "TEEPEE HOTEL INDIANS MUST HAVE A RESERVATION". This complete trivialization of the reservation system might seem like the ultimate cultural insult if it was not for what came next. As the narrator continues he states that Indians were divided into different tribes including "the black feet, the

⁸⁷ Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, 124.

⁸⁸ *Heap Hep Injuns*, by Izzy Sparber (New York: Famous Studios, 1949).

flatheads, the hot-foots, and, of course, the Cleveland Indians.” An equally offensive depiction of each tribe accompanies their mention. Moreover, the narrator tells us that these tribes were led by great chiefs like Crazy Horse and Rain-in-the-Face, the former of which depicted by an Indian galloping on all fours with buck teeth and two feathers in his hair to represent horse ears. It is the most offensive image of Native Americans in any cartoons examined in this study.

The cartoon continues to talk about facets of Native American life, stating that they were good hunters, the first to grow tobacco, and the first to commercialize it. A scene is included with an Indian character parodying a Lucky Strike commercial from the 1940s and 1950s, replacing the slogan “Sold American” with “Sold Indian”.⁸⁹ It discusses smoke signals and the use of war paint. Of course, these Indians are also depicted as aggressive. The narrator warns that; “It was a dangerous undertaking for any paleface to travel through Indian Territory.” This ominous warning is immediately followed by a throng of Indians attacking the innocent white settler until he opens up the side of his schooner to reveal that it is a really a general store. The cartoon then takes a turn. Similar to odd uses for musical instruments in Betty Boop’s *Rhythm of the Reservation*, a series of scenes depict Native Americans using modern tools and appliances in a host of various incorrect ways. One Indian uses a stroller as a cradle board, another use an oscillating fan to cut carrots, and it culminates with a group of Indians riding in a fancy new car albeit strapped atop of a beleaguered horse. In this quick series of events, *Heap Hep Injuns* transformed Indians from fierce opponents on the range to ignorant dolts in the modern

⁸⁹ Tom McBride and Ron Nief, *The Mindset List of the Obscure: 74 Famously Forgotten American Icons from A to Z* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, 2014), electronic, accessed November 1, 2017.

world. The idea expressed here echoes the sentiments of so many white reformers of the day who viewed Native Americans as ultimately failing to adapt adequately to modern society.

As the cartoon continues, a sing-a-long element of the short begins when a young Indian boy approaches a young Indian girl galloping on his rocking horse. He asks: “Want ‘em lift babe?”, to which the young girl replies: “Me sure do pony boy, me like ‘em sing to pony boy. Do pales-faces remember pony boy song?” For the next two-plus minutes, the short uses a following-the-bouncing-ball format to allow the audience to sing “Pony Boy”. The song itself is about a woman from New York meeting a skilled Indian horse rider on the Plains and taking him back to live life in the big city. The lyrics are generic enough and do not warrant much discussion, other than being another case of a white person rescuing an Indian from their traditional way of life.

Following the song, the narrator returns to talk over the image of a speeding stretched luxury car and says: “In recent years many Indians have struck oil on their reservations and have become fabulously wealthy.” An Indian dressed in a tuxedo and top hat with a feather stuck in it and a blanket over his shoulder accompanies this narrative. Despite his outward appearance of wealth, when addressed all this well-to-do Indian can say is “ugh.” As he passes his servants, which are included to highlight his wealth, he quickly disrobes down to a breechcloth and enters a tipi set up inside his mansion. It is true that there were some Native Americans who discovered oil on their property, but they were an anomaly. Some of those who did find riches were either swindled out of their land or worse. In *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2017), journalist David Grann explores a series of murders that took place among the Osage tribe in

Oklahoma that centered on the acquisition of oil producing land through inheritance.⁹⁰ Regardless of whether some Indians discovered oil or not, this does not justify the eradication of a culture.

Heap Hep Injuns was released in 1949, placing it in the early stages of the termination era. When viewed in its entirety, this cartoon serves as a cornerstone for so many of the horrible stereotypes that were adopted by Americans over the course of the twentieth century. Savagery, ignorance, and the idea that Indian culture is gone are all exhibited in this single short. This is the message that many Americans grew up watching on Saturday mornings. It defines Indian culture as backwards and something that is to be laughed at, not embraced. Indian cultures were the relics of the past and America was moving forward. If Indians were too dumb to adapt, they deserved to be left behind. This sentiment rested at the core of tribal termination. The old way of life for Indians that had been supported by the Indian New Deal was no longer acceptable. It was time to join the rest of America and modernize.

By the 1950s, Westerns became commonplace in the world of cinema. Between main feature studio releases and B-level movies, the average number of Westerns released between 1940 and 1960 numbered over 30 a year. While not all Westerns fixated on Indian attacks, the majority painted the same picture over and over again, namely that Indians, regardless of their tribal affiliation, were all bloodthirsty. Another core concept of many of these Westerns portrayed the West as a land of opportunity and that Indians

⁹⁰ Molly Stephley, "The Osage Murders: Oil Wealth, Betrayal and the FBI's First Big Case," The National Museum of the American Indian, March 1, 2011, accessed September 02, 2017, <http://blog.nmai.si.edu/main/2011/03/the-osage-murders-oil-wealth-betrayal-and-the-fbis-first-big-case.html>.

were an obstacle. The 1951 Mighty Mouse cartoon *Injun Trouble* illustrates this sentiment. Mighty Mouse was a creation of Paul Terry who formed Terrytoons in 1929 after working for several other animation studios. Terry's cartoons were often more comical than many of his contemporaries. Max Fleischer's serious Superman cartoons provided the inspiration for Terry's Mighty Mouse character. Mighty Mouse debuted in the 1942 short *The Mouse of Tomorrow*. He embodied everything that Superman was, but in the guise of a diminutive mouse. The formula of Mighty Mouse cartoons was simple; A protagonist finds themselves in a dire situation only to be rescued by Mighty Mouse at the last second. As a result of this formula, Mighty Mouse has the distinction of accruing the least amount of screen time per short of any major cartoon star in history.⁹¹

In 1951, Mighty Mouse fought Indians for the first time in the short *Injun Trouble*. The premise of the cartoon is that a former Confederate named Colonel Pureheart, who is an anthropomorphized mouse, is down on his luck and seeks to make a fortune by going out west. All goes well for the colonel on his journey to the West until he runs afoul of Indians.⁹² This cartoon revisits the joke concept of making light of tribal names. In this case, the Apache have patches on everything from rocks to trees, the Pawnee have the three hanging balls that symbolize pawnbrokers on their tipis, and the villains, the Blackfoot, have black feet. This trivialization of tribes is standard among cartoons from this era and only serves to denigrate the cultural heritage of individual tribes. Because Indians are interchangeable, the leader of the Blackfoot is Sitting Bull, depicted as literally a sitting bull. Sitting bull commands a legion of anthropomorphic cats that are adorned in loin clothes and single-feather headbands. Unfortunately for

⁹¹ Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, 141-144.

⁹² *Injun Trouble*, dir. Eddie Donnelly (New Rochelle, Terrytoons, 1951).

Colonel Pureheart, he is captured and then tied to a large steak (sic) meant as a visual pun for roasting on the stake. It bears noting that the image of Indians tying captives to a stake is prevalent in many of the cartoons from this era.⁹³ While there are some instances of Indians burning their victims, the idea of using a stake is much more of a European phenomenon.

With death immanent, it seems that there is no hope for Colonel Pureheart until out of nowhere Mighty Mouse appears to save the day. Not only does he have the power of flight, but apparently, the power of time travel as well. The absurdity of this cartoon extends beyond that of many others. The Indians use their headdresses as devices to facilitate flight, likely because they are made of feathers. They resemble the flying monkeys from *The Wizard of Oz*, but are no match for Mighty Mouse. With Indians falling to the ground left and right, the tribe's medicine man springs into action to help his fallen compatriots. Instead of providing these fallen braves with bandages or a cure, the medicine man whips out a bottle labeled "fire water" that sends its recipient flying into battle like an fighter plane. The term "fire water" is a common stereotypical phrase used for alcohol in association with Indians in the West. The origin of the term likely stems from some of the first encounters with European traders when Indians would use a fire test to ensure the product they were being given was of a high quality. If the alcohol was good, it would ignite into a flame, typically meaning it had a proof of 100 or more. If

⁹³ For a somewhat sensationalized account of captives held by Indians in the West see Gregory Michno and Susan Michno, *A Fate Worse Than Death: Indian Captivities in the West, 1830-1885* (New York: Caxton Printers, 2009). This volume explores the potentiality of some captives being burned alive, but relies on evidence that often sensationalizes the threat Indians posed to their captives. It is likely that some captives were burned alive, but it is not a common enough happening to warrant the creation of a consistent trope within popular culture.

it did not ignite, it was diluted.⁹⁴ Ultimately, Mighty Mouse triumphs over the Indians, and Colonel Pureheart returns to Virginia with his plundered treasure and saves his homestead.

In this cartoon, a few things become apparent. In the world of Mighty Mouse, there is no villain more heinous than a cat. The cat is the natural enemy of the mouse. In this cartoon, those cats represent Indians who are the natural enemy to Colonel Pureheart who is simply trying to make his fortune by stealing gold from Indian land. While the Indians are already dehumanized by being anthropomorphized into cats, their depiction resembling flying monkeys carries a further connotation of being mindless drones. A constant trait of Indians in these cartoons is a complete lack of individualism. The chief is the supreme authority and what he says goes. By the 1950s, the United State was embroiled in the Cold War, and this type of mindless activity was closely associated with the evils of communism. The Indian red menace apparently became an allegory for the communist red menace.⁹⁵ If tribal life had been seen as an inhibitor to progress in the past, it was now being re-imagined as a sign of anti-Americanism.

Perhaps the most iconic image of Native Americans in cartoons during the Golden Age came in 1953 with the release of Disney's animated feature *Peter Pan*. Like many of Disney's animated features, *Peter Pan* was based on a pre-existing intellectual property, in this case it was J.M. Barrie's play *Peter Pan; or, the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1904). Upon his death, Barrie willed the Peter Pan copyright to the Great Ormand Street

⁹⁴ Elijah Haines, *The American Indian* (Chicago: Mas-sin-na'-gan Company, 1888), 795.

⁹⁵ Philip French, *Westerns: Aspects of a Movie Genre and Westerns Revisited* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2005), 50-52.

Hospital that still owns the stage production rights to this day.⁹⁶ Disney acquired the animation rights to film at a relatively low cost and began working on the script in 1940. The late-1930s and early-1940s were not financially kind to Disney. Writer and animator strikes in 1940 crippled Disney's ability to produce cartoons, but *Peter Pan* managed to survive.⁹⁷

The Disney version of *Peter Pan* differed in a few ways from its stage counterpart, but the story remained relatively intact, leading to the inclusion of animated Indians. In the play, the tribe is referred to as the "Piccaninny tribe" and really could have been any group of people that were cultural outsiders. Barrie, being British, could have just as easily picked aboriginals, but decided on Native Americans.⁹⁸ In its version of *Peter Pan*, Disney took the levels of racism present in the original stage play to new heights. Although the animated version does not include the song "Ugga-wugga-wigwam", Disney created a new song that is even more problematic, "What Makes the Red Man Red."⁹⁹ The lyrics go as follow:

*Why does he ask you, "How?"
Why does he ask you, "How?"
Once the Injun didn't know
All the things that he know now
But the Injun, her sure learn a lot
And it's all from asking, "How?"*

*Hana Mana Ganda
Hana Mana Ganda*

⁹⁶ "Copyright," Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity, accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.gosh.org/about-us/peter-pan/copyright>.

⁹⁷ J. Michael Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in Its Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 269.

⁹⁸ Alan Yuhas, "What's Up, Tiger Lily? One Native American Stereotype Has Certainly Grown Old," *The Guardian*, December 07, 2014, accessed October 02, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/07/tiger-lily-peter-pan-native-american-stereotype>.

⁹⁹ *Peter Pan*, dir. Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, and Hamilton Luske (Los Angeles: Walt Disney Productions, 1953).

*We translate for you
Hana means what mana means
And ganda means that, too*

*When did he first say, "Ugh!"
When did he first say, "Ugh!"
In the Injun book it say
When first brave married squaw
He gave out with heap big ugh
When he saw his Mother-in-Law*

*What made the red man red?
What made the red man red?*

*Let's go back a million years
To the very first Injun prince
He kissed a maid and start to blush
And we've been blushin' since*

*You've got it right from the headman
The real true story of the redman
No matter what's been written or said
Now you know why the red man's red!*

Steeped in the pidgin "Ugh speak" so notoriously linked with cartoon Indians, this song, in a span of a little more than two minutes, boils Native American culture down to a few silly events and eviscerates the construction of Indian languages. These were not real Indians, they were not even Show Indians, rather they were imagined constructs passed-off as Native Americans.¹⁰⁰ The imagery so omnipresent in all the other cartoons of the Golden Age remained. The chief was represented as an overweight slow-witted authority figure, Tiger Lily was portrayed as an Indian maiden, and the other members of her tribe were simply mindless drones there to follow the whims of the chief. It was a cultural depiction bereft of individual agency.

¹⁰⁰ Moses, *Wild West Shows*, 275.

Another aspect of *Peter Pan* that plays into the stereotypical telling of the Native American narrative is that Peter Pan acts as the savior figure for Tiger Lily. Because of her close affiliation with Peter Pan, Captain Hook takes Tiger Lily captive in an attempt to discover Peter Pan's whereabouts. Much to the chagrin of Captain Hook, Tiger Lily remains silent. Eventually, Peter shows up, rescues Tiger Lily, and returns her to her grateful father. In a reward for his bravery, Indian Chief, which is the non-descript name he goes by in the animated feature, says that he will "Make Peter Pan heap big chief, you now Little Flying Eagle." Because of this line, most people assume the chief's name is Chief Flying Eagle, but that was not the case in the original production of the cartoon.

Peter's portrayal as a hero to the tribe is not surprising. In the 1911 book adaptation of the play, Peter's role as a protector of the tribe received more emphasis. A line from the book reads: "'The great white father," he would say to them in a very lordly manner, as they groveled at his feet, "is glad to see the Piccaninny warriors protecting his wigwam from the pirates."'¹⁰¹ In this case, Peter served as the great white father and the tribe as his subjects. Originally, Barrie intended to call his play *The Great White Father*. The name makes sense when one takes *Peter Pan* for what it really is, a story about growing and accepting progress. The Indians in stage, book, and animated versions of the story all, like Peter's Lost Boys, have either to choose to be vigilant and survive on their own or rely on the help of a protector.¹⁰² Barrie's conception of native peoples, while rooted in British colonialism, was perfectly acceptable to American audiences watching

¹⁰¹ J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan and Wendy* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1921), 109.

¹⁰² Sarah Laskow, "The Racist History of Peter Pan's Indian Tribe," Smithsonian.com, December 02, 2014, accessed September 20, 2017, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/racist-history-peter-pan-indian-tribe-180953500/>.

Peter Pan in the 1950s. America was about progress, and those who did not fall in line would fall behind. In the end, it was better for Peter, and all those that he kept in a state of childhood innocence, to accept that maturation is a part of life and become productive members of society.

As the 1950s moved forward, federal policy toward Indians remained firmly rooted in the concept of termination, but in Hollywood there was a slight shift in Westerns back to the more introspective tone about settlement and Native Americans in the West. John Ford's classic *The Searchers* (1956) serves as an example of the slowly changing narrative in Hollywood. Loosely based on the real life abduction of Cynthia Ann Parker by the Comanche in 1836, the film relies heavily on tried-and-true tropes of Westerns ranging from the Plains Indian-style of dress and the high body count of dead Indians. Yet, racism occupies an important narrative element in the film. The main plot device of the movie involves an undying vengeance to kill any Comanche because they had kidnaped a young white woman. In the film, the kidnapped character, Debbie, takes to the ways of the Comanche. When the protagonist of the film, Ethan, played by John Wayne, discovers this, he threatens to kill her even though she is the girl they have been searching for throughout the film.¹⁰³ At this point, Ford makes his statement about how blind racism and hatred clouded white society's views of Native Americans. In an interview in *Cosmopolitan*, John Ford stated "There is some merit to the charge that the Indian hasn't been portrayed fairly in the Western... If he has been treated unfairly by whites in the films that, unfortunately, was often the case in real life. There was much

¹⁰³ *The Searchers*, dir. John Ford, by Winton C. Hoch and Max Steiner, perf. John Wayne, Natalie Wood, Vera Miles, Ward Bond, and Jeffrey Hunter (United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1956).

racial prejudice in the West.”¹⁰⁴ This simple statement did not go into much detail, but it represents one of the most preeminent creators of Westerns admitting that Native Americans had been portrayed unfairly on screen. It would not lead to an immediate rebirth in the movement for cultural pluralism, but it was a step toward recognizing that the way Indians were depicted on film mattered.

Although rumblings of change within the broader scope of Hollywood followed, the depiction of Native Americans in animation remained relatively unchanged during the 1950s. The final example from the Golden Age of animation depicting Indians is the 1960 Looney Tunes short *Horse Hare*, starring Bugs Bunny. Warner Brothers Pictures created Looney Tunes as part of its animation studio in 1930 in an effort to compete against Disney Studios. The early cartoons produced under the Looney Tunes brand resembled those of Disney’s Silly Symphonies that relied heavily on the presence of a song.¹⁰⁵ Arguably, the characters spawned by Looney Tunes, and its sister brand Merry Melodies, are the most iconic of the Golden Age. Mickey Mouse is the most globally recognized, but the list of Looney Tunes characters include Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, Elmer Fudd, Sylvester, Tweety, Wile E. Coyote, and others, and appeared so often in the lives of Americans that they became synonymous with animation. By the 1940s, Looney Tunes cartoons abandoned the song requirements and focused on developing characters. World War II was important for Looney Tunes. During the war, the roster of Looney Tunes characters starred in numerous propaganda films that played

¹⁰⁴ Bill Libby, "The Old Wrangler Rides Again," in *John Ford Made Westerns: Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*, ed. Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein (Bloomington (Ind.): Indiana University Press, 2001), 281.

¹⁰⁵ Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons*, 159.

for both G.I.s abroad and citizens at home.¹⁰⁶ The American public viewed these characters as fellow fighters against the Axis menace, which endeared them to their hearts.

Horse Hare is a typical post-WWII Looney Tunes animated short. It stars Bugs Bunny and one of his main antagonists, Yosemite Sam, renamed in this short Renegade Sam. This is the only time that Yosemite Sam took up the moniker Renegade Sam. It seems the writers deemed it necessary to rename Sam since he was leading a group of Indians in this short. In order to differentiate between Renegade Sam and Yosemite Sam, the animators switched the character's color scheme from blue, yellow, and red to black and red. There is also a slight change in the style of his hat, which, of course, now has a single feather attached to it. The short starts at Fort Lariat in 1886.¹⁰⁷ While the name of the fort is fictional, the year chosen is significant as Geronimo surrendered to federal forces in 1886. Appropriately, the short includes an Indian character named Geronimo. As the story begins, Sgt. Bugs is put in charge of defending the fort at the behest of his commanding officer, who has to go off on Indian patrol. With the fort depleted of its forces, Renegade Sam decides it is time to attack. There's no explanation as to why the Indians are following Sam, but in typical cartoon fashion, they charge with wild abandon toward the fort with arrows flying. One arrow hits Sam in the posterior prompting him to yell "Watch where you're shootin' them arrows you idgit Indians."

With an Indian melody playing and Indians firing indiscriminately at the fort, Bugs is pinned down, but he has his trusty rifle and begins firing back. At this moment

¹⁰⁶ William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, eds., *World War II and the Postwar Years in America: A Historical and Cultural Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 163-165.

¹⁰⁷ *Horse Hare*, dir. Friz Freleng (Los Angeles: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1960).

the short introduces one of the scenes that inspired this study, Bugs Bunny shooting Indians and singing “Ten Little Indians”. The version of the song that appears in *Horse Hare* uses the simplified modern interpretation of the “Ten Little Injuns” nursery rhyme that Septimus Winner published in 1868 for a minstrel show.¹⁰⁸ While picking off Indians with his rifle, Bugs sings

*One little, two little, three little Injuns
Four little, five little, six little Injuns
(Uh-oh, sorry that one was a half-breed)
Seven little, eight little, nine little Injuns
Ten little Injun boys*

While singing, Bugs makes chalk marks for each of the Indians killed, but stops when he reaches the sixth, which he declares to be a “half-breed” and erases half of the line. Meant to be a joke, it also implies that half-breeds are somehow worth less than others. In real life, this stigma was all too often accurate. Individuals labeled as half-breeds often found themselves outcasts of both white and Native American society. To this day, individuals of a mixed race identity often find themselves at a disadvantage in legal, social, political, and educational situations.¹⁰⁹

The short concludes with the standard Bugs Bunny narrative. Bugs uses his cunning to force Sam into situations that lead to his failure. Recalling the date associated with the events in this cartoon 1886, a character by the name of Geronimo appears in the cartoon as a hulking beast of an Indian. Bugs uses Geronimo’s brute aggression against Sam and catches him in between Geronimo, who is charging with a large wooden pole,

¹⁰⁸ Iona Archibald. Opie and Peter Opie, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 333-334.

¹⁰⁹ Sandra Winn Tutwiler, *Mixed-Race Youth in Schooling: The Fifth Minority* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 28.

and the gate of the fort. Upon smashing his leader, this caricature of the great Indian warrior Geronimo says “Oh boy, me wouldn’t like to be me tonight.” This serves as a rather insulting portrayal of one of the most legendary figures of Indian resistance in the West. In the end, as Sam is making his last ditch effort, the cavalry shows up and clashes with the Indians catching an unfortunate Sam in the middle of the action.

Horse Hare serves as a fitting conclusion of the study of Native American depictions in the Golden Age. Although 1960 is not considered the end of the Golden Age, it is definitely late in the era. It had been twenty-seven years since the release of *Indian Whoopie*, and the same tropes concerning Native Americans continued to appear in animated cartoons. The country had undergone a myriad of social, cultural, and political changes in those years. There had even been distinct changes in Indian policy and a burgeoning Civil Rights movement that began to put focus on Indian rights and culture. Yet, cinema and animation froze Native Americans in time. *Horse Hare* accentuates just how entrenched this image of Native Americans had become by including a song that was nearly a century old as one in its most enduring scenes. This period of animation and cinema taught multiple generations of Americans that all Indians were the same and that their culture was either something to be feared or mocked. The hopes of cultural pluralism expressed by John Collier in the Indian New Deal never made it past the halls of Washington D.C. to the general public. Mainstream society was too caught up in progress and the pursuit of the post-World War II American dream to acknowledge that it was unwittingly denigrating Native American cultures by ignoring their vitality and uniqueness to. This is not an indictment of Americans during this period; rather it is an explanation of their behavior based upon the media they consumed.

Although the animation was popular, well drawn, and highly innovative, it failed to go beyond simple stereotypes and contrived narratives. Animation aficionados look back on this period and hold it in high esteem for its artistic quality. However, these cartoons' continual perpetuation of mid-twentieth century racism tarnishes their legacy.

CHAPTER III

NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE LOW-BUDGET ANIMATION OF THE DARK AGE

On September 30, 1960, the landscape of animation in the United States changed forever with the debut of *The Flintstones* on the American Broadcasting Company (ABC) network. While the shorts of the Golden Age continued to play in theaters, it became clear that television was the future of the animation industry. The arrival of *The Flintstones* and the move toward television-based cartoons ushered in the Dark Age of animation. Not just the medium differentiates the Dark Age from the Golden Age; it is the actual animation. Gone were the days of beautifully drawn shorts that were labored over by teams of animators and writers and considered works of art. In their stead emerged scores of hastily produced cartoons that relied on recycled material both in narrative and imagery.¹¹⁰ In short, cartoons of the Dark Age were cheap. Regardless of their lack of artistic quality, cartoons from this period count among them some of the most beloved and memorable characters of all time, including the Pink Panther, Fred

¹¹⁰ Paul Wells, "Smarter Than the Average Art Form: Animation in the Television Era," ed. Mark Harrison, in *Prime Time Animation: Television Animation and American Culture*, ed. Carol Stabile (London: Routledge, 2003), 16.

Flintstone, George Jetson, Charlie Brown, and many more. The dates of the Dark Age range from 1960 to roughly the early-1980s. Within this timespan, the U.S. underwent a cultural transition thanks to the Civil Rights Movement that spilled over into the popular media of the day. Congruent with the changes in media, federal policy toward Native Americans transitioned from tribal termination to the reinstatement of tribal sovereignty over the course of two decades.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the evolution of federal Indian policy and impactful moments in the Native American Civil Rights Movement from 1960 to the late-1970s. Following this discussion, attention turns to demonstrating the gradual change in attitude toward Native Americans in animation throughout the Dark Age. This examination reveals that old habits die hard, but gradually animation catches up to the rest of the society and finds a more culturally sensitive place for Native Americans within its various stories. What these cartoons lack in artistic mastery, they make up for in increasingly progressive depictions of Native Americans. This is not to say that all the examples, even the ones from the latter stages of the Dark Age, make these strides, but progress was made toward breaking the cycle of the animated depiction of the one-dimensional villainous Indian.

By the close of the 1950s, federal Indian policy was on the precipice of change. Politicians from both major parties questioned the value tribal termination. In the Presidential Election Campaign of 1960, both John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon pledged support to Native Americans and indicated that major changes to federal policy

were to come if the American people elected either one of them.¹¹¹ During his campaign, Kennedy emphasized that he wanted a sharp break from the federal policy of the Eisenhower administration. While campaigning, he said: “My administration would see to it that the Government of the United States discharges its moral obligation to our first Americans by inaugurating a comprehensive program for the improvement of their health, education, and economic well-being. ... No steps would be taken by the Federal Government to impair the cultural heritage of any group.”¹¹² Although Kennedy did not make any direct mention of ending termination, his words inspired hope for a brighter future. He was, at the very least, acknowledging that current policy was not working and that promoting cultural preservation was important.

The change in attitudes toward federal Indian policy accompanied a decline in the Cold War sensibilities of the 1950s, coupled with a growing awareness of cultural oppression in the U.S. Kennedy remained a true “Cold Warrior” who would oversee two of the most important moments of the Cold War, the Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban Missile Crisis. However, the staunchly pro-Americanism of the 1950s Cold War that accentuated uniformity and universal American identity slowly gave way to a rebirth in the New Deal era idea of cultural pluralism.¹¹³ The winds of change were in the air when Kennedy took office in 1961. The previous year saw the formation of two of the stalwart youth organizations of the Civil Rights Movement, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and the Students for a Democratic Society. The former focused

¹¹¹ Jack Utter, *American Indians: Answers to Today's Questions*, 2nd ed. (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 400.

¹¹² Thomas Clarkin, *Federal Indian Policy in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, 1961-1969*(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 13.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 16, 277.

on the African American Civil Rights Movement while the latter represented the youth movement and its focus on increased participatory democracy. Both served as models for the various ethnic-based civil rights youth groups that formed in the 1960s.

The rise of social activism found its way into the Native American community as well. In the summer 1961, Native American youths from across the country gathered in Gallup, New Mexico seeking to form a new organization for political action. This meeting spawned the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC). Although the NIYC comprised young men and women, they did not rebuke the efforts of their elders in the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), which had formed in 1942.¹¹⁴ They simply wanted to provide a jolt to the burgeoning Red Power movement using new perspectives inherent in the younger generation. The preamble to the NIYC's Constitution laid out the organization's main purposes, including "making their inherent sovereign rights known to all people, opposing termination of federal responsibility at all levels,... and staunchly supporting the exercise of those basic rights guaranteed to American Indians by the statutes of the United States of America."¹¹⁵ The idealism inherent in the NIYC's Constitution was much greater than that of the NCAI's which pledged its loyalty to the United States.¹¹⁶ The NIYC's message represented a new generation. They argued for recognition of their true place, not in history, but in the present. The narrative of the NIYC changed the perception that Native American culture

¹¹⁴ Bradley Glenn Shreve, *Red Power Rising: The National Youth Council and the Origins of Native Activism* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014), 95.

¹¹⁵ Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations*. (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2007), 129.

¹¹⁶ "Constitution, By-Laws & Rules of Order," Constitution, By-Laws & Rules of Order | NCAI, accessed October 02, 2017, <http://www.ncai.org/about-ncai/ncai-governance/constitution-bylaws-rules-of-order#Preamble>.

was a thing of the past. These were young men and women who lived, thrived, and survived in the modern age. They were modern activists fighting to recapture control of their heritage.

President Kennedy promised a lot to Native Americans, but as many before him, he did not live up to all of those promises. The true end of termination and the reinstatement of tribal sovereignty would not happen until over a decade after his presidency. That does not mean Kennedy ignored Native Americans. In the introduction to *The American Heritage Book of Indians* (1961), Kennedy wrote: “For a subject worked and reworked so often in novels, motion pictures, and television, American Indians remain probably the least understood and most misunderstood Americans of us all.”¹¹⁷ Kennedy was right. As demonstrated in previous chapters, American media portrayed Native Americans as monolithic. There was no individuality, just stereotypes and tired tropes. Even during the Indian New Deal, John Collier’s Indian policy overlooked tribal differences. Why should Americans believe that Indians were diverse or even still active contributors to society? Since the formation of the country Native Americans had been portrayed as idyllic symbols of naivety, a culture frozen in time, or, worse, an enemy that necessitated eradication either through genocide or assimilation.

Kennedy’s rhetoric shined a light on problems within the Native American community that the Johnson administration attempted to address in its Great Society programs. In general, what was beneficial for other minorities in the U.S. was also beneficial for Native Americans. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, which is often

¹¹⁷ Alvin M. Joseph and William Brandon, eds., *American Heritage Book of Indians* (New York: American Heritage/Wings Books, 1993), 11.

incorrectly seen as just a measure to extend the vote to African Americans in the South, led to an end of discriminatory voter suppression toward Native Americans. Many states refused to allow Native Americans to register to vote. Although Indians were granted citizenship by the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, the granting of voting rights remained a power reserved to the states. Many states refused to grant voting rights to Indians with tribal affiliations.¹¹⁸ Arguments against extending the vote often evoked notions of dual-citizenship, but typically boiled down to racism and simply not wanting to enfranchise Native Americans. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 closed this loophole stating, “No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure, shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.”¹¹⁹ Native Americans could now freely participate in the democratic process that had too often overlooked them in the past.

Among the most beneficial Great Society programs for Native Americans were the Community Action Agencies (CAA) created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. Part of Johnson’s War on Poverty, CAAs facilitated the disbursement of federal funds to impoverished areas of the country that needed assistance in any number of fields, from economic development to education, to healthcare services. CAAs and the Community Action Programs they administered required “maximum feasible participation” by the communities they served.¹²⁰ This stipulation made CAAs beneficial

¹¹⁸ Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs*(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 24.

¹¹⁹ "Voting Rights Act 1965," Welcome to OurDocuments.gov, accessed September 12, 2017, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=100>.

¹²⁰ D'Arcy McNickle, *Native American Tribalism: Indian Survival and Renewals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 119-120.

for Native Americans. Since its creation in 1824, the Bureau of Indian Affairs relied heavily on an ethos of paternalism toward Native Americans. The Bureau supposedly knew what the proper course of action was and tribes were not consulted. CAAs did not continue this history of paternalism.¹²¹ By requiring community participation, CAAs ensured that funds and programs would be put to the best possible use. The federal government would no longer tell communities what to do; instead, communities could decide what they needed. While this did not necessarily translate into the federal government giving tribes control over CAAs at that point, the concept of community meant that Native Americans, who were likely of the same tribal affiliation, could control their stake in the program. The CAAs restored agency to Native Americans in terms of federal aid programs. One of the main criticisms of Johnson's handling of Native American issues is that his programs targeted poverty in general and did not always take into account distinct cultural differences. Although the Great Society and the CAAs did not bring about a complete end to termination, they were a step toward self-determination.

The tumult of the 1960s birthed a constant push for increased cultural recognition among minorities in the U.S. The Great Society programs introduced by Johnson had a direct effect on Native Americans. In March of 1968, Johnson became the first President to deliver a special message directly to Congress on the issue of Native Americans. In what has been dubbed his "Forgotten American" speech, Johnson told Congress, "We must affirm the right of the first Americans to remain Indians while exercising their rights as Americans. We must affirm their right to freedom of choice and self-determination.

¹²¹ Ibid.

We must seek new ways to provide Federal assistance to Indians – with new emphasis on Indian self-help for Indian culture.”¹²² Johnson’s words gave hope to those who fought for Native American Civil Rights, but there had been many words spoken before. Nevertheless, it was clear by 1968 that Native American political issues were once again on the table for discussion in American politics.

In the year that followed Johnson’s congressional address, two important developments occurred for Native Americans in the U.S. Spurred by testimonies of incompetent leadership and abuses on tribal land, President Johnson in April 1968 signed the Indian Civil Rights Act (ICRA) into law. The act addressed the balance of tribal authority over constitutional rights. The 1896 court case *Talton v. Myers* established firmly the notion that local tribal authority superseded constitutional rights of Native Americans. This ruling declared tribes to be domestic dependent nations whose sovereignty was established prior to the Constitution; therefore tribal law could supplant constitutional rights. This was the law of the land until the ICRA, which changed federal law to ensure that Native Americans enjoyed most of the protections given to non-indigenous Americans under the Constitution. It was a reversal of over one hundred and fifty years of federal policy. The act effectively extended the Bill of Rights to Native Americans with a few exceptions, such as the establishment clause, right to jury trial in civil cases, or guaranteed republican government.¹²³ On the surface this legislation seemed positive for Native Americans as it provided the protections of citizenship that all Americans enjoy. However, in the context of the Native American Civil Rights

¹²² Johnson, Lyndon B. “Special Message to the Congress on the Problems of the American Indian: “The Forgotten American.” March 6, 1998. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed October 11, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28709>.

¹²³ Clarkin, 264-269

Movement and the Great Society, it was actually a step backward. The movement's goal was to end the era of termination officially, and attain self-determination and tribal recognition. The IRCA contradicted those goals by reasserting federal authority over tribal law. The IRCA made sense to the men who passed it. Indians were being victimized on their own lands. There was nothing the federal government could do about it, so the law had to change. Unfortunately, in the context of the Red Power era it was simply a modified form of paternalism cloaked in the guise of American Liberty.

Shortly after the installation of the IRCA, the most recognizable organization of the Red Power movement, the American Indian Movement (AIM), formed in June of 1968.¹²⁴ AIM had rather humble origins, forming out of a meeting of about two hundred Native Americans. The founding members of AIM -- George Mitchell, Dennis Banks, and Clyde Bellecourt – urged the Indian community to take control of its own destiny.¹²⁵ AIM vocalized the day-to-day frustrations of Native Americans across the country. Poverty, discrimination, harassment, and poor housing were but a few issues the movement addressed. AIM mirrored the sentiments of other minority protest organizations of the era; legislation was great, but action was better.

As the 1960s came to a close and the 1970s began, Native American activism became increasingly visible. For a culture that had been declared dead by the American entertainment industry, it sure seemed alive on the news. In 1969, a group of seventy-eight Native Americans calling themselves Indians of All Tribes occupied the infamous prison Alcatraz citing the *Treaty of Fort Laramie* (1868). The treaty called for all out-of-

¹²⁴ Red Power is the colloquial term often used for the Native American Civil Rights Movement in the latter-half of the 1960s.

¹²⁵ Minnesota History Center, "American Indian Movement (AIM): Overview," American Indian Movement (AIM): Overview, accessed November 02, 2017, <http://libguides.mnhs.org/aim>.

use federal property to be returned to Native Americans.¹²⁶ The grandiose nature of the occupation drew more attention to the plight of Native Americans and was followed by several other high profile events and legislation.

The push for improved federal Indian policy did not end with the Johnson Administration. In fact, Richard Nixon's election in 1968 proved fortuitous for Native Americans. After 18 months in office, Nixon delivered his own address to Congress on Indian issues. Whereas Johnson and Kennedy focused on federal aid programs designed to alleviate poverty for marginalized people of all ilk, Nixon directly addressed the issue of termination. In his speech to Congress, Nixon argued that Native Americans should have "self-determination without termination."¹²⁷ It was clear that the Nixon Administration intended to end the nearly twenty-five year old policy of termination in favor of self-determination and greater Indian participation in the administration of federal programs.¹²⁸ Nixon's attitude toward Indian policy made sense in the framework of his administration's domestic policy package, "New Federalism". It was less bureaucratic and more cost effective to turn over these programs to Native Americans. Although, Nixon introduced the idea of self-determination, it would not be actualized until the Ford Administration.

As Nixon continued to advocate for better Indian policy, both Congress and Native Americans also remained active. In 1972, Congress passed the Indian Education

¹²⁶ Casey Ryan Kelly, "Datournement, Decolonization, and the American Indian Occupation of Alcatraz Island (1969-1971)," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2014): 168.

¹²⁷ "Richard Nixon: Special Message to the Congress on Indian Affairs. - July 8, 1970," The American Presidency Project, accessed October 02, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2573>.

¹²⁸ Dean Kotlowski, "Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, and Beyond: The Nixon and Ford Administrations Respond to Native American Protest," in *The American Indian: Past and Present*, ed. Roger L. Nichols (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 356-357.

Act. This act acknowledged that Native American learners had their own unique educational needs and that the federal government should foster those needs by allowing tribal control over Indian education.¹²⁹ The federal government addressed Indian concerns, but it still was not enough. Many Native Americans continued to struggle on a day-to-day basis.

In the fall of 1972, AIM, the NAIC, the NIYC, and five other Native American organizations launched a cross-country trek to bring national attention to the many issues still plaguing Indians.¹³⁰ These included poor living standards, insufficient housing, and the need for formal recognition of treaty rights among others. They called this journey the Trail of Broken Treaties. The caravan left the west coast in October and arrived in Washington D.C. a week before the 1972 Presidential Election. There they hoped to deliver the Twenty-Point Position Paper to the Nixon Administration. The crux of this statement requested that the federal government enact legislation that would ensure that all previous treaties with Native Americans were adhered to, end termination, and ensure protections of tribal sovereignty.¹³¹ Unfortunately for the activists, the Nixon Administration refused to meet with them. Feeling betrayed, several protesters occupied the Bureau of Indian Affairs building for seven days.¹³² The impact of the trek and occupation on federal policy were negligible. Their real importance came from the

¹²⁹ U.S. Department of Education, "History of Indian Education," December 19, 2005, accessed October 02, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oie/history.html>.

¹³⁰ Other organizations involved in the Trail of Broken Treaties include the National Indian Brotherhood, the Native American Rights Fund, the National Council on Indian Work, National Indian Leadership Training, and the American Indian Committee of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

¹³¹ Vine Deloria, *Behind the Trail of Broken Treaties: An Indian Declaration of Independence* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), 55-57.

¹³² Donald Lee Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2012), 141.

continued exposure of the hardships plaguing Native Americans at a time when the activist attitudes of the 1960s had cooled considerably.

The following year brought about the most visible incident of the Native American protest of the 1970s, the occupation of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The occupation stemmed from an inter-tribal conflict between traditionalist Oglala Lakota and moderates. At the heart of the controversy stood tribal chairman Richard Wilson. Traditional members of the tribe believed Wilson to be highly corrupt and mismanaging the federal programs meant to help its poorer members. Essentially, Wilson ran the tribe like a crime boss. He went as far as to establish his own militia known as the Guardians of the Oglala Nation or GOONs for short. With the situation worsening on the reservation, traditionalists met with AIM to plan a course of action, which was to take over the hamlet of Wounded Knee because of its historical significance.¹³³

The occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1972 had been violent enough to raise the ire of the Nixon Administration, and Wounded Knee went even further. Nixon was furious about the occupation. In a discussion with his White House Domestic Affairs Advisor John Ehrlichman, Nixon's less-than-polished side concerning minorities came out. Nixon exclaimed, "... and the bad Indians are just like bad blacks. And I think [the army] ought to move tanks, the whole goddamn thing. Put a division in if necessary."¹³⁴ The "bad Indians" Nixon referred to were the ones occupying Wounded Knee, not Wilson and his GOONs. The administration felt betrayed by the occupation

¹³³Kotwolski, "Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, and Beyond: The Nixon and Ford Administrations Respond to Native American Protest," 132.

¹³⁴ Douglas Brinkley and Luke Nichter, comps., *The Nixon Tapes: 1973* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016), 372.

and did not know what to do about it. In what stands as a testament to the level of sympathy that the Red Power movement had gained among the American people, Ehrlichman expressed the real problem for the administration when he said "...the whole difficulty here ... is [the army has] no PR concept in this thing, and the government's story is not getting across. The reason why we would send soldiers is not apparent to anybody."¹³⁵ The administration's concern about public relations meant that the years of Native American activism had worked. If AIM had occupied Wounded Knee in the 1950s, there would have not been any real hesitation to assert federal authority over the tribe, but public sentiments were different in the 1970s. The movement, often despite the violence associated with it, earned the general public's respect to a level sufficient to warrant concern over suppressing it.

As with any violent protest that invokes federal action, there were varied responses among the American people. A month into the occupation, Wounded Knee got its moment in the Hollywood spotlight when Marlon Brando sent Sacheen Littlefeather to accept his Oscar for *The Godfather* at the 1973 Academy Award. This was the ultimate crossover between the entertainment industry and real world Indian issues.¹³⁶ The occupation of Wounded Knee ended after seventy-one days and two deaths. It was a high price to pay, but Wounded Knee gained widespread sympathy for the Red Power cause. The American public, and people like Marlon Brandon, Johnny Cash, Jane Fonda, and others, expressed their support for the occupation.¹³⁷ The event served as an exclamation

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Neil Diamond, *Reel Injun*.

¹³⁷ William Terence Martin Riches, *The Civil Rights Movement: Struggle and Resistance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 159.

point to the era of Red Power resistance that would ultimately pay great dividends for Native Americans.

The Watergate Scandal and Nixon's subsequent resignation threw the future of federal Indian policy change into doubt. The Red Power movement's most powerful ally was replaced by Gerald Ford who had only a modicum of interest in Indian policy reform. Since Wounded Knee, AIM and other Indian activist organizations adopted a less militant posture. Although the pressure of violent protest was diminishing, the legal threat posed by Indian activists and underlying public sympathies for the Red Power movement pushed the Ford Administration and Congress to go ahead with Nixon's plans for tribal self-determination.¹³⁸ The legislation that emerged from this was the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975. It culminated a decade of Red Power activism. The act called for "maximum Indian participation in the Government and education of Indian people" and "the establishment of a meaningful Indian self-determination policy which will permit an orderly transition from federal domination of programs for and services to Indians to effective and meaningful participation by the Indian people in the planning, conduct, and administration of those programs and services".¹³⁹ The act itself failed to cure the issues that continued to plague Indian communities, but it was the zenith of years of progress toward abandoning the paternalistic measures of the past. The gradual shift from the assimilationist policies that existed during the Golden Age to the more progressive policy of tribal self-determination in the 1960s and 1970s slowly found its way into animation. Some Native American

¹³⁸ Kotlowski, "Alcatraz, Wounded Knee, and Beyond: The Nixon and Ford Administrations Respond to Native American Protest," 366-70.

¹³⁹ George Pierre. Castile, *Taking Charge: Native American Self-Determination and Federal Indian Policy* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2006), 14.

characters during this shifted away from the traditional villainous or dumb Indian roles and transitioned into those of witty protagonists.

A little over a month before John F. Kennedy won the Presidential Election of 1960, the world of animation changed forever with *The Flintstones*'s primetime debut on September 30 on the ABC. Although *The Flintstones* were not the first made-for-television cartoons, the show typically marks the beginning of the Dark Age of animation. *The Flintstones* were a product of William Hanna and Joseph Barbera's Hanna-Barbera Productions Incorporated, formed in 1957. Quickly, Hanna-Barbera became the undisputed leaders in television animation. The key to surviving and prospering in the world of animation in the 1960s was sacrificing quality for quantity, and Hanna-Barbera did not try to hide that fact. William Hanna summed up the situation saying, "Disney-type animation is economically unfeasible for television, and we discovered that we could get away with less."¹⁴⁰ The style of these cartoons became known as limited animation. This meant reusing backgrounds and having characters move as little as possible on screen. The result was that studios like Hanna-Barbera could put out more cartoons in a week than they could in a year under the old theatrical shorts system.

Hanna-Barbera based *The Flintstones* on the 1950s television series *The Honeymooners*. Like *The Honeymooners*, *The Flintstones* were a parody of the decade in which they were produced. Episodes of *The Flintstones* featured changes in gender dynamics, new forms of entertainment, like rock and roll music, and issues with

¹⁴⁰ Leonard Maltin and Jerry Beck, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 344.

consumerism.¹⁴¹ Like the theatrical shorts before it, *The Flintstones* was intended for a multi-generational audience. This was largely facilitated by its prime-time slot on ABC. Animation's relegation to a kid's genre was still a few years away.¹⁴² Appealing to a broad audience meant that *The Flintstones* relied on both good narrative storytelling and sight gags to induce as much comedy as possible. *The Flintstones* was truly a sitcom, which meant that it followed a singular narrative for the entirety of its 25 minute runtime.

In 1961, *The Flintstones* narrative took them out west in the episode "Droop-Along Flintstone".¹⁴³ The episode opens with Betty and Wilma sitting at a table wondering where their husbands have gone. Soon, they hear a ruckus in the distance and discover that Fred and Barney are being chased by a group of Indians. Betty remarks, "There hasn't been a real Indian around here for years." An odd statement, given they were living in a prehistoric era. The Indians are pictured just as those in cartoons from the previous decades. Adorned in headbands with single feathers and arrows flying wildly from their bows, these Indians are giving chase to Fred and Barney for some undisclosed reason. Utilizing an "in media res" format, the audience is introduced to Tumbleweed Flintstone who is Fred's wealthy cousin.¹⁴⁴ Tumbleweed is portrayed as a rich oil tycoon Texan who flaunts his money and has an overly-boisterous personality. Moved forward by the notion that Tumbleweed has to go on a business trip and needs someone to housesit his dude ranch, Fred, Barney, William, and Betty make their way out west.

¹⁴¹ M. Keith Booker, *Drawn to Television: Prime-Time Animation from the Flintstones to Family Guy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), *Drawn to Television*, 6-11.

¹⁴² Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, 344.

¹⁴³ William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, dirs.. "Droop-Along Flintstone," in *The Flintstones*, September 22, 1961.

¹⁴⁴ "In media res" refers to a plot device in which a narrative starts a point somewhere after the beginning of the story only to go back and revisit the events preceding it later in the piece.

After visiting the Grand Canyon, which is jokingly pictured as nothing but a stream at this point, Fred and Barney arrive at the dude ranch and quickly, as Wilma says, “go western.” Hooting and hollering like stereotypical cowboys, Fred and Barney go on a walk that leads to them wandering into a ghost town. It appears that the culture of the West was just as dead in prehistoric times as people felt it was in the early-1960s. At this moment, the main plot device of the episode is revealed. The town Fred and Barney have entered is not a ghost town; rather it is the set for a Hollyrock Western. Tired and with no one around, Fred and Barney take a nap in the saloon, only to be awakened by the sound of cowboys fighting. Unaware that this is for a movie, they believe these men to be the real inhabitants of the town.

Upon discovering Fred and Barney on his set, the director of the film realizes they do not know that they are in a movie. He decides to use this to his advantage and casts the two as his villains for the picture. Following a fracas with the good guys of the film, the two find themselves being chased by the Indians who opened the episode. Like the cartoons before it, there is no real explanation as to why these Indians are chasing Fred and Barney; they simply are. This is not an advance in any way for the depiction of Indians in animation. It remains the Indian as villain, although, somewhat weirdly they are chasing the alleged villains of the movie. It is at this point that the episode delivers a line that places it firmly within the pre-existing tropes of Indians in animation. Seeing the chase, Wilma remarks that Fred had been worried about his hair falling out and that he must be even more worried right now, to which Betty replies, “Yeah, knowing that those Indians could make him instant bald.” This line is soon followed by Fred and Barney’s

capture at the hands of the Indians and, of course, they are tied to a stake with fire burning close by.

One of the slight nods of self-awareness in this episode includes the director of the imbedded Western mentioning on two occasions that he found these “Indians” in an all night movie theater. This quick little joke pays homage to the fact that Indian characters were rarely played by actual Native Americans in post-World War II Westerns. This joke is clearly aimed at the adult audience and demonstrates a cultural awareness that the shorts of the previous era never exhibited. The cartoon ends with Betty and Wilma acting as the cavalry and saving the day.

This cartoon represents the beginning of a new spin on old standards. The Indian characters remain portrayed as mindless antagonists, but the inclusion of the winks and nods to Hollywood Westerns adds a layer of self-awareness. The cartoon acknowledges that the way Indians are portrayed in Hollywood is an industry-made creation, not reality. There is no pronounced attempt to go beyond that acknowledgment, but it is a start. Compared to the live-action television shows of the day -- like *The Beverly Hillbillies* and *The Andy Griffith Show* which featured stories that referenced savage Indians on several occasions and trivialized Native American culture by boiling it down to little more than tomahawks, drums, and war paint -- what *The Flintstones* were doing was downright revolutionary.¹⁴⁵ This illustrates what makes cartoons a good medium for social dialog. Live-action shows have actors who have their own opinions on issues and can also be held culpable by the public for what they say on screen. Cartoons, on the other hand,

¹⁴⁵ Dustin Tahmahkera, *Tribal Television: Viewing Native People in Sitcoms* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 49, 54.

have teams of writers who can hide behind animation. Of course, cartoons still deal with public criticism, but layers of protection exist. The lack of actors provides one of those layers, but the underlying notion that cartoons are absurd provides protection as well. Although it is incorrect to discount cartoons as unimportant, they are protected by the notion of “yeah, but it is just a cartoon.”

The Flintstones's ratings success in 1960 led to an influx of prime-time animated shows on the major networks. In the span of four years, seven new prime-time animated shows appeared on American televisions including, *Matty's Funday Funnies*, *The Bugs Bunny Show*, *Calvin and the Colonel*, *Top Cat*, *The Jetsons*, *The Bullwinkle Show* and *Johnny Quest*.¹⁴⁶ It was a full blown trend, but one that would not last. Of the eight prime-time animated shows only *The Flintstones* survived more than two seasons ending in 1966 after a steady decline in quality and ratings. The others found themselves relegated to Saturday mornings and afternoons. It would not be until 1989 with the debut of *The Simpsons* that weekly episodic prime-time animation would return to American televisions.¹⁴⁷ The failure of these prime-time shows proved a major blow to the animation industry. Without a prime-time audience, television stations relegated cartoons to less desirable timeslots and the Saturday morning cartoon became entrenched in American culture.

If the limited animation of *The Flintstones* lessened the artistic nature of cartoons, their relegation to Saturday mornings was a near-fatal blow. The move meant that children now became the primary audience for televised cartoons. Saturday morning animation reached new lows in terms of quality. Studios began firing their older writers

¹⁴⁶ Booker, *Drawn to Television*, 21.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

and animators in favor of younger and cheaper workers. Complex narratives in new cartoons virtually disappeared and limited animation became the standard over artistic integrity.

The new focus on children gave birth to two developments, edutainment and cartoons meant to sell products. No cartoon of the 1960s embodied this better than *The Funny Company*. The history of *The Funny Company* is imprecise, but what is known is that it was started via a collaboration between producer Kenneth Snyder and toymaker Mattel. In total, two hundred and sixty shorts were produced.¹⁴⁸ The cartoons themselves were crudely drawn, ran between five to six minutes, and featured a live-action educational film in the middle. *The Funny Company* never had its own series on television; rather, the cartoons found their way into anthology shows or local television kids' club shows. The cartoons revolved around a clubhouse gang of kids who palled around with an elderly inventor and two stereotypical Indians.

The Indians' names were Super Chief and Broken Feather. Super Chief took his name from a famous train that ran along the Santa Fe railway, and his sole contribution to dialog at any point was the sound of a train whistle when he opened his mouth wide. Broken Feather, whose name was indicative of the broken feather in his headband, served as Super Chief's translator and spoke in the pidgin "ugh speak" that was a staple of cartoons in the Golden Age. This portrayal could potentially be written off as just a continuation of the practices from the previous era, but these cartoons were meant to be

¹⁴⁸ David Perlmutter, *America Toons In: A History of Television Animation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Publishers, 2014), 107.

educational. These were the images that children in the 1960s imbibed. Images that became the foundation for their cultural understanding of Native Americans.

In the episode “Aladdin’s Wonderful Lamp” (1963), the children find themselves at a charity event where they have planned a short play that revolves around a genie granting a wish that requires one of the characters to play what is essentially the shell game.¹⁴⁹ As the game is about to start, Super Chief opens his mouth letting out a honk that Broken Feather translates to, “This like little Indian children game played on reservation.” This leads into this episode’s education film. Funny Company member Jasper State Park explains a game he encountered on a reservation. He describes the Tewa game *Cañute*, which involves hiding a rock in piles of dirt or sand and taking turns guessing and tabulating scores for correct guesses.¹⁵⁰ It is unclear if the film was shot specifically for this cartoon, but the clothing of the children in it indicate that it was most likely filmed in the 1960s. The description of this game includes details about it being played on a reservation in Arizona, which is the modern-day home of the Tewa. What is confounding about this though is that this cartoon is simultaneously trying to shed light on an aspect of Native American culture that would interest children while reinforcing Indian stereotypes, by way of its main characters, and the idea of that there is only one type of Indian. The narrator never mentions any tribal specifics and simply refers to *Cañute* as an Indian game. In addition, during the narration Broken Feather chimes stating “Me champion gesser on reservation, plenty good rock hider too.” This use of “ugh speak” conflicts with the supposed educational value of the segment. Also

¹⁴⁹ Kenneth Snyder, dir. “Aladdin’s Wonderful Lamp,” in *The Funny Company*, 1963.

¹⁵⁰ John P. Harrington, “The Tewa Indian Game of “Canute,”” *American Anthropologist* 14, no. 2 (1912): 245, doi:10.1525/aa.1912.14.2.02a00030.

troublesome is the lesson learned from the film that children can have fun using simple things like rocks and sticks. This makes the Indians in the film appear simplistic, or in keeping with the noble savage trope, innocent.

Taken as a whole, the positive aspects of the Indians in *The Funny Company* make it a step forward. Super Chief and Broken Feather are helpful figures in this series. They are friends of the children in the club and help educate the audience. The aural and visual depictions are steeped in stereotypes, but their role in the narrative is not. This cartoon, however, was meant to sell products. Mattel produced a Super Chief jack-in-the-box and a series of Tell-a-Tale board books in 1965, one which was titled *Super Chief in the Big City*.¹⁵¹ The reach of Super Chief and Broken Feather extended far beyond the small screen and, in the case of the board books, led directly to helping childhood literacy.

The cartoons of the mid-1960s typically abandoned the narrative that Indians were villains. Instead, cartoons increasingly depicted Native Americans as secondary protagonists, who, at the least, were far more competent than their counterparts from the Golden Age. Two examples of this include the *Roger Ramjet* short “The Cowboy” (1965) and *The Space Kidettes* short “Space Indians” (1966). These cartoons share the general narrative of the main protagonists benefitting from Native Americans helping them overcome their antagonists. While they both portray Indian characters as friends, they do still rely on the same stereotypical aural and visual depictions. The depiction of Indians in *The Space Kidettes* is absurd and troublesome since there was no need to include a

¹⁵¹ Tim Hollis, *Toons in Toyland: The Story of Cartoon Character Merchandise* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi, 2015), 123.

historically-base archetype in a cartoon set in outer-space. The animators could have easily created an alien race instead of using Native Americans.

Kenneth Snyder, the creator of *The Funny Company*, debuted *Roger Ramjet* in 1965. The *Roger Ramjet* cartoons were far superior to those of *The Funny Company* series. The character Roger Ramjet parodied *uber*-patriotic Americans and found himself in a series of dire situations that he escaped by taking one of his superhero power inducing “proton pills”. Cartoon historian David Perlmutter argues that it was Ramjet’s reliance on taking drugs to overcome his enemies that unfairly led to these cartoons being lost until the late-1990s when Cartoon Network re-released them.¹⁵² In the short “The Cowboy”, Ramjet finds himself in the West and captured by two outlaws called the Hite brothers, named as such due to their diminutive stature.¹⁵³ While being held captive, an arrow pierces one of the Hite brothers’ hat prompting them to yell “Run for cover boys!” Ramjet responds saying, “Nonsense, there are no hostile Indians anymore.” Soon, a wild band of Indians charge onto the screen with a throng of arrows flying through the air when all of a sudden a baseball bat appears prompting Ramjet to say “Hmmm, must be the Cleveland Indians.” It is a spectacle seen so many times before, but here it leads to a different outcome.

The outlaws and the Indians, referred to here as redskins, engage in a standoff that results in the outlaws offering Ramjet, who they believe to be a Martian, in exchange for letting them go. The Indian recognizes Ramjet and effectively rescues him from the outlaws. At this point the cartoon offers a couple sly nods to Native American history.

¹⁵² Perlmutter, *America Toons In*, 108.

¹⁵³ Kenneth Snyder, dir. “The Cowboy,” in *Roger Ramjet*, September 12, 1965.

First, the Indian's name is Chief Custer, a clear allusion to the Sioux defeat of Colonel Custer at the Battle of Little Big Horn. Second, Ramjet says to Chief Custer, "I don't know how to thank you." Custer responds, "How 'bout you give us back Oklahoma." In this singular line, this cartoon demonstrates a greater level of Native American history than any cartoon of the Golden Age, with the exception of the Superman short *Electric Earthquake*. These are a people who have been wronged. In this instance, Ramjet serves as a representation of the federal government and responds "I'm sorry I can't do that, but how about two tickets to *Mary Poppins*." Ramjet's response resembled a middling attitude toward the U.S.'s historical treatment of Native Americans. It acknowledged wrongdoing, but, instead of corrective measures, it offered what it felt was sufficient to make up for past abuses. Extended to the federal Indian policy trends of the era, this mirrored the idea of helping Indians through anti-poverty initiatives, but stopping short of ending termination and instituting self-determination.

In 1966, Hanna-Barbera debuted *The Space Kidettes*, an obvious play on the term "space cadet". The studio hoped to capitalize on the growing popularity of the space program with a Saturday morning cartoon that featured a gang of children space rangers who were constantly trying to confront the villainous Captain Skyhook. Setting the show in space added a level of absurdity to the cartoon that hid some of its larger social commentary. Animation historian Christopher Lehman argues that *The Space Kidettes* was more than just a show about some kids in space, and that it was really an allegory for the Vietnam War. The show featured children far away from home fighting an enemy

often not really knowing why.¹⁵⁴ In addition, these children were portrayed as being innocent and a running joke was that the villain refused to hurt them because of their age.

In the episode “Space Indians”, the Space Kidettes find themselves battling with Captain Skyhook once again after he discovers them having a picnic on top a treasure he buried.¹⁵⁵ It so happens that the crater the Space Kidettes are having their picnic on is located on the reservation of the most dangerous tribe of space Indians. Who are the space Indians? In this cartoon, they are basically the same stereotypical Native Americans that appeared in all of the other Hanna-Barbera cartoons, except these Indians ride space scooters and shoot arrows out of harpoon-like space guns. This is one of the few depictions of animated Native Americans in a futuristic setting. The most prominent futuristic show *The Jetsons* is notorious for its lack of any non-white characters. Although set in the future, these Indians are the exact same as those depicted in *The Flintstones*. A facet of these Indians that remains constant is the use of “ugh speak”. In the same year as *The Space Kidettes*, Hanna-Barbera released a series called *Dino Boy in the Lost Valley* that ran as a compendium to *Space Ghost*. Although *Dino Boy in the Lost Valley* did not feature any Native American characters, one of its main protagonists was a caveman named Ugh. Ugh spoke exactly like the Native Americans in other Hanna-Barbera cartoons. The connection here is clearly that Ugh and the various Native American characters throughout the Hanna-Barbera animation universe represented cultures that were from the past and dead. There may be living examples of that culture, but they were anomalies that struggled to fit in to the modern world.

¹⁵⁴ Christopher P. Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era: A Study of Social Commentary in Films and Television Programs, 1961-1973* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 81.

¹⁵⁵ William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, dirs. “Space Indians,” in *The Space Kidettes*, September 24, 1966.

One of the sad realities of the history of television is that there has yet to be a sitcom that prominently features Native Americans as the main protagonists. This does exist in the world of animation, however. In 1968, Total Television created a spin-off series from its popular *Underdog* franchise called *Go Go Gophers*. The *Underdog* series of cartoons is noted for being one of the first clear examples of left-wing political writing in children's television animation.¹⁵⁶ *Underdog*'s run on network television can be divided into two eras. The original sixty-two episode run from 1964 to 1967 featured thirty-minute cartoons revolving entirely around Underdog. The content of these episode were pretty standard fair and often actually glorified warfare and generally portrayed a middling perspective on America. This was due in large part to the fact that General Mills was the primary sponsor of the program and used Underdog to help sell Cheerios.

In 1968, *Underdog* entered syndication and the content of the show changed. The cartoons starring Underdog did not change and were simply repeats of episodes from previous seasons edited into five to six minute shorts that were shown over a series of three to four episodes. The real change came from the addition of new shorts called *Klondike Kat* that was about a bumbling Mountie who caught suspicious foreign villains by accident, and, the focus of this examination, *Go Go Gophers*. The premise of *Go Go Gophers* revolves around the existence of two anthropomorphized gophers who are the last members of the tribe of gopher Indians living in Gopher Gulch. Every week, the two gophers find themselves at odds with cavalry soldiers from the nearby fort who are trying to remove the gophers from their land. These cavalry soldiers are depicted as anthropomorphized coyotes, which serves as an indication that they are the bad guys.

¹⁵⁶ Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era*, 79.

This depiction of Indians still relies on several of the established negative cartoon tropes. The Indians are named Running Board and Ruffled Feathers, the former speaks in “ugh speak”, while the latter speaks in unintelligible gibberish. In addition, they are visually depicted like other cartoon Indians. Running Board has a full Plains Indian headdress and Ruffled Feathers a single broken feather. Despite the continued presence of these worn out stereotypes, *Go Go Gophers* offers a distinct example that there was a growing awareness of Native American culture in cartoons and the American cultural conscience. On a rudimentary level this was the first, and, to date, the last mainstream series of comedic cartoons to feature Native Americans as the primary protagonists. It is also the only comedic series, live-action or animated, to feature Native Americans in a positive role on a weekly basis until the 1990 sitcom “Northern Exposure”, and, even then, the main protagonist was white.

The entire run of *Go Go Gophers* is set in Gopher Gulch and, despite the occasional appearance of a modern piece of technology, it sticks to the Western genre. The writers took full comedic and satirical advantage of the genre they were spoofing. The commanding officer of the U.S. Army fort is Kit Coyote whose name is a parody of Kit Carson the famous frontiersman, Indian fighter, and army officer. In addition, Kit Coyote dressed and spoke like Theodore Roosevelt. The combination of the name and his depiction demonstrated that Kit was an unrelenting imperialist who was willing to do whatever it took to rid Gopher Gulch of the Indian menace. One of the many jabs at the Western genre comes in the form of Kit Coyote’s second in command, Sgt. Okey Homa, whose voice and demeanor is a satirical take on John Wayne. Within the series, Okey Homa often tries to provide a cooler head to Kit’s rash decisions, but never succeeds.

This version of John Wayne is not a forceful leading man; rather he is a timid sidekick content to blindly follow orders. A good amount of the inspiration for *Go Go Gophers*' spoofing of Westerns came from the live-action television show *F-Troop* that aired from 1965 to 1967. *F-Troop* had its own host of satirical imagery including having well-known white actors play Indians in order to lampoon the use of white actors as Native American in Hollywood and Spaghetti Westerns.¹⁵⁷

Since the entire series of *Go Go Gophers* revolves around Native American characters, a brief look at a few episodes and their storylines will suffice for this study. In "Bold as Gold", gold is discovered in Gopher Gulch and the Indians do whatever they can to keep white settlers from encroaching upon their land.¹⁵⁸ The episode conjures up historic similarities to Cherokee removal that was partially instigated by the discovery of gold on Indian land. The Cleveland Indians joke reappears in "Cleveland Indians".¹⁵⁹ This particular episode takes the well-trod joke and pokes fun at it by having Running Board and Ruffled Feathers visit Cleveland where they meet the Cleveland Indians. Running Board is surprised and calls them imposters. One of the later episodes, "Don't Fence Me In" features Kit and Okey Homa building a fence around Gopher Gulch to keep the Indians out only to be outsmarted and locked out themselves.¹⁶⁰ These premises are admittedly simple, but they demonstrate Native American characters were outsmarting their white counterparts on a weekly basis. The message was clear; these Indians should be allowed to remain on their land. These are not complacent, dumb, or

¹⁵⁷ Michael Ray FitzGerald, *Native Americans on Network TV: Stereotypes, Myths, and the "Good Indian"* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 15.

¹⁵⁸ W. Watts Biggers, prod. "Bold as Gold," in *Go Go Gophers*, 1966.

¹⁵⁹ W. Watts Biggers, prod. "Cleveland Indians," in *Go Go Gophers*, 1967.

¹⁶⁰ W. Watts Biggers, prod. "Don't Fence Me In," in *Go Go Gophers*, 1968.

innocent Indians, nor are they villains. They are heroic protagonists that win their battle against American expansionism every week. Unlike those before them, they have clear motives and agency over their actions.

These cartoons came out in the turbulent year of 1968, when there was a growing sense of cultural awareness in the U.S. They did not challenge the aural or visual presentation of Indians in animation, but they did change the narrative. The American public was warming to this new narrative. The years of believing that assimilation and termination was the proper course of action were giving way to a sense of renewed cultural pluralism. Ultimately, if a cartoon as silly as *Go Go Gophers* can even elicit the slightest of inquiry into the plight of Native Americans that proves its intellectual and cultural worth.

By the late-1960s and early-1970s, Native Americans took on a new role in the American cultural conscience. The growing counter-culture movement, spurred on by the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-war movement, led many white Americans to embrace Indianness as their cultural identity. In *Playing Indian*, Philip Deloria argues that Indian culture offered the perfect American stand-in for the situation in Vietnam. Apart from the skin color connotations, Indians were a people who had resisted the U.S. from taking their lands.¹⁶¹ The perceived imperialism of the Vietnam War paired nicely with the history of Manifest Destiny in the West. The changing attitude toward Native Americans made its way to the Hollywood as well. The film *Little Big Man* (1970) explores the differences between the lives of white settlers and Native Americans in the West. Dustin Hoffman plays Jack Crabb, also known as Little Big Man. Crabb survives a

¹⁶¹ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 160-161.

Pawnee raid as a child and is taken in by the Cheyenne who raise him as one of their own. Over the course of the movie, Crabb has to battle with his natural whiteness and cultural Indianness. Although Crabb at times does not exhibit the best character traits, it is clear to the audience that it is his Indian-side that they should be sympathetic toward.¹⁶² Undeniably, it represented a positive change to see Native American culture portrayed in a more enlightened manner in Hollywood and Americans looking to that culture for inspiration. However, this was white people co-opting Indian culture for their own purposes. It was a new take on assimilation. If Indians were reluctant to adopt mainstream American culture, then the mainstream would assimilate Indian culture into theirs.

The improvements to the portrayal of Native Americans in mainstream culture, especially in cartoons, were not universal. In addition to the problematic cartoons of the Golden Age continuing to run on television as part of anthology programs on Saturday mornings, new cartoons produced in the late-1960s and early-1970s continued to rely on the racist stereotypes of the past. Two such cartoons are the *Merrie Melodies* Cool Cat vehicle “Injun Trouble” (1969) and the *Woody Woodpecker* short “Indian Corn” (1972). One thing that makes these two cartoons different than the others from the Dark Age is that these were theatrically released shorts. They found their way to television via compilations, but they debuted in theaters. Cartoons initially made for television had a different level of standards imposed by advertisers. Theatrical shorts lacked these restrictions, which meant that they often depicted racier and more racist content.

¹⁶² Ibid., 161.

In 1967, in hopes of appealing to the audiences of the day, Warner Brothers Studios developed new characters for its *Merrie Melodies* series. This effort produced Cool Cat, a “hip kind of tiger” that spoke in a laid back manner and spouted popular counter-culture phrases like “groovy”, “far out”, and “so cool it now, ya’ hear.”¹⁶³ The *Cool Cat* cartoons were not well received. They amounted to a blatant attempt to capitalize on trends of the day, and their content was limited to cheap sight-gags and non-existent narratives. These shortcomings, coupled with the general decline in need and demand for theatrical shorts, led to the demise of *Merrie Melodies*.¹⁶⁴

The final *Merrie Melodies* theatrical short ever was Cool Cat in “Injun Trouble”. The title alone indicates this cartoon was firmly rooted in the past.¹⁶⁵ Within the first few seconds, the cartoon introduces two Indians who are drawn with single feather headbands, war paint, and large noses. The two have a brief exchange consisting of nothing but “ugh” and “how”. The concept of the Indian villain returns in this short. Provoked by Cool Cat’s appearance on their land in his dune buggy, these Indians begin chasing him while whooping wildly. At this point, one of the Indians turns to the camera and says “Injuns always yell like that when they mad.” This statement establishes the idea that all Indians whoop and that all Indians are exactly the same. It goes beyond the simple presence of whooping and solidifies it as a fact. From this point forward the cartoon is completely devoid of anything resembling a coherent narrative. Instead it is a constant cut from one gag to another. While driving his dune buggy, Cool Cat comes across another Indian and his overweight “squaw”. The Indian, for some reason, says

¹⁶³Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, 276.

¹⁶⁴ Graham Webb, *The Animated Film Encyclopedia: A Complete Guide to American Shorts, Features, and Sequences, 1900-1979* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland &, 2006), 554.

¹⁶⁵ *Injun Trouble*, dir. Robert McKimson (Los Angeles: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1969).

“Me givem’ you squaw.” The squaw hugs Cool Cat who yells “Indian giver!” It is a silly exchange that has a punchline that does not make sense since the general interpretation of an “Indian giver” is someone who gives a gift and then wants it back. Needless to say, this is not a good cartoon. The supposed humor of this entire exchange rests on the weight of the “squaw” and her affection for Cool Cat.

As the short continues there are more quick gags that make light of Indians. One Indian draws a face on a paint bucket, puts it on his head, and calls himself a “pail face”. The short also includes a smoke signal gag. An Indian is pictured using a stenograph machine to type out “Cool Cat Go Home” in smoke. Given that this is a theatrical short and not one for television, there are a few more adult themes present. In one instance, Cool Cat comes across a sexualized Indian maiden who is wearing a miniskirt and a bikini top. The maiden asks Cool Cat, “How’d you like to Indian wrestle tiger?” Thinking she means they are going to have sex, Cool Cat stammers only to be surprised when the maiden whoops, which is how Indians communicate in this cartoon. This whoop summons a muscular Indian who literally wrestles with Cool Cat. In one final gag, Cool Cat encounters yet another stoic Indian with his hand raised. Instead of saying “how”, this Indian says “why”. Cool Cat responds, “Why? I thought Indians always say “how”.” These jokes would have fit well in the cartoons of the Golden Age, but here they are just stale and culturally tone deaf. When compared to the depictions of Indians as protagonists in *Go Go Gophers*, these Indians are a massive step backward. To the credit of broadcasters and Warner Brothers, “Injun Trouble” has never been shown on television or released on video. It is not part of the Censored Eleven, mostly because the series was not popular enough to warrant any demand from the general public. However, it does

demonstrate that while Warner Brothers allowed the cartoon to be produced and shown in theaters, they were culturally aware enough to keep it off television.

The *Woody Woodpecker* theatrical short “Indian Corn” (1972) serves as another example of how old stereotypes endure.¹⁶⁶ By 1972, most cartoons had abandoned portraying Native Americans as villains and many just avoided the subject all together, but *Woody Woodpecker* cartoons seemed frozen in time when it came to their depictions of non-white cultures.¹⁶⁷ This short’s story finds Woody Woodpecker on an Indian reservation where the chief orders his son to capture a woodpecker. The Indians use “ugh speak” and are drawn in the standard stereotypical fashion. Eventually, the young Indian brave enlists the help of Woody’s arch nemesis Buzz Buzzard. Unlike “Injun Trouble”, this short does not rely on gags centered on Indian stereotypes for its comedy; instead, it relies on the ineptness of the young Indian and Buzz Buzzard in their roles as villains. In addition, “Indian Corn” did make it way to television with the creation of *The Woody Woodpecker Show* that ran in one form or another from 1957 to 1997.

The next entry in the chronicling of Native Americans in animation is different because of the lack of Indians in the story. In 1973, CBS aired the tenth of its Charlie Brown specials *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving*.¹⁶⁸ The Charlie Brown specials were prime examples of Dark Age animation. They relied on pre-existing intellectual properties, were produced cheaply, used limited animation, and were meant explicitly for television. In the broader scope of animation, the Charlie Brown specials were not

¹⁶⁶ *Indian Corn*, dir. Paul J. Smith (Los Angeles: Walter Lantz Productions, 1972).

¹⁶⁷ Michael Samerdyke, *Cartoon Carnival: A Critical Guide to the Best Cartoons from Warner Brothers, MGM, Walter Lantz, and DePatie-Freleng* (Self-published, 2013), Electronic.

¹⁶⁸ *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving*, dir. Bill Melendez (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures, 1973).

progressive. They presented a moral message and were steeped in underlying Christianity. They did not change with the times; however, *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* marks the first on-screen appearance of Franklin, a black member of the Peanuts gang.¹⁶⁹

The premise of this special revolves around Charlie Brown hosting a Thanksgiving meal for his friends. Despite the main narrative centering on Thanksgiving, there is no discussion of Native Americans outside of a brief mention from Linus when he tells the story of the first Thanksgiving. Linus says: “In the year 1621, the Pilgrims held their first Thanksgiving feast. They invited the great Indian chief Massasoit who brought ninety of his brave Indians and a great abundance of food. Governor William Bradford and Captain Miles Standish were honored guests. Elder William Brewster, who was a minister, said a prayer that went something like this. We thank God for our homes and our food and our safety in our new land. We thank God for the freedom to create a new world with freedom and justice.” With that short explanation generations of Americans got their history of the first Thanksgiving. It was a happy meeting of no real consequence between helpful Indians and thankful Pilgrims. This narrative was acceptable to Americans. It did not allude to the years of atrocities that Native Americans would endure due to successful white colonization of North America. It was simply a nice story of thanks.

It may seem overly harsh to criticize this cartoon for not going further in depth about the true history of Thanksgiving, but the cursory treatment it receives effectively

¹⁶⁹ Christopher Lehman, "Franklin and the Early 1970s," in *The Comics of Charles Schulz: The Good Grief of Modern Life*, ed. Jared Gardner and Ian Gordon (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2017), 141.

established the notion that there is nothing wrong with the holiday. If one was to ask a typical American about the story of Thanksgiving, they would probably get something very similar to Linus's brief speech, and it is likely that they got that information from this cartoon. This is not a cartoon like "Injun Trouble" that has been lost to the ages, *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving* has aired near or on Thanksgiving since 1973, and it continues to spread its simplistic explanation of one of the most important events in Native American history.

Theatrical shorts were on their way out during the 1970s, but DePatie-Freleng Enterprises continued to produce them until 1976. The most successful member of the DePatie-Freleng stable of characters was the Pink Panther; a lone gem among a host of problematic characters. Two of the most notorious series from DePatie-Freleng are the *Tijuana Toads* and *The Blue Racer*. The *Tijuana Toads* cartoons featured two toads who exhibited numerous Mexican stereotypes. *The Blue Racer* was about a racing snake, had a beetle character that was essentially a take on Mickey Rooney's legendarily offensive character Mr. Yunioshi from *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961). The characters in these series were clearly out of place in the 1970s. Had these shorts been originally intended for television and not theatrical release, it is unlikely that they would have been produced.

With DePatie-Freleng's poor history of racial sensitivity, it seemed inevitable that the company's new Western series of shorts *Hoot Kloot* would not deal with Native Americans in a positive manner. The sole *Hoot Kloot* cartoon that addresses Native Americans beyond a simple cameo was the ambiguous "Apache on the County Seat"

(1973).¹⁷⁰ The character Hoot Kloot is a stereotypical “redneck” southern sheriff who is out of touch and never thinks he is wrong.¹⁷¹ Typically, Hoot Kloot is hot on the trail of his nemesis Crazywolf. Despite his name, Crazywolf did not resemble a Native American. Rather, he was depicted as more of an archetypal outlaw. In “Apache on the County Seat”, Hoot Kloot is on the trail of an Indian known as the Jolly Red Giant, a name given to this Indian to play off Green Giant foods’ mascot. Predictably, the Indians in this short display all the racial insensitivity expected given the studio’s previous attempts at ethnic characters. All of the standard fare, from big noses, to headdresses, to uncontrollable whooping are present

The crime Jolly Red Giant has committed is overpopulating his Indian tribe. The implication is that these Indians should not be multiplying; rather, they should be slowly disappearing. Hoot Kloot represents ages of eradication and assimilation. In a nod to what at that time was a relatively recent occurrence, *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), Hoot Kloot says to the Indian, “You have the right to make one smoke-signal.” If one overlooks the stereotypical portrayal of Native Americans in this film, a deeper narrative appears. Hoot Kloot is clearly the villain in this scenario. He invades tribal land trying to find clues about Jolly Red Giant’s guilt and confiscates property along the way. This upsets the Indians on the reservation. Hoot Kloot’s horse, Fester, who acts as the logical half of the duo, warns that the Indians are becoming restless. Ignoring the arrows flying overhead, Hoot Kloot remains oblivious to the ire he has created among the Native Americans and continues to believe that they love him.¹⁷² Here, Hoot Kloot serves as a

¹⁷⁰ *Apache on the County Seat*, dir. David DePaite and Friz Freleng (Burbank: DePaite-Freleng Enterprises, 1973).

¹⁷¹ Perlmutter, *America Toons In*, 94.

¹⁷² Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era*, 177-180.

metaphor for the federal government. He represents an authority figure who is infringing upon the sovereignty of this tribe, but feels he is doing so out of their best interests. Because of this, the overall impression from this short is a sympathetic understanding of Native Americans. They are the victims of misguided authority figures and are consistently ignored when they express their displeasure.

The same year that produced the stereotypical Indians in “Apache on the County Seat”, the most culturally sensitive portrayal of Indians to date in animation appeared in the *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* episode “How the West was Lost” (1973). *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* was created at a time when there was a concerted push for creating more edutainment. Every episode of the show included Bill Cosby breaking the fourth wall to speak to the audience and talk about the lesson the gang was learning in this particular cartoon. In addition, each episode listed a group of educational specialists that were consulted for the content. It was not on the same level as *Sesame Street*, but was a valid attempt of combining education and entertainment.¹⁷³

“How the West was Lost” sought to dispel popular beliefs about Native Americans. It acts as the perfect summation of the changes that were occurring in America concerning understanding and embracing Native American culture. The episode starts with the gang waiting in line at the Bargain Bijou Theater to see *The Twisted Arrow* presented by Tivoli. This is a clear homage to the spaghetti westerns of the 1960s. The film the gang watches is a cookie cutter western that features white heroes and Indian villains. During the film, Rudy tells the gang not to worry about the good guys because

¹⁷³ Heather Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors: Television Regulation Before the V-chip* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 173-174.

“Indians can’t shoot straight, and besides they always lose”. Inspired by the film, the gang begins playing cowboys and Indians in the street where they come across a moving van from Arizona with a tipi on the side, a sign of developments yet to come.

The next day at school the teacher informs the class that a new student has arrived from Arizona. The teacher introduces Johnnie Mockwa.¹⁷⁴ When the door opens the audience gets their first glimpse at Johnnie, portrayed here as an updated stereotype. Johnnie is not wearing a headdress, but he is wearing a headband. His clothes are such that they mimic the counter-culture approach as to what Indians wear, in this case it was white pants and, most importantly, a leather vest. His hair is cut in a mid-crop indicative of Indians from many Westerns. Upon seeing Johnnie, Dumb Donald asks “How come he’s dressed like an Indian?” Even in this episode that is meant to address Native American stereotypes, the animators still draw Johnnie in a way that clearly denoted Indianness. Ethnic generalization proves to be quite difficult to overcome. Soon after their initial encounter, Johnnie meets up with the gang on the basketball court where he makes a long range shot to everyone’s amazement. This is where the conflict of the episode first appears. Rudy begins to suspect that Johnnie is not a real Indian. He revisits his statement from the movies saying, “Everybody knows Indians can’t shoot nothing straight. No guns, no arrows, no basketballs, no nothing.” Johnnie retorts, “You’ve been seeing too many movies...” The gang then asks Johnnie what kind of Indian he is. He dumbfounds the gang by telling them that he is Hopi. No one had heard of the Hopi. This is an allusion to the fact that these kids have gained their knowledge of Indians from Westerns and most likely are only familiar with the Apache, Comanche, and other tribes

¹⁷⁴ Mockwa is the presumed spelling of the character. Research into the episode never revealed the spelling of Johnnie’s last name.

that served as Hollywood villains. Johnnie is asked to “[do] something Hopi”, which he answers by demonstrated a near superhuman-like ability to climb and perform parkour moves. He explains that he can climb well because his people live in the cliffs of Arizona. Again, the cartoon veers into problematic areas. While the Hopi do live in Arizona, it is highly unlikely that in the 1970s Johnnie’s family lived in a cliff dwelling. It is an effort at eroding ethnic generalization that unfortunately relies on misleading information.

As the episode progresses, the gang continues to question Johnnie’s Indianness. He encounters Fat Albert and Weird Harold engaging in what the gang called “Indian wrestling.” When Johnnie says that he is unfamiliar with it, the gang’s suspicions rise once more. Alleged evidence against Johnnie continues to pile up. The gang discovers that he is reading books which inspires Rudy to say, “He doesn’t fool me for one minute. Indian’s don’t read stories, they sit around campfires and make them up.” Rudy further states his doubt, saying that he does not look like an Indian and he is an authority because he has seen all the Jeff Chandler movies. Jeff Chandler famously played Cochise in the film *Broken Arrow*. Later when the gang goes diving into an unnamed body of water, Johnnie shows up and demonstrates advanced diving and swimming skills. Again, they question whether he is a real Indian because Indians live in the mountain tops where there is nowhere to swim. Finally, after calling Johnnie “Big Chief Snow Job”, the gang’s doubt in Johnnie peaks when they ask him to perform a rain dance because it is hot outside. Johnnie asserts that the “rain dance is just a ceremony, dancing won’t make it rain.” Despite this, he obliges, but stubs his toe and is unable to complete the dance. This was the last straw for the gang who now completely believe that Johnnie is a fraud.

The stage has been set for the gang to learn their lesson. After an encounter with Mudfoot, a friendly vagrant that often offers them advice, the gang thinks that maybe they have made a mistake. At this point, the cartoon cuts to one of the embedded live action sequences featuring Bill Cosby. Breaking the fourth wall Cosby explains “You can’t blame the kids too much for being confused. We’ve all been fed a lot of baloney about our Native Americans. So when we’re finally given the straight story we find it hard to accept.” With those few words, Cosby effectively sums up the problems associated with the depiction of Native Americans in mainstream media up to that point. Every Indian was the same. Whether they were stoic, mystic, heroic, dumb, or villainous they were all the same culturally and existed in a common narrative from the past. Even, Cosby, who is trying to impart cultural sensitivity refers to Indians as “our Native Americans”, a phrase that denotes American ownership over an entire culture.

When the cartoon returns, the gang is shown reading books on Native Americans in order to learn the truth about their culture. This is the overall message of the episode. Americans must eschew their ideas about Indians that they have gleaned from popular culture and seek real information. At the end of the episode Johnnie returns and is embraced by the gang who is now convinced he really is an Indian. Unfortunately the episode ends on a bit of a low note as Johnnie informs the gang that he is moving to “INDIANapolis.”¹⁷⁵ Despite the shoehorned-in pun, this single cartoon does more to enlighten the public about Native American culture than all others before it. It also demonstrates the tricky nature surrounding efforts to introduce new multicultural aspects. Johnnie’s character would not have been effective if he did not exhibit some sort of

¹⁷⁵Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era*, 181.

visual Indianness. But at the same time, by providing that visual, the cartoon reinforces stereotypes it is looking to overcome. Fortunately, the overall message of this particular cartoon negates its negative aspects.

The last example of Native Americans in cartoons that warrants brief examination here is the character Apache Chief from the *Super Friends* franchise. Apache Chief was part of a multiculturalism initiative launched with the reboot of the series as *The All-New Super-Friends* hour.¹⁷⁶ Along with Apache Chief, the show added an Asian named Samurai, a Latino named El Dorado, and the African-American Black Vulcan. Although the inclusion of a more diverse cast of characters was positive in principle, it proved problematic in its execution. These characters amounted to little more than stereotypical portrayals of their cultures.¹⁷⁷ Adorned in a loin cloth, headband, and vest, Apache Chief looked Indian. He spoke in a semi-broken English that was nowhere near the level of “ugh speak” from the cartoons of previous decades, but was stilted. Apache Chief’s superpower was the ability to grow larger and stronger by saying the phrase “Inuk Chuk”.¹⁷⁸ In keeping with the myth of Native Americans, Apache Chief’s powers were bestowed upon him by a mystical elderly Indian. From 1977 to 1984, Apache Chief appeared in twelve episode of various iterations of *Super Friends* cartoons. None of his appearances warrant in-depth analysis as they typically revolved around him simply utilizing his power to help whoever the main superhero of the episode happened to be. Apache Chief disappeared from the DC comics’ universe following the end of the *Super*

¹⁷⁶ Timothy Burke and Kevin Burke, *Saturday Morning Fever: Growing Up with Cartoon Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), 214.

¹⁷⁷ Perlmutter, *America Toons In*, 129.

¹⁷⁸ There are various spellings of this phrase.

Friends series. He does, however, stand as a testament to the pitfalls of prescribed multiculturalism in mainstream media.

By the time the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 passed Congress, animation was solidly on a path of decline. Shrinking budgets and network cost-cutting measures meant that only a few new series debuted in the late-1970s. Most of the animation that appeared on television came in the form of anthologies of shorts from previous decades. This meant that the racist images of the past continued to appear on a regular basis. Despite the persistence of the racist images, the industry and the nation made strides forward. The transition from Indians as villains to Indians as heroes or, at the least sympathetic figures, led to a more positive view of Native American culture. There were still many obstacles to overcome. The age did little to combat the idea that all Indians were the same, nor had it completely abandoned the stereotypical aural and visual depictions of Native Americans.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVER-LINGERING NOBLE SAVAGE IN RENAISSANCE AGE CHILDREN'S ANIMATION

The Renaissance Age is one of the more complex eras of animation. Beginning in the early-1980s, it did not reach its pinnacle until the 1990s. It was an era comprised of extremes, starting with low-budget limited animation cartoons that amounted to little more than toy commercials and culminating in cinematic works of beauty worthy of Oscars. The era also reinvented adult-focused prime-time animation with the debut of *The Simpsons* in 1989. For Native American depictions in animation, it was an era that saw the rebirth of the noble savage along with a growing awareness of the need to portray Indian culture with increased sensitivity. Like the age before it, it had its share of positive steps forward and misguided attempts at depicting Native Americans.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the future of animation seemed in the air. The cartoon anthologies that had ruled Saturday mornings throughout the 1960s and 1970s appeared increasingly outdated in an ever-modernizing world. The few new cartoon series that debuted from 1980 to 1982 relied heavily on proven cartoon characters like

Yogi Bear, the Super Friends, and Scooby Doo, or they were animated adaptations of popular television shows like *Mork & Mindy*, *Happy Days*, and, even, *Laverne and Shirley*. The quality of these cartoons was firmly rooted in the low-budget limited animation style that Hanna-Barbera popularized in the 1960s and, consequently added little to the history of animation.

Change in the animation industry came from an unlikely source, Ronald Reagan. The Reagan Administration's economic policy dubbed "Reaganomics," emphasized deregulation of numerous industries, including the media. The Federal Communication Commission under Reagan lifted many of the advertising restrictions that had been placed on children's programming during the 1970s.¹⁷⁹ This change in policy meant that cartoons could now be specifically designed to sell toys. Toy manufacturers took full advantage and began producing cartoons that amounted to little more than thirty-minute long commercials. *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* (1983), *The Transformers* (1984), *The Care Bears* (1985), and *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero* (1985) are just a few of the television cartoon series created solely to sell toys. Some argue that these cartoons are not part of the Renaissance Age because they were mass-produced, relied on limited animation, and were little more than advertisements. However, it is unfair to lump these cartoons in with the Dark Age of animation. These cartoons never attempted to develop complex narratives and run in an episodic fashion that facilitated long-term story arcs. This is different from the five minute shorts full of sight gags and one-liners of the Dark Age. The animation did not have the artistic integrity of the cartoons of the Golden Age, but the content was more complex, albeit capitalistic.

¹⁷⁹ Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 109-110.

Owing to the success of the standalone toy-selling series of the mid-1980s, studios like Warner Brothers and Disney re-entered the realm of television animation in the late-1980s and early-1990s with shows like *DuckTales* (1987), *TaleSpin* (1990), *Tiny Toon Adventures* (1990) and *Animaniacs* (1993). These cartoons exhibited noticeably higher quality than those that preceded them and brought back many of the beloved characters of the Golden Age. In addition to the emergence of quality cartoons on the small screen, big budget feature-length animation returned to movie theaters with movies like *An American Tale* (1986) and *The Little Mermaid* (1989). This was not all. In 1989, *The Simpsons* debuted as a standalone program on the Fox Network, creating another aspect of the Renaissance Age, prime-time adult-oriented animation. Thus, the Renaissance Age is truly an era full of diverse content.

Due to the complex nature of this age, it is divided into multiple chapters reserving prime-time animation for the next chapter. This chapter, like those before it, begins with an examination of major developments in Native American policy and culture from 1980 to 2000. This chronological ending is chosen because it corresponds with the end of the Clinton Administration. No consensus exists as to when the Renaissance Age actually ended. Following this contextual review, the chapter focuses on children's television animation. The Renaissance Age offers two unique periods of children's animation, the toy-base action cartoons of the 1980s and the more comedic fair of the late-1980s and early 1990s. The chapter concludes with a discussion of animated features of the era culminating with what is typically considered to be the final classic feature-length film of the Renaissance Age, *Pocahontas* (1995).

The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 may have been a boon for the animation industry, but it proved a difficult challenge for the Native American community. When Reagan entered office, and arguably when he left, he knew very little about Native Americans and the problems they faced. As an actor, he had starred in Westerns like *Cattle Queen of Montana* (1954) that featured Native Americans as villains. Reagan was also governor of California when Indians of All Tribes occupied Alcatraz in 1969. His gubernatorial administration avoided dealing with the occupation of Alcatraz in any significant way in favor of allowing the federal government to take charge. The only notable action came in August of 1970 when the administration offered the Bay Area Native American Council a \$50,000 planning grant to address the needs of urban Indians with the caveat that none of the funds could be used to support the Indians occupying the Island. Some saw this as a maneuver by Reagan to drive a wedge between the politically active urban Indians in California and the occupiers.¹⁸⁰ Apart from this incident, not much interaction occurred between Reagan and Native American issues until his presidency.

The cornerstone of the Reagan Administration's economic policy was deregulation and cuts to federal expenditures. This proved costly for Native Americans. In the first year of his presidency, Reagan proposed drastic cuts to Indian aid programs in the 1982 fiscal year. The cuts to Indian Affairs totaled nearly \$1 billion. These included reducing housing programs by ninety-six percent, health facilities by eighty-two percent, economic development by eighty-two percent, jobs and training by forty-five percent,

¹⁸⁰ Troy R. Johnson, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island: Indian Self-Determination and the Rise of Indian Activism* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1996), 201.

and urban Indian health care by fifty percent. The cuts were drastic. Indian aid programs only accounted for four-tenths of a percent of federal expenditures, but absorbed nearly three percent of the budget cuts.¹⁸¹ It was clear that Indians were not a priority for the Reagan Administration. Officials in the Reagan Administration held overly negative views of Indians and tribal affairs. In an interview on the television program *Conservative Counterpoint* on January 19, 1983, Secretary of the Interior James Watt condemned President Johnson's Great Society programs for creating a socialist state among Indian tribes. He claimed that Indians were treated as "incompetent wards" and that due to federal aid tribal chiefs and chairmen had been rendered "ward bosses."¹⁸² Watt had intended to express his disgust for the welfare society he and the administration believed that government aid programs created, but in doing so he broached old stereotypes of incompetent Indians. Unsurprisingly, Watt's comments sparked outrage in the Indian community.

After Watt's remarks, Reagan offered his first official Indian policy statement on January 24, 1983. Keeping with the tenets of the Reagan Administration's belief in streamlining the federal government, he began by saying "This administration believes that responsibilities and resources should be restored to the governments which are closest to the people served. This philosophy applies not only to State and local governments, but also to federally recognized American Indian tribes."¹⁸³ The rhetoric of Reagan's address consistently alluded to the concepts of self-determination and tribal

¹⁸¹ Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 2000), 120-121.

¹⁸² Castile, *Taking Charge*, 58.

¹⁸³ "Ronald Reagan: Statement on Indian Policy - January 24, 1983," The American Presidency Project, accessed October 03, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=41665>.

control over Indian issues, insisting that increased tribal control would alleviate all the major problems that continued to plague Native Americans. Reagan argued that Indian policy to that point had kept tribes from succeeding because the federal government interfered too much. He went as far as to claim that the cuts to Indian aid programs could be easily be funded by tribes due to the availability of capital investments in the free market.¹⁸⁴ This ill-conceived policy relied on the theoretical success of supply-side economics. Shrouded in the concept of self-determination, it ultimately justified Reagan's budget cuts.

Over the course of Reagan's two terms as President, his pro-business economic policies continued to be troublesome for Native Americans. In 1984, the Navajo asked Secretary of the Interior William Clark to consider readjusting their royalty agreement with Peabody Coal. At the time, the Navajo received a two percent royalty rate that translated into only receiving \$2.7 million from coal resold for \$141 million. The Bureau of Indian Affairs suggested that the royalty rate be increased to twenty percent. In 1985, Donald P. Hodel, Clark's replacement, held a secret meeting with a Peabody representative. Subsequently he released a new agreement with only a twelve and a half percent royalty rate.¹⁸⁵ In 1983, Reagan touted the idea of relying on private investment to save Indian communities, but now when that very circumstance presented itself, his administration actively prevented it. It proved that the talk of self-determination and tribal empowerment was secondary to what really mattered, big business.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Meizhu Lui, *The Color of Wealth: The Story Behind the U.S. Racial Wealth Divide* (New York: New Press, 2006), 52.

By the final year of Reagan's presidency many of the issues plaguing Native American communities had worsened due to federal cutbacks. According to political analyst C. Patrick Morris, the Reagan Administration's policies amounted to "Termination by accountants". The quality of Indian life, housing, and health had all deteriorated considerably since his term began.¹⁸⁶ American Indian activist Susan Harjo echoed Morris's sentiments and expanded on the deteriorating cultural awareness of Indians when she testified before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in 1988. She stated, "We have a richness of cultural underpinnings without which we would not be able to survive today's conditions of outrageously high unemployment, staggering alcoholism, the highest rate of teenage suicide..., which comes from low self-esteem, which comes from having those kids' elders... mocked, dehumanized, cartooned, [and] stereotyped."¹⁸⁷

Under Reagan's watch, Congress did pass the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988. The act allowed tribes to negotiate with state governments concerning the prospect of casino gaming. It was the first federal legislation to structuralize gaming in any form.¹⁸⁸ The stated purpose of the act was to facilitate new tribal revenue streams. This new revenue could be used to replace government funds for social programs. However, the act effects of the act are unclear. Government studies show that the amount of Indians living under the poverty line has increased since the implementation of the act and many

¹⁸⁶ C. Patrick Morris, "Termination By Accountants: The Reagan Indian Policy," *Policy Studies Journal* 16, no. 4 (1988): 732, doi:10.1111/j.1541-0072.1988.tb00683.x.

¹⁸⁷ Albert L. Hurtado, *Major Problems in American Indian History: Documents and Essays* (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015), 543.

¹⁸⁸ NIGC, "Indian Gaming Regulatory Act," Indian Gaming Regulatory Act | National Indian Gaming Commission, accessed November 02, 2017, <https://www.nigc.gov/general-counsel/indian-gaming-regulatory-act>.

social issues, like drug abuse and suicide, have worsened.¹⁸⁹ One demonstrable repercussion of the act, discussed in the next chapter, is that it facilitated the birth of a new Native American stereotype, the unscrupulous executive casino Indian.

If there were any questions about Reagan's attitude toward Native Americans, they disappeared in May of 1988. Speaking to an audience at Moscow State University, Reagan, perhaps unprepared for a question about Native Americans, was asked about his administration's inability to connect with Indians. He answered with a statement that reeked of assimilation and termination. Reagan replied, "Maybe we made a mistake in trying to maintain Indian cultures. Maybe we should not have humored them in that, wanting to stay in that primitive lifestyle. Maybe we should have said, "No, come join us. Be citizens along with the rest of us."¹⁹⁰ Reagan's comments on Indians contradicted every bit of progressive Indian policy since the Kennedy Administration. He painted a picture of a people who were inept, a threat to society, and incapable of adapting to the modern world; in other words, he still believed Indians to be the villains from the Westerns of his heyday.

With the change of administrations in 1989, federal policy once again focused on dealing with Native American issues. The late-1980s proved a difficult period for Native Americans who were still dealing with the financial setbacks by the Reagan administration. When George H.W. Bush took office, he faced a combative Congress that was controlled by Democrats in both houses. For many issues, this created a contentious

¹⁸⁹ United States Government Accountability Office, "Indian Issues: Observations on Some Unique Factors That May Affect Economic Activity on Tribal Lands," Digital Library, June 11, 2014, accessed November 02, 2017, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc293101/>.

¹⁹⁰ Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), xiii.

relationship, but federal Indian policy was relatively bipartisan. In May of 1989, Democratic Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii introduced the Smithsonian-affiliated National Museum of the American Indian Act. The act provided funding and guidance for the construction of the National Museum of the American Indian on the Mall in Washington, D.C.¹⁹¹ In his statement on signing the bill, Bush said, “The National Museum of the American Indian will be dedicated to the collection, preservation, and exhibition of American Indian languages, literature, history, art, anthropology, and culture.”¹⁹² Of equal importance this bill codified the “policy for returning American Indian and Native Hawaiian human remains and associated funerary objects.”¹⁹³ This meant that the thousands of Indian remains and sacred funerary objects that had been disrespectfully collected over the years, and stored in the Smithsonian archives, would find their way back to their rightful resting places. The museum legislation signified that the new administration, Congress, and the American people were concerned about ensuring awareness and preservation of Native American culture.

Federal policy and public sentiment toward Native Americans remained favorable in the early-1990s. In April 1990, Democratic Senator Dennis DeConcini (D-AZ) introduced the New Federalism for American Indians Act. The opening salvo of the act demonstrates a dramatic shift from the Reagan-era views on Native Americans within the scope of the federal government. The bill opens, “After careful review of the historical and special relationship between the United States and the Indian people, the Congress

¹⁹¹ Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs*, p.161

¹⁹² "George Bush: Statement on Signing the National Museum of the American Indian Act - November 28, 1989," The American Presidency Project, accessed October 03, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=17875>.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

finds that the United States has a unique fiduciary responsibilities and obligations toward the Indians, and the Indians have unique rights and privileges as set forth in treaties, agreements, statutes, and Executive orders.”¹⁹⁴ Woven into the remainder of the bill is what amounted to an eloquent reprimand of how the federal government had handled its affairs with Native Americans over the previous two centuries. The bill was meant simply to be read to Congress to spur further action regarding Native American issues. It worked, as over the remainder of the Bush Administration Congress enacted several beneficial pieces of legislation.

From April 1990 to the end of 1992, the Bush Administration signed into law no fewer than a dozen major pieces of legislation concerning revisions to federal Indian policy. The bulk of these dealt with re-instating funding for programs that were cut during the Reagan Administration. Housing, education, energy, employment, and economic development programs all found new life during this period. One bill that had nothing to do with budget cuts was the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990. Similar to the provision laid out in the bill that created the National Museum of the American Indian, NAGPRA called for the return of Native American cultural items to their proper owners by any facility that received federal funding and established grant programs to help fund the repatriation of such items. While the bill was the proper thing to do in light of the centuries of mistreatment of Native American artifacts, it had its detractors. Some in the archeological and anthropological fields argued that it would make scientific research nearly impossible. Much of this debate revolved around the discovery of the Kennewick Man in 1996,

¹⁹⁴ S. 2512, 101 Cong., New Federalism for American Indians Act of 1990 (1990) (enacted).

whose remains fell under NAGPRA protection. Scientists believed the near complete set of ancient bones to be of immense scientific importance and feared they would have no access to it.¹⁹⁵ Despite its perceived limiting of scientific research, NAGPRA was a major step forward in returning cultural ownership to Native Americans.

The passage of NAGPRA and other pro-Indian legislation coincided with a particularly negative period of mainstream media coverage of Native Americans. The *New York Times* published an article by Robert H. White in November 1990 that painted a bleak picture of Indian life in America. White chronicled many of the negative stories that had plagued Indians that year, including gun battle deaths on the St. Regis reservation in New York, a violent standoff between Mohawks and government officials in Canada, and countless stories of incompetent Indian leadership. Lamenting the Indian woes, White wrote, “Many, if not most, Native Americans remain America’s internal exiles, living within confines established by their conquerors.”¹⁹⁶ The true purpose of the article was not to be grim; rather it was to shed light on tribes throughout the country that had actually made major strides forward capitalizing on private investment, technological innovation, and creating effective tribal leadership.¹⁹⁷ Ultimately, his article comprised a message of hope that Native Americans could find a way out of their current state of affairs. Given the vast amount of legislation attempting to improve Native American lives, the federal government agreed with White.

Coinciding with the changes to federal Indian policy and lingering negative Indian issues, Hollywood experienced a brief flirtation with Native American-centric

¹⁹⁵ Renee M. Kosslak, "The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act: The Death Knell for Scientific Study?" *American Indian Law Review* 24, no. 1 (1999): 129-133, 151, doi:10.2307/20070624.

¹⁹⁶ White, Robert. "Indians' New Harvest." *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1990. Web. 9 Sep. 2017

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

blockbusters, the most obvious being *Dances with Wolves* (1990). Throughout the 1980s, Indians in movies typically fit within the villain role, but most of big-budget Westerns of the decade, and there were very few, focused on outlaws. Movies with Indian characters were typically lower-budget or made for television movies, like the Johnny Cash and Willie Nelson remake of *Stagecoach* (1986), or the mini-series *Lonesome Dove* (1989). *Dances with Wolves* was a different type of Western. Historian Dustin Tahmahkera argues that *Dances with Wolves* was Hollywood's reply to Dee Brown's 1970 book *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*. The basic premise of *Dances with Wolves* is that Kevin Costner's character, Lieutenant John Dunbar, forsakes his army duties to join the Lakota. While with the Lakota, he falls in love with their lone white female captive and eventually leaves them despite joining the tribe and adopting many of their customs. The film ends with a message describing how thirteen years later the tribe surrendered to federal authorities and that the "horse culture of the plain was gone and the American frontier was soon to pass into history."¹⁹⁸ Unlike Dee Brown's book that forces its readers to address the harsh realities of reservation life, *Dances with Wolves* lets Americans remember Plains tribes the way they prefer to think of them, which is as "handsome, buffalo-hunting, and tipi-living", essentially, a culture frozen in time.¹⁹⁹ This notion reintroduces the concept of the noble savage which seeped into the policy changes and positive public opinion of the 1990s. While the intentions of increased funding to Indian programs or sympathetic popular culture portrayals are often positive, they also often stem from a sense of nostalgia or the need to preserve innocence.

¹⁹⁸ Tahmahkera, *Tribal Television*, 102-4.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

The transition from the George H.W. Bush's Indian policy to that of Bill Clinton was not nearly as drastic as the previous administration change. The relative bipartisanism in Congress concerning Indian-related legislation remained largely intact throughout the remainder of the 1990s. On April 29, 1994, Clinton made history when he invited five hundred and fifty-six tribal leaders to the White House. This was the first time since 1822 that tribal leaders were invited to have a direct meeting with the sitting President of the U.S. In his address to the tribal leaders, Clinton emphasized his administration's beliefs in tribal sovereignty and cultural preservation stating, "our first principle must be to respect your right to remain who you are and to live the way you wish to live."²⁰⁰ The Clinton Administration backed up these beliefs signing legislation into law that continued the work done in the early-1990s. Through legislation and executive orders, the Clinton Administration extended new educational opportunities to Native Americans, funded new housing projects, and extended recognition to created non-historic tribes.²⁰¹ By the turn of the new millennia, the Bush and Clinton administration had enacted Indian policy that was conducive to fostering increased self-determination and improving the day-to-day lives of Native Americans. In addition, the American public had adopted a growing awareness of the ills of negative Indian images and developed a more sympathetic attitude toward the issues that had plagued Native Americans for decades.

²⁰⁰ "William J. Clinton: Remarks to Native American and Native Alaskan Tribal Leaders - April 29, 1994," The American Presidency Project, accessed October 04, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=50070>.

²⁰¹ Alysa Landry, "Bill Clinton: Invites Tribal Leaders to White House, Increases Tribal Independence," Indian Country Media Network, October 18, 2016, accessed October 05, 2017, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/bill-clinton-invites-tribal-leaders-to-white-house-increases-tribal-independence/>.

When Ronald Reagan won the Presidential Election in 1980 the future of animation looked bleak. Television cartoons were a quagmire of low-budget limited-animation cartoons. Starting in the late-1970s, television networks began relying on anthology programs of cartoons from the previous decades and animated adaptations of their live-action television shows. A few new cartoon showcases appeared, but most of them featured established characters. Then something transformative happened. In 1981, the FCC under the control of Reagan appointee Mark S. Fowler deregulated children's television.²⁰² The flood gates opened in the world of animation, and what poured out was a generation worth of cartoons that were little more than thirty-minute long commercials. The concept of cartoons serving as commercials was not new. The first such instance of this was the Mattel produced 1969 series *Hot Wheels* that featured cars from the toy line that debuted the previous year. This show prompted the FCC to force networks who aired *Hot Wheels* to count part of the runtime as advertising.²⁰³ *Hot Wheels* lasted for two years and was the last toy-centric cartoon until 1983.

There is a clear distinction between a toy that is made because of a cartoon and a cartoon that is made because of a toy. Throughout the entire existence of animation, cartoons existed that led to the production of toys, books, clothing, and other tie-in items. What occurred in the 1980s was the reverse of this. Companies produced the toys first and marketed them with cartoons. The first toy developed purely with television exploitation in mind was Mattel's *Masters of the Universe* action figures. Based off of

²⁰² Peter Boyer, "Under Fowler, F.C.C. Treated TV As Commerce," *The New York Times* (New York), January 19, 1987, accessed October 3, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/01/19/arts/under-fowler-fcc-treated-tv-as-commerce.html>.

²⁰³ David Owen, *The Man Who Invented Saturday Morning* (New York: Villard Books, 1988), 174-175.

Conan the Barbarian, the Masters of the Universe featured a broad cast of characters who were intended from the onset of their production to be more than simply action figures.²⁰⁴ In order to bring their vision to life, Mattel turned to one of the kings of limited animation, Filmation. Having produced shows like *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, Filmation was well known for its ability to churn out cartoons quickly and on a budget. This is exactly what Mattel was looking for to help sell their product. The cartoon produced by Filmation, *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe*, was an instant success, prompting the production of numerous other cartoons focused solely on selling toys. Recently, He-Man has returned to its roots as an animated shill starring in commercials for Geico Insurance meant to appeal to the aging generation of adults who grew up on those cartoons. Many cartoon historians consider these toy-based cartoons part of the Dark Age of animation, but given that they inspired a rebirth of interest in cartoons and spawned numerous new characters, it seems more fitting to place them as the progenitors of the animation renaissance.

One of the most successful toy-based cartoon series of all-time was *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*, which debuted in 1983 as a mini-series and transitioned into a full ninety-five episode series in 1985. The creation of the G.I. Joe cartoons differed from Masters of the Universe in two key ways. First, prior to the cartoon series, G.I. Joe already existed as a concept in both toy and comic book form. Hasbro believed that comic books were the best vehicle to promote their new line of smaller three and three-quarters inch action figures. Second, originally the G.I. Joe cartoons were only supposed

²⁰⁴ Brian C. Baer, *How He-Man Mastered the Universe: Toy to Television to the Big Screen* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company,, Publishers, 2017), 39-40..

to be thirty-second animated commercials produced by Marvel Productions, meant to promote the comic books and toys and run during other cartoons.²⁰⁵ Those plans changed and Hasbro and Marvel approached Sunbow Entertainment to produce a mini-series of thirty-minute long cartoons to promote their line of products. Eventually, the animation duties for the series transitioned to DiC Entertainment, which literally stood for “Do it cheap”.²⁰⁶ In order to keep costs low, DiC outsourced its animation overseas, a practice that continues today. Stories and voice acting was done in the U.S. The result was a product that looked cheap because it was cheap; but it sold toys. Every mini-series and season featured new characters and vehicles that were then released at toy and department stores everywhere.

Since G.I. Joe was about producing as many products to sell as possible, it allowed the cartoon to introduce a wide array of characters from all sorts of backgrounds. Among the ninjas, boxers, drill sergeants, and even football players like William “The Refrigerator Perry”, there was room for a lone Native American character. This character’s name was Charlie Iron-Knife, better known by his codename Spirit. Sporting long hair, a headband, moccasin boots, and a breechcloth over his pants, it was clear that he was an Indian. In order to create a broader universe that connected the action figures, comic books, and cartoons, Hasbro included a file card with all of its action figures that gave a brief biographical statement about the character. Spirit’s biography on of the card read, “Spirit comes from a family so far below the poverty line that they never realized

²⁰⁵ Jason Bainbridge, "Transformers: The Movie: Making Modern Mythology the Marvel Way," in *Marvel Comics into Film: Essays on Adaptations Since the 1940s*, by Matthew J. McEniry, Robert Moses Peaslee, and Robert G. Weiner (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company,, Publishers, 2016), 30.

²⁰⁶ David Perlmutter, *America Toons In: A History of Television Animation* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company,, Publishers, 2014), 207-212.

they were poor. Was a hunting guide through high school. Served in Southeast Asia then as a civilian completed his education. Returned to service for reasons inexplicable to anyone but a Native American mystic warrior. Qualified expert: M-16, M-1911A1 Auto Pistol, Remington sniper rifle.”²⁰⁷ This brief statement vaguely broaches the idea that Native Americans had issues with poverty but does not give any true insight into the characters motivations or establish any details that elevate Spirit above the level of just being “an” Indian. Each of the file cards ended with a brief quote from comic book writer Larry Hama, meant to give some insight into the writer’s perspective on the character. On Spirit’s card, Hama wrote, “Charlie is a Shaman, a medicine man. He’s not a healer or a priest or a witch-doctor. There isn’t any equivalent in our culture for what he is unless we had shrinks that could actually help people.”²⁰⁸ This quote reeks of someone trying write a clever line about a Native American without being offensive. All it really achieves is a level of confusion stemming from the lack of any explanation about how a medicine man and healer are different.

Spirit made his cartoon debut on September 12, 1984 in the “Palace of Doom” episode of the *Revenge of Cobra* mini-series. The plot of this mini-series is that Cobra has constructed a weather machine that was subsequently blown into three pieces which the Joes and Cobra are racing to find. In this episode, it becomes clear what “Native American mystic warrior” meant on Spirit’s file card. Within seconds of appearing on screen, Spirit utters the first of many wise sayings that pop up throughout episodes in which he is featured. When one of the other Joes say that infiltrating the Palace of Doom

²⁰⁷ Larry Hama, Herb Trimpe, and Joe Delbeato, *The G.I. Joe Order of Battle*, vol. 1 (New York, NY: Marvel Entertainment Group, 1987), 100.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.164

is impossible, Spirit remarks, “Possibility and Impossibility are states of mind. In my mind, there is only the possible.”²⁰⁹ With this line, Spirit begins establishing a character that falls firmly into the mystic Indian trope. During the 1980s, this trope became the standard for any Native American protagonist in an action cartoon. It was a sympathetic portrayal, but one that accentuated stereotypical aspects of Native American culture and firmly placed the characters in the past. While trying to salvage one of the pieces of the weather machine, Spirit perpetuates the idea that he has supernatural powers by stating that he can “feel another presence” close to him. In the comic book version of Spirit, the Native American stereotypes are emphasized. Historian Michael Sheyahshe argues that “Spirit seems more like a caricature of a Native American rather than a “Real American Hero.” He speaks in flowery metaphors... Spirit also communicates with members of the animal kingdom.”²¹⁰ It does not seem like a coincidence that the only supernatural Joe is an Indian.

Throughout Spirit’s appearances in the G.I Joe cartoons, he consistently reinforces the stereotypes of the stoic and mystic Indian warrior. Unlike other Joes, whenever Spirit engages in a one-on-one battle he begins with a sign of respect. In this episode, as in many others, Spirit’s main adversary is the ninja Storm Shadow who has fallen from grace by betraying his master, but still fights honorably. The pairing of Storm Shadow and Spirit is no mere coincidence. The writers of these cartoons treat the ninja Storm Shadow and Snake Eyes almost exactly like Spirit. They are portrayed as caricatures of Japanese culture, speaking in proverbs and consistently showing signs of

²⁰⁹ Ron Friedman, dir. “The Palace of Doom,” in *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*, September 12, 1984.

²¹⁰ Sheyahshe, *Native Americans in Comic Books*, 164.

respect. The treatments of Spirit and the other non-white characters in the G.I. Joe cartoon relates to a larger problem of trying to connect predominantly white audiences to characters of color. The writers rely heavily on stereotypes to create narrative and purpose. The result is often a sympathetic portrayal, but one that trivializes cultural differences.

Unable to escape being paired with non-white characters, one of Spirit's other major appearances comes in the 1985 episode "Excalibur".²¹¹ In it, Spirit is teamed with Quick Kick, an Asian-American character who curiously wears martial arts pants and nothing else into battle, not even shoes. Predictably, this episode is one of the few that features supernatural events. In this case, Spirit's usual foe Storm Shadow has stolen the legendary sword Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake. She commences to exact revenge on the British Isles because of the sword's theft. The stereotypical depictions of Storm Shadow, Spirit, and Quick Kick are nothing compared to the portrayal of the Scotsman Beamish who tells the Joes the story of the Lady in the Lake. Given his connection to the supernatural world, Spirit is the only one of the Joes who believes the story. Spirit has several wise-Indian aphorisms in this episode. When Quick Kick is astonished by the power of Excalibur, Spirit says, "The eye sees much the mind fails to comprehend." Quick Kick responds with, "You ever thought of going into the fortune cookie business?" Later in the episode, Spirit once again morphs into the magical Indian. After being victimized by Storm Shadow, Quick Kick falls off the ledge of a castle and breaks his leg. Writhing in pain he says, "What would the Duke do in a situation like this? Call the

²¹¹ John Gibbs and Terry Lennon, dirs., "Excalibur," in *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*, November 01, 1985.

nearest Indian, pilgrim.” He then does a bird call, which apparently is how he believes you summon Indians. Spirit arrives to save the day by saying a prayer and magically setting and healing Quick Kick’s leg. Quick Kick proclaims that it is a miracle to which Spirit replies, “No miracle, Ancient Indian medicine. I have healing power.” This exchange accentuates the magical Indian trope, another step in the evolution of Indian characters. In the 1960s and 1970s, Indians became the good guys, now they were borderline gods. Spurred by a made-for-television movie called *Mystic Warrior* (1984), numerous Indian characters took on mystical elements.²¹²

Spirit’s character on *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*, illustrates one of the main problems white writers faced when creating characters of color. By trying to create a sympathetic character, they relied too heavily on stereotypes that seem positive. In Spirit’s case, G.I. Joe writers placed modern Native Americans firmly in a culture that existed outside of the mainstream. The struggle becomes how to depict someone that comes from a different culture without delving into those stereotypes. The only other Native American Joe is Airborne. At no point in the series do the writers explore any of his culture. He is just another character. It is only revealed that he is a Native American in an episode where his brother is kidnapped by Cobra.²¹³ The issue becomes: is it better to delve into stereotypes or avoid them altogether and create whitewashed characters that just adhere to mainstream American culture? The key is to create nuance, which is hard to achieve in a children’s show. Unfortunately, this means that more-often-than-not

²¹² Alfred R. Schneider and Kaye Pullen, *The Gatekeeper: My 30 Years as a TV Censor* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 69.

²¹³ John Gibbs and Terry Lennon, dirs., "Operation: Mind and Menace," in *G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero*, October 15, 1985.

cartoons skew toward stereotypes. This embeds these stereotypes into the children that watch these shows, leading to the necessity of combating those stereotypes later in life.

The magical Native American Warrior trope re-appeared in full force in 1989 with the debut of the toy-based cartoon *BraveStarr*. The cartoon was the final series produced by the company that started the toy-based movement, Filmation. It was also the first, and to date, the only mainstream action cartoon to feature a Native American lead protagonist. The genesis of *BraveStarr* can be traced back to the Filmation series *Ghostbusters*.²¹⁴ One of the ghosts developed for the series, a villainous prospector with a virtuous side named Tex Hex, struck a chord with Lou Scheimer, president of Filmation. Scheimer ordered his staff to take the Tex Hex's character and develop a series with him as the lead villain.²¹⁵ The result was the futuristic space-Western *BraveStarr*. Although the series began on television in 1987, the *BraveStarr*'s back story was explored in the 1988 film *BraveStarr: The Movie*.²¹⁶

Set in the twenty-third century, *BraveStarr* finds Marshal BraveStarr acting as the chief lawman of the planet of New Texas. The background established in the movie casts BraveStarr as the second-to-last of a race of Native Americans living on a moon planet that was attacked by an ancient evil named Stampede. Throughout the series, no details are provided about the tribe. Their depiction in the cartoon resembles that of the Comanche or Apache from Westerns of the 1950s and 1960s. The character that saves BraveStarr is simply called Shaman, which matches his persona in the series. He is a

²¹⁴ This show was not based off of the movie *Ghostbusters* (1984); rather, it was based off of the 1975 live-action television series *The Ghost Busters*.

²¹⁵ Diane Wagner, "The \$200-Million Man: Marshall BraveStarr Isn't Just a Plaything, But a Marketing Mega-Concept - A Look at the Serious Business of Toy Merchandising," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles), December 21, 1986.

²¹⁶ *BraveStarr: The Movie*, dir. Tom Tataranowicz, perf. Charlie Adler (Los Angeles: Filmation, 1988).

magical Indian wise man who acts as BraveStarr's guide throughout his adventures on New Texas. He also gives BraveStarr his magical powers. In keeping with the stereotype that Indians have a special supernatural connection with the animal world, BraveStarr's powers are all tied to certain animals. Facilitated by a magic amulet, BraveStarr is able to call on the strength of a bear, ears of a wolf, speed of a puma, and eyes of a hawk.

The standard good versus evil plot serves as the main premise of *BraveStarr*. Marshal BraveStarr and his deputies battle Stampede's evil forces led by Tex Hex. It is an ordinary narrative bereft of any major contributions to the history of cartoons. However, the underlying narrative of the show does. Underneath the weekly battles between the good guys and bad guys lies a clear allegory to the treatment of Native Americans in the U.S in the nineteenth century. The planet of New Texas serves as the unexplored American West and is rich in a resource called kerium. Kerium is treated as a substitute for either gold or oil. The Native American allegory involves the presence of the native race of this planet, dubiously dubbed Prairie People. The Prairie People are portrayed as simplistic, innocent, hardworking, and even speak in broken English or outright gibberish. It is not equivalent to "ugh speak", but demonstrates a perceived lack of intelligence. They live communally and are led by a chief. The Prairie People have lived on New Texas for an untold amount of time without being disturbed by settlement from the outside world until some traders discover that the planet is rich in kerium. The inclusion of the Prairie People adds a layer of depth to the cartoon, but also a layer of insensitivity. Serving as a clear allegory to Native Americans, their portrayal is a major step backward. The Prairie People fall firmly into the noble savage trope, with a dash of

the bumbling idiot Indian from the cartoons of the 1940s. Similar to the cartoons of the Golden Age, the Prairie People are meant to be the comic relief in the *BraveStarr* series.

BraveStarr's writers, to their credit, were not shy about using the Prairie People to tell stories about the plight of Native Americans in the nineteenth century. The episode "Revolt of the Prairie People" recounts the history of the interplay between Native Americans and the federal government, and replaces the players with *BraveStarr* characters.²¹⁷ The premise of the episode is that the Galactic Council has sent an envoy, Commander Choice, to New Texas to construct a series of fences around the Prairie People, effectively creating a reservation. The Prairie People live underground in homes that resemble Pueblo cliff dwellings. The reason given for fencing them in is that it is for their own good. Throughout the episode, *BraveStarr* acts as the intermediary between the Galactic Council and the Prairie People. He represents the modern American conscience. What the Galactic Council sees as protection, *BraveStarr* sees as an attack on freedom. However, even *BraveStarr* treats the issue in a paternalistic manner by not letting the Prairie People immediately take up arms as they had wanted. The dialogical interplay between characters resembles modern Americans trying to come to terms with the country's mistreatment of Native Americans. The Prairie People stand up for their freedom, as does the character Judge J.B. who says "You have no right to tell them what is or isn't right for them." After *BraveStarr* refuses to let Commander Choice put up the fences meant to protect the Prairie People, the plan changes to relocating them. When *BraveStarr* objects to this move, Choice responds in a way meant to symbolize why it is

²¹⁷ Ed Friedman, dir., "Revolt of the Prairie People," in *BraveStarr*, October 27, 1987.

not fair to blame nineteenth-century soldiers who fought the Indian Wars. Choice retorts, “I’m just a good soldier marshal. I do what I’m told.”

With forced removal pending, BraveStarr decides to make a last ditch effort and appeals to the Galactic Council to change their orders. BraveStarr consistently insists that all matters be carried out in the name of the law. No room exists in his world for rebellion, even if it is justified, a sentiment that white Americans all too often take when facing the subjugation of minorities. The irony of this situation is that one of the Prairie People points out this is exactly what happened to BraveStarr’s ancestors. Perhaps BraveStarr is simply trying to avoid the death and destruction of the Indian Wars, but it is never explicitly mentioned. Once in front of the Galactic Council, BraveStarr argues, “I don’t think you can take a bunch of people who are different, like the Prairie People are, and tell them what’s good or bad for ‘em. Some people call ‘em prairie rats and fuzz bunnies, but they’re not. They’re people just like you and me, and they love their freedom, just like you and me.” The Galactic Council leader who is “very worried about their safety” takes BraveStarr’s words under consideration and then agrees to rescind the orders. While the episode does a decent job of demonstrating that Indian removal was wrong, its apologist stance toward those who conducted those efforts is disappointing. They are absolved of their aggression toward the Prairie People simply because they were doing what they thought was right. This sentiment echoes white defenses of assimilationist federal Indian policy. The entire venture is written off as an innocent mistake when Judge J.B. says “Sometimes people with big jobs lose sight of the little people.” It is an underwhelming conclusion to an episode that is one of the few cartoons to address outright the issues of Indian removal.

Another issue that *BraveStarr* addressed is the how racial tensions can erupt and the power of racial slurs. The episode “Kerium Fever” revolves around an economic downturn that has hit Fort Kerium due to the lack of kerium.²¹⁸ Tensions between the Prairie People and the townspeople of Fort Kerium become enflamed when two Prairie People show up with a sack full of kerium. They are at the saloon to buy “sweet water”, which is a stand-in for alcohol in this cartoon world. Sadly, the writers of *BraveStarr* succumb to another classic Indian trope by making the Prairie People wild for sweet water. The townspeople believe that the Prairie People should tell them where they are getting the kerium. One of them yells, “Those critters got kerium and they ain’t even human.” Critters is the slur most often used to address the Prairie People in a derogatory fashion. As the episode plays out, Tex Hex decides to use the growing racial tension and stage a kidnapping perpetrated by his Prairie People robots to enrage the townspeople even further. After successfully carrying out the kidnapping, BraveStarr calls the culprits critters, which upsets his deputy, Fuzz, who happens to be one of the Prairie People. Realizing what he had just done, BraveStarr apologizes and says “Critters just slipped out.” The rest of the episode unfolds in a rather formulaic fashion with the culprits exposed as robots and everyone’s racism shown to be foolish. Nevertheless, one cannot help but notice that the underlying message of this episode is that people do not really mean to be racist; instead, they give in to those heinous tendencies when faced with adversity. Just as in the episode “Revolt of the Prairie People”, *BraveStarr*’s writers take an apologist viewpoint. Racism is wrong, but sometimes good people make mistakes. It is a message that is all too common.

²¹⁸ Ed Friedman, dir., “Kerium Fever,” in *BraveStarr*, September 25, 1987.

Taken as a whole, the *BraveStarr* series like many others, is a mixture of positive and negative views of Native Americans. Given that the series was produced during the Reagan Administration, when Indian issues took a backseat to economic deregulation and budget cuts, the series is relatively progressive. The real issue of its portrayal of Native Americans lies with the middling-stance the series takes. It has a positive Native American protagonist, but the ordinary Indians in the cartoon, the Prairie People, are consistently portrayed as essentially BraveStarr's wards. Paternalism still rules the day, but in a kinder, gentler guise.

The toy-based cartoons of the 1980s began to fade in the 1990s in favor of more comedic cartoons, but there were exceptions. One of these exceptions was the show *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*. Created by Ted Turner and Barbara Pyle, the program focused on spreading awareness of environmental issues in a way that was appealing to children. This meant merchandising as well, but merchandising with a purpose. The toys, shirts, and other products associated with *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* provided revenue for the Captain Planet Foundation.²¹⁹ DiC originally produced the cartoon and turned over production to Hanna-Barbera in 1994. The result was a low-budget limited animation cartoon that blurred heavily the lines between entertainment and education.

Given the focus on environmental issues, it would seem that Native American storylines would abound in the series, but this was not the case. Throughout its one hundred and thirteen episode run, only two featured Native American characters in the main narrative. When Native Americans did appear, the writers fell into the trap of

²¹⁹ Barbara Pyle, "Captain Planet," Barbara Pyle, with Ted Turner Created the Animated Action Series Captain Planet and the Planeteers., accessed October 13, 2017, <http://www.barbarapyle.com/captain/>.

portraying them as a mystical culture of the past. The 1990 episode "Tree of Life" illustrates this practice.²²⁰ The episode begins with an elderly Native American telling a story about the ancients who planted the redwood trees that spawned the Tree of Life. There is no attempt to establish tribal affiliation or specific location. One would assume that they are in California. The plot of the episode is soon revealed when lumberjack robots appear and begin chopping down all of the trees. The villain in this episode, Dr. Blight, is motivated by money, which is the standard narrative for most episodes. The episode plays out in typical *Captain Planet and the Planeteers* fashion. The Planeteers arrive to help, are put in danger, and eventually overcome the danger by summoning Captain Planet.

The treatment of Native Americans that stands out in this episode. The beginning scene of the Indian elder regaling children with a story of the past appears innocent if that is where it had ended. Unfortunately, the episode makes some questionable choices afterward. The core of the problem lies in that the Indians depicted in the episode exist outside of mainstream culture. By all indications, these people exist in the modern world, yet, because they are Indians, they are separated from it culturally. They live in a village protected by the existence of the Tree of Life. The elder says that without the Tree of Life his people cannot survive. This connotes that Native Americans are so tied to the land that their very existence relies upon it remaining completely undisturbed. The criticism of this narrative is not meant to imply that Native Americans do not have a respect for the land. It is that by perpetuating the mystical tie to the land, it relegates Indian culture to myth. Further deconstruction reveals signs of paternalism. The Native Americans in this

²²⁰ Will Meugniot, dir., "Tree of Life," in *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, November 10, 1990.

story are not able to overcome the villains on their own and must rely on outside forces to protect them. Not only are they trapped in the past, they also cannot defend themselves.

The problematic portrayal of Indians continues in the 1994 episode “No Horsing Around”.²²¹ By 1994, most television cartoons had abandoned Native American storylines, but in this episode of the retitled series *The New Adventures of Captain Planet*, Indians are once again portrayed as a culture incompatible with the modern world. The episode begins with the mystical Indian trope front and center as the guest protagonist of the episode, Red Elk, is in the middle of a vision about wild horses. As in “Tree of Life” the Indians in this episode live away from the modern world. This becomes a point of contention when Red Elk’s brother, Standing Bear, returns from school. Red Elk says that Standing Bear is next in line to become chief. Apparently, tribal elections do not exist for this unnamed tribe. Standing Bear has decided that one of his first actions as chief will be to sell some of the wild horses on the reservation. Red Elk is infuriated by this decision and claims that the “outside world has corrupted Standing Bear.” The implication here is that traditional Native American values are incompatible with those of the modern world.

The primary plot of the episode involves the villain, Hoggish Greedly, rounding up horses on the reservation in order to drive them to non-Indian land so he can sell them for profit. While wild horses are protected on tribal lands, the Wild and Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971 also protects them on federal land.²²² The unrealistic nature of the plan aside, what develops as the episode proceeds is a gradual indictment of

²²¹ Barbara Pyle, prod., "No Horsing Around," in *The New Adventures of Captain Planet*, May 07, 1994.

²²² "Richard Nixon: Statement on Signing Bill To Protect Wild Horses and Burros. - December 17, 1971," The American Presidency Project, accessed October 13, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=3264>.

the modern world and exaltation of traditional Native American culture. This may appear positive on the surface, but in practice it relegates Native American culture to the past. Greedily captures Planeteer Ma-Ti and Red Elk, prompting Standing Bear and the other Planeteers into forming a search party. Here, another long-standing Native American stereotype appears. Standing Bear is an excellent tracker, because, of course, all Indians are. He stops short of putting his ear to the ground to find his brother, but this is a clear example of the perpetuation of the stereotype that all Indians have an engrained ability to track anything. As the search party attempts to find Red Elk, Standing Bear slowly “goes Indian” by reclaiming his traditional values. This transformation is handled through a simple costume change. He eschews his preppy college clothes because he is too hot in favor of a more-stereotypical Indian outfit complete with moccasins and a vest. The stereotypes continue to appear as Standing Bear, out of nowhere, becomes an expert in Indian medicine and heals one of the Planeteer’s cactus wounds. By the time the Planeteers summon Captain Planet to save the day, Standing Bear’s transition back to being a “real” Indian is complete and he has changed his mind about selling the horses.

The problematic nature of this story is not that Standing Bear changes his mind, it is how and why he changes his mind. The reversal of the decision rests squarely on Standing Bear eschewing the education he received outside of the reservation. When he first reveals his reasoning for selling the horses, he points to the fact that they were becoming overpopulated and food supplies were dwindling. These are logical reasons to thin the herd, but by simply becoming a “real” Indian again he completely loses sight of this informed decision. Clearly, Captain Planet’s writing team was relying heavily on the notion that Native Americans had deep bonds with the earth and were the prototypical

environmentalists. It was a sentiment that fit their environmentalism agenda well; however, by attempting to be progressive in one area, they were retrogressive in the other.

The Native American warrior character, whether it be in combat or environmental issues, fit well within the narratives of the toy-based cartoons of the age. This was not the case, however, in comedic cartoons. An examination of comedic cartoons intended for daytime consumption on network television renders very few Native American examples during the Renaissance Age. The main reason for this is that action cartoons dominated the landscape leaving little room for comedic cartoons. When comedic cartoons did reappear in the late-1980s and early-1990s, they were often tied to pre-existing intellectual properties and set in worlds that did not accommodate Native American characters. Of course, another reason for the disappearance of Native Americans in cartoons involves the growing awareness of cultural sensitivity leading many studios to avoid the issue altogether. These conditions meant that the few comedic examples that do exist either tried to address the issues quickly or presented the content with an immense level of absurdity that hinders criticism.

An example of animators trying to use Native American themes while briefly explaining away culturally sensitive issues comes in the 1988 episode of *A Pup Named Scooby Doo*, "The Story Stick".²²³ At the onset of the episode, it seems the viewer is in for a trip down memory lane in the depiction of Native Americans. The Indian melody plays over the title card and Shaggy and Scooby emerge wearing war paint and feathered headdresses. Shaggy comments that he is enjoying his camping trip with "heap big pup

²²³ Gil Iverson, dir., "The Story Stick," in *A Pup Named Scooby-Doo*, November 19, 1988.

name Scooby Doo.” Scooby then appears and says, “Ugh, like how pale face.”

Fortunately, this foray into the stereotypical portrayal of Indians of past cartoons is short-lived. Daphne appears on screen and admonishes the two saying “I swear you guys have been watching too many movies, Indians are just like everybody else.” When compared to the depiction of Native American culture in the Captain Planet, cartoons, this brief exchange seems enlightened.

The plot of this episode revolves around the building of a hotel on Indian land. The Native American protagonist is named Warren and is in no way dressed like a stereotypical Indian. His grandfather, who is upset about losing his home to the hotel, embodies Native American stereotypes in both dress and action. His name is Jay Littlefield, and he warns Scooby and the gang that if his sacred land is threatened then the Totem Spirit will arrive to defend the land. The narrative of the cartoon is a convoluted mess. By all indications, it appears that in typical Scooby-Doo fashion, Littlefield should be the man behind the Totem Spirit monster that appears to terrorize the gang, but he is not. There is no way to villainize Littlefield. He is a Native American who is upset that his land is being taken from him. He is a sympathetic victim, not a villain. Instead, the antagonist is eventually revealed to be Mr. Kyle, who is the man that was planning on building the hotel. Viewing this episode as an adult, it is hard to see how children were supposed to understand Mr. Kyle’s motives. They are tied loosely to the fact that there are numerous Native American artifacts on the land that he wants to sell. With Mr. Kyle arrested, Warren announces that the plans for the hotel have been cancelled and they are going to build a museum to house Native American artifacts instead.

“The Story Stick” offers a unique blend of stereotypes and positive depictions of Native American culture. The reliance on ancient stories and a Totem Spirit that protects the land are problematic plot devices that accentuate stereotypical Native American mysticism. However, the story addresses some key issues such as Scooby and Shaggy realizing that Native Americans are not caricatures from Westerns. In addition, the resolution to the conflict in the story is also positive. Unlike the Captain Planet cartoons in which the old ways and new are viewed as incompatible, the solution in this cartoon is a compromise between old and new. The decision to build a museum that preserves Native American material culture while also bringing money and tourism to the tribe indicates a peaceful coexistence between the modern world and traditional Native American culture. This is a complex depiction for a cartoon that is otherwise absurd.

The only other references to Native American culture that research in this period of televised cartoons found came from the mid-1990s series *Animaniacs*. It is difficult to include these cartoons in this study due to the absolutely absurd nature of the cartoon. The two instances of Native American imagery occur in the shorts “Turkey Jerky” (1993) and “Jokahontas” (1996).²²⁴ Both of these episodes take comedic shots at traditional portrayals of popular American history stories featuring Native Americans. “Turkey Jerky” addresses the first Thanksgiving by portraying Miles Standish on an outlandish hunt for a turkey. In this short, as in “Jokahontas”, the Warner brothers, Yakko and Wakko, and their sister, Dot, play the role of the Indians.²²⁵ They wear headdresses and war paint, but do not utilize “ugh speak” or demonstrate any of the stereotypes

²²⁴ Gary Hartle, dir., "Turkey Jerky," in *Animaniacs*, November 22, 1993; Liz Holman, dir., "Jokahontas," in *Animaniacs*, September 14, 1996.

²²⁵ The Warner brothers and sister are anthropomorphic dogs.

historically associated with Indians in Warner Brothers' cartoons. The only reversion to the stereotypical days of the past is that they use names like Slobbers with Wolves and Yacking-Yakk briefly as one-off jokes. The short "Jokahontas" lampoons Disney's *Pocahontas*, which was released a year earlier. The episode culminates implying that Disney did not really care about the story of *Pocahontas* and that it simply fit into the typical Disney narrative of a heroine rescued by love. A deeper discussion of *Pocahontas* occurs later in this study.

Considering the realm of feature-length animation, two films during this period from the same franchise, and separated by seven years, provide very different depictions of Native Americans. The *An American Tail* franchise began in 1986 with the release of the original film, *An American Tail*. Backed by Stephen Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment and helmed by former Disney animator Don Bluth, the franchise became an impressive box office success.²²⁶ It spawned two additional films that depict Native Americans, the theatrically released sequel, *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* (1991) and the direct-to-video release *An American Tail: The Treasure of Manhattan Island* (1998).²²⁷

Although *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* is essentially a pioneer Western, the inclusion of Native American characters is brief. This film finds the Mousekewitz family leaving their home in New York in order to find new opportunities in the American West. In the context of the narrative, Fievel's best friend Tiger makes the

²²⁶ Leonard Maltin and Jerry Beck, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 354.

²²⁷ *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West*, dir. Phil Nibelink, prod. Steven Spielberg (Universal City, CA: Amblin Entertainment, 1991); *An American Tail: The Treasure of Manhattan Island*, dir. Larry Latham (Universal City, CA: Universal Pictures Home Entertainment, 1998).

journey out west in order to reconnect with his friend who left before he could say good-bye. Along the way, Tiger encounters a set of buffalo bones that happen to have a tribe of mouse Indians living under it. For a franchise that prided itself on a sympathetic portrayal of immigrants in the U.S., its handling of Native Americans is regrettable. The Indians here are depicted as stereotypical savage Indians. Despite the Indians having their own made-up language, the first line that is uttered by one of them is “How.” In drawing these Indians, the animators went back to the tropes of the Golden Age. They are depicted having large chins, prominent noses, Plains Indian headdresses, topless with breechcloths. The Indians captures Tiger and promptly tie him to a rotisserie over a fire. All of the standard fair is present in this scene including wild dancing, whooping, and smoke signals. Fortunately for Tiger, after the chief sees his silhouette on the rotisserie it reminds him of an image of their tiger god. Tiger’s life is spared and the mouse Indians treat him like a god by feeding and pampering him.

An American Tail: Fievel Goes West debuted in 1991. By this time, portrayals of Native American’s as ignoble savages was rare, if at all present, in animation. These Indians, however, are not good guys and only treat Tiger well because they believe him to be a god. Mistaking him for a god, only makes light of Native American spiritual culture and depicts them as ignorant. What makes this depiction so important is that it establishes a base understanding of what Indians are like in this franchise’s universe, making it possible to compare it to the Indians featured in *An American Tail: The Treasure of Manhattan Island*. Released seven years later, *An American Tail: The Treasure of Manhattan Island*, provides a stark contrast to its predecessor’s depiction of Native Americans.

For a direct-to-video sequel, the narrative of *An American Tail: The Treasure of Manhattan Island* is complex. The animation suffered once the franchise left theaters in favor of the small screen, but the writing remained excellent. The story told in this film concerns immigrant workers being oppressed by robber baron capitalists. There is also a sub-plot about the historical treatment of Native Americans. The Native American aspect of the film occurs when Fievel's friend, Tony Toponi, who is a lesson in Italian-American stereotypes himself, finds a map exposing a secret underground network of tunnels that they believe leads to a great treasure. After following the map and escaping several booby traps, Fievel and his friends stumble upon an underground Indian village that, much to their surprise, is still full of mouse Indians. These Indians are noticeably different than their ignoble savage counterparts in the previous film. The style of dress has changed to a degree. Chief Wulisso is still portrayed wearing a full headdress, but he and his fellow Indians are no longer drawn to look lesser than their mouse contemporaries. The Indians here are also well-spoken. They do at times speak in their own fabricated language, but they do not speak in broken English at any point.

After a tense initial encounter, Fievel proves that they are trustworthy by giving a peace offering of his mother's famous matzah ball soup. Having won the favor of Chief Wulisso, Fievel and his friends hear the tribe's history. Something unusual happens here; Chief Wulisso actually alludes to a tribal affiliation. He relates that they are descendants of the Lenape that once resided on Manhattan Island. They are not necessarily Lenape, but the implication is that they have a strong tie to that history. Chief Wulisso continues the story of his people and says that they went underground because of the vile nature of the European conquerors who killed and dispersed his ancestors. The shows *BraveStarr*

and *Go Go Gophers* addressed the issue of conquest, but neither of them did so in a manner that directly mentioned American history and real events. This is a mainstream cartoon first. Chief Wulisso's story of conquest upsets Fievel, because he feels as though they have committed the same crime by coming to the underground civilization to try to take their treasure. As it turns out, the treasure is a wampum tapestry that chronicles the history of the Lenape. The chief's daughter, Cholena, tells Fievel that the tapestry is the most valuable treasure because it keeps the story of her people alive.

As the story progresses, the chief reluctantly allows Cholena to go to the "upper world" to observe the people there and see if they have changed their villainous ways. The plot that unfolds from this point on revolves around industrialists abusing their workers. When faced with an impending unionization and a strike, the owners of the cheese factory in which all the mice work decide to utilize their newfound knowledge of the Indian tribe to unite the workers against a different enemy. The cartoon makes good use of language in this instance. When the antagonists refer to Indians, they call them Injuns, while the protagonists treat them more respectfully. The industrial capitalists' plan works in the short term by fanning the flames of racial hatred and promoting the idea of Indian savagery. However, an impassioned speech by Fievel's father intervenes, in which he says "We are all foreigners. The only ones that really belong here are the Indians." In the end, the mouse workers realize that the industrial capitalists are their true enemies and they unite to fight for their rights.

This cartoon has many positive messages. It gives the Indian characters a backstory rooted in actual history and does not portray them as villains, dullards, or overly-mystic. That does not mean it is completely devoid of stereotypes. Scenes of wild

dancing and whooping with no context persist, and the portrayal skews toward the noble savage stereotype due to the consistent spouting of wise sayings by both the chief and Cholena.²²⁸ Despite its shortcomings in depicting Native Americans, compared it to its predecessor in the series, it becomes clear that many developments in how minorities were portrayed in animation occurred during the 1990s. What once was one-dimensional characters were now getting the broader context they deserved.

No examination of Native Americans in animation would be complete without discussing the 1995 Disney animated feature *Pocahontas*.²²⁹ Starting with *The Little Mermaid* in 1989, Disney is credited with bringing animation back as a respected art form during the Renaissance Age. The director of *Pocahontas*, Mike Gabriel, stated in an interview that the genesis of the film occurred in 1990 when he was contemplating what project to approach next for Disney. He wanted to work on an epic that was full of music and humor, and decided that a Western might be the best avenue. His initial thought was to revitalize the 1948 Disney property *Pecos Bill*, but after being inspired by his family's Thanksgiving, he turned his attention to the story of Pocahontas.²³⁰ At the same time of Gabriel's inspiration, the President of Disney Feature Animation, Peter Schneider, was looking to produce an animated adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Feeling that the story of Pocahontas offered the same romantic struggle as *Romeo and Juliet*, Disney greenlit

²²⁸ Sabine Lang, "How Solomon Bibo from Germany Became an Indian Chief and Other Glimpses of Jewish Life in the Wild West," in *Migration Networks Skills: Anthropological Perspectives on Mobility and Transformation*, ed. Waltraud Kokot, Astrid Wonneberger, Mijal Gandelsman-Trier, and Hauke Dorsch (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016), 117.

²²⁹ *Pocahontas*, dir. Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, perf. Irene Bedfor, Mel Gibson, Judy Kuhn, and Russell Means (Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures, 1995).

²³⁰ Robert Siegal, "The Making of Walt Disney's Pocahontas," Blu-ray.com, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.blu-ray.com/news/?id=9336>.

production on the film.²³¹ Herein lies one of the major problems with Disney's version of the Pocahontas legend. For Disney, the story of Pocahontas was simply another in a long history of narratives that saw a heroine fall in love with an stranger from outside of her world only to have to face the difficulties in that relationship. It was a plug and play narrative. Neither Schneider nor Gabriel were interested in creating a documentary about Pocahontas; instead, they wanted to use her story as inspiration for the traditional star-crossed lovers narrative that was so often front and center in Disney features. While that formula was fine for features like *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), and *Aladdin* (1992), it proved problematic for *Pocahontas*.

Unlike those other features, *Pocahontas* was based in reality. For the first time, a Disney animated feature film used historical characters. The need to present this story with cultural accuracy was not lost on the studio. In 1993, *Aladdin* garnered its fair share of criticism from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee for song lyrics and images that propagated Arab stereotypes.²³² Disney took several precautions to prevent cultural insensitivities during the production of *Pocahontas*. It hired Native Americans to fill all the Indian voice acting roles in the film and consulted with eastern tribes. Its efforts, however, failed to stifle criticism. One of the main consultants and models for the visual depiction of Pocahontas, Shirley "Little Dove" Custalow-McGowan of the Mattaponi tribe argued that the legend of Pocahontas was "a great story of respect and honor" but had been "lost in favor of just a romance."²³³ Not all Native Americans shared

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Elaine Dutka, "Disney's History Lesson: 'Pocahontas' Has Its Share of Supporters, Detractors," Los Angeles Times, February 09, 1995, accessed November 03, 2017, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-02-09/entertainment/ca-29997_1_native-american.

²³³ Angela Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian: Native Americans and Hollywood Movies* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009), 151.

this opinion. The once outspoken Native American activist and member of AIM, Russell Means, said that it was “the single finest work ever done on American Indians by Hollywood” because it was “willing to tell the truth”.²³⁴ Means’s comments prompted some Native Americans to accuse him of selling out. He was, after all, the voice actor for Chief Powhatan in the film.²³⁵ Means defended his role in the film by asserting that by lending his name to the production gave Indians more exposure in Hollywood. In an interview, Means said, “I haven't abandoned the movement for Hollywood. . . . I've just added Hollywood to the movement”.²³⁶

The film that Means called the truth, actually was far from it. The inaccuracies in *Pocahontas* provide one of the few well-covered examples of Native Americans in animation, but they warrant a brief summary. One of the most egregious errors in the film concerns the portrayal of Pocahontas’s age. In real life, Pocahontas was ten to eleven years old when she first encountered John Smith. This was obviously unacceptable for the story that unfolded in Disney’s version of the legend. A romantic relationship between a pre-teen and a twenty-seven year old John Smith would not set well with audiences. The romance between Smith and Pocahontas is the next biggest problem with the film. There is no historical evidence whatsoever that John Smith and Pocahontas had any relationship outside of her role as an interpreter between the Mattaponi and the English settlers. The climactic scene of the movie in which Pocahontas saves John

²³⁴ Pauline Turner Strong, *American Indians and the American Imaginary: Cultural Representation Across the Centuries* (London: Routledge, 2016), 150.

²³⁵ Aleiss, *Making the White Man’s Indian*, 151.

²³⁶ Elaine Dutka, "The Angriest Actor: Native American Activist Russell Means Focused His Fierce Will at Wounded Knee. Can a Revolutionary Co-exist with 'Pocahontas'?" Los Angeles Times, June 11, 1995, accessed November 03, 2017, http://articles.latimes.com/1995-06-11/entertainment/ca-11761_1_native-american.

Smith's life is also a point of contention. Mattaponi historian, Linwood Custalow, argues that the alleged planned execution John Smith wrote about was actually a ceremony meant to initiate Smith as a secular chief, and his life was never in danger. Custalow contends that Smith changed this history after Pocahontas's death in order to both augment his and her legacies.²³⁷ The other major historical criticism levied against *Pocahontas*, comes from its direct-to-video sequel, *Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World* (1998). This film tells the story of Pocahontas after John Smith leaves. The main criticism of the feature is that it neglects to show that the English kidnapped Pocahontas and forcibly converted her to the Anglican Church.²³⁸

Historical inaccuracies aside, a fair amount of racism also exists in *Pocahontas*. In its attempt to create a culturally sensitive depiction of Native Americans, Disney fell into the trap of relying on the noble savage trope. Even when trying to depict the English as the villains, the notion that Native American culture was inferior to white civilized culture is reinforced. Dr. Cornel Pewewardy, Director of Indigenous Nations Studies at Portland State University, argued in 1996 that the inclusion of terms like "savages," "heathens," "primitive", and "civilized" implied a "value judgement of white superiority."²³⁹ The song "Savages" is one of the biggest offenders in promulgating the primitive versus civilized ideology. It had been four decades since Disney included the song "What Makes the Red Man Red?" in *Peter Pan*, but Disney had still not learned its

²³⁷ Ali Nahdee, "Disney Exec: 'She Has to Be Sexy.' Historical Inaccuracies and Harms of Disney's Pocahontas," Indian Country Media Network, August 13, 2017, accessed November 03, 2017, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/culture/arts-entertainment/disney-exec-sexy-historical-inaccuracies-harms-disneys-pocahontas>.

²³⁸ Aleiss, *Making the White Man's Indian*, 151.

²³⁹ Cornel Pewewardy, "The Pocahontas Paradox: A Cautionary Tale for Educators," *Journal of Navajo Education* Fall/Winter (1996), <http://www.hanksville.org/storytellers/pewe/writing/Pocahontas.html>.

lesson. The song “Savages” is meant to depict that both sides have skewed views of the other, but the connotation is still that one society is modern and the other antiquated. The song relies heavily on the use of the term “savages” and alludes to Indians as “vermin”. While it also refers to the English as “paleface” demons, the fact that the song relies so heavily on a term that has been long associated with Indians detracts from the supposed enlightened message.

How does a film produced with such attention paid to being culturally sensitive end up being one of the most problematic portrayals of Native American history? The answer lies in who is ultimately telling this story. All the tribal consultations and Native American casting did not compensate for the fact that white males wrote, produced, and directed the film. They made the final decisions and directed the film toward a narrative that exalted the white man’s Indian.²⁴⁰ The Pocahontas character that these men envisioned was not from history; rather it was an amalgam of all of the positive Indian characteristics they felt her legend embodied. To these men, Pocahontas was just another heroine who needed to be saved by a man. The story did not have the typical Disney happy-ending, but the base narrative was exactly the same as the princess-centric features that came before and after it. In *Pocahontas*, Native American history and culture amounted to little more than a motif. Unfortunately, *Pocahontas* remains a popular film for many educators in the U.S. who believe that because of the presence of Native American voice actors and the consulting done for the film, it is an accurate portrayal of Pocahontas.

²⁴⁰ Kathy Jackson, "Redesigning Pocahontas: Disney the "White Man's Indian," and the Marketing of Dreams," in *Westerns: The Essential Journal of Popular Film and Television Collection*, ed. Gary Richard Edgerton and Michael T. Marsden (London: Routledge, 2012), 208-212.

By the time of the release of *Pocahontas*, the U.S. was firmly engaged in the culture wars between liberals and conservatives. The term “politically correct” was championed by liberals and vilified by conservatives. This war spilled over into the world of children’s animation. The stereotypical presentation of Indians in *An American Tail: Fievel Goes West* from 1990 were not acceptable by 1995. However, the push toward political correctness had its negative ramifications. Disney attempted to be culturally sensitive in its production of *Pocahontas*, but the film still met resistance. Admittedly, that resistance was warranted. The message that animation studios heard was they need not try harder to be culturally accurate, because attempting to depict minorities sensitively, especially Native Americans, was a no-win situation. The result was that Native Americans virtually disappeared from children’s animation in the 1990s with the exceptions of the works mentioned here. It was simply easier for studios to whitewash cartoons in order to avoid potential racial issues.

CHAPTER V

PRIME-TIME TIPIS: NATIVE AMERICANS IN ADULT-FOCUSED ANIMATION OF THE RENAISSANCE AND MILLENIUM AGES

The revitalization of animation in the 1980s and 1990s spanned beyond Saturday mornings and artistic cinematic releases. It also included the revival of prime-time adult-focused programs. The debut of *The Simpsons* on the Fox network in 1989 unleashed an avalanche of prime-time cartoons that is still going strong today. These cartoons rely on sharp cultural criticism that appeals to an adult audience. Their bright colors and outlandish sight-gags may titillate children, but they are truly intended to be enjoyed by adults. The satirical and critical nature of these cartoons make them excellent sources for understanding how American views of Native American issues has changed over the course of now over two-and-a-half decades of prime-time entertainment. From one-off sight gags and jokes in *The Simpsons*, to full episodes devoted to issues like the Native American mascot controversy on *South Park*, to the introduction of the most thoroughly explored Indian character in animation, John Redcorn, on *King of the Hill*, these prime-time cartoons provide ample examples of thoughtful depictions of Native Americans in mainstream popular culture.

The standard bearer for prime-time animation is *The Simpsons* that, at the time of this writing, is entering its twenty-ninth season. Its longevity indicates that this subsection of animation has become a standard format that has yet to reach its conclusion. Although shows have come and gone, the general concept of adult-focused prime-time animation has remained relatively unchanged for nearly thirty years. The only other cartoon format that approaches it are the cinematic shorts of the Golden Age that lasted for multiple decades. But, even those were one-off cartoons that did not sustain a narrative. The longevity of this format extends from the Renaissance Age into the Millennium Age. This cross-generational transition does have some effects on the genre. Most notably, the cartoons that began in the 1990s matured in content once they entered into the 2000s. This chapter, examines the various prime-time series and analyzes how each addressed Native American imagery, culture, and issues. The series discussed are *The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*, and *South Park*. Since this genre overlaps two generations, the discussion of Native American political and cultural issues will be discussed in conjunction with specific examples within the cartoons when applicable.

It is important to look at how this genre of animation found its way back onto television sets across the U.S. and how it has developed since 1989. When *The Flintstones* ended its prime-time run in 1966, a twenty-three year prime-time cartoon draught began. Cartoons' relegation to Saturday mornings, coupled with the deteriorating quality of animation throughout the 1970s and 1980s, led networks to distance themselves from the concept of adult-focused prime-time animated shows. They were content to leave cartoons to children. If cartoons were going to make a prime-time comeback, they needed someone to take a chance on them, which occurred with the

upstart Fox Network. In 1987, the Fox Network expanded its programming into prime-time and added the sketch comedy show *The Tracey Ullman Show*. Embedded in each episode were short cartoons that acted as bridges to commercials, known as bumpers, featuring the soon-to-be juggernaut Simpson family.²⁴¹ They became a cult favorite, and *The Tracey Ullman Show* producer James L. Brooks approached *The Simpsons*' creator Matt Groening about creating a half-hour animated series. After some trepidation by Groening and the network, the series began production and became an immediate hit.²⁴²

Other networks noted *The Simpsons*' success. Several shows popped up over the next few years including *Fish Police*, *Capitol Critters*, *Family Dog*, and *The Critic*. Only one, *The Critic*, ran a full season.²⁴³ Animation historians Wendy Hilton-Morrow and David McMahan argue that these programs suffered from being seen as imitators and were doomed to failure because networks were not willing to ride out low ratings.²⁴⁴ This process mirrored that of the 1960s when *The Flintstones* inspired a rash of prime-time animation programs. Unlike the shows of the 1960s, these failed shows did not find their way to Saturday mornings because they were aimed clearly at adult audiences and contained jokes that simply did not translate to a younger audience. Another major difference from the 1960s is the failure of these shows to kill prime-time animation. Instead, animation weathered the initial storm and surged once again in 1997 with the debut of *King of the Hill*. Since then, the Fox Network has remained a stalwart provider

²⁴¹ Matthew A. Henry, *The Simpsons, Satire, and American Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 27-28.

²⁴² Wendy Hilton-Morrow and David McMahan, "The Flintstones to Futurama: Networks and Prime Time Animation," in *Prime Time Animation Television Animation and American Culture*, ed. Carol Stabile (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2013), 78-79.

²⁴³ *The Critic* was revived in 2000, but only lasted an additional season.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p.80

of animated programming, hosting shows like *Family Guy*, *Futurama*, *Bob's Burgers*, *The Cleveland Show*, and *American Dad*.

Another component of the new prime-time animation boom was the proliferation of cable television in the 1990s. *The Simpsons* proved a ratings juggernaut at the Fox Network and helped establish the network's legitimacy. Cable channels saw this success and believed animation could boost their profile as well. The standouts of 1990s included MTV's *Beavis and Butthead* and Comedy Central's *South Park*. They are certainly not the only two prime-time cartoons to have success on cable television, but their impact stretched beyond any others. Both *South Park* and *Beavis and Butthead* led to theatrically released films, the latter even led to Beavis and Butthead presenting an award at the Academy Awards.²⁴⁵ Cable afforded these cartoons more license to push the envelope of what was considered decent. In the case of *South Park*, it led to some of the most politically-focused cartoons in the history of animation. As of 2017, prime-time animation that traces its lineage back to *The Simpsons* remains strong on both network and cable television.

As the progenitor of the prime-time animation revitalization *The Simpsons*, holds a special place in the history of not only cartoons but television in general. The prominent role that *The Simpsons* has played in television has also made it the target of many controversies over its existence. From its onset, *The Simpsons* garnered the ire of conservatives and parents across the country. Bart Simpson's constant misbehavior, poor attitude toward school, and lack of parental punishment concerned those who believed the show was sending a negative message to kids. Yet, the show was created for adults.

²⁴⁵ M. Keith Booker, *Drawn to Television: Prime-Time Animation from the Flintstones to Family Guy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 128.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the controversial nature of the show, *The Simpsons* became a marketing powerhouse producing clothes, toys, and music albums. Schools across the country reacted by banning merchandise connected to the show because of Bart Simpson's rebellious nature.²⁴⁶ Even President George H.W. Bush offered criticism when during his re-election campaign he gave a speech declaring, "And we need a Nation closer to the Waltons than the Simpsons, an America that rejects the incivility, the tide of incivility, and the tide of intolerance."²⁴⁷ The criticism of the incivility of *The Simpsons* seems quaint given the gradual decline in standards on television in the years since. But at the time, it represented a belief by many that the Simpson family was actually threatening the stability and integrity of American families.

The satirical nature of *The Simpsons* also sparked outrage from various locales in which episodes are set. In the 1992 episode, "A Streetcar Named Marge", the writers adapted the Tennessee Williams play "A Streetcar Named Desire" into a stereotypical Broadway musical in order to poke fun at the genre.²⁴⁸ The result was a song that included the lyrics,

*New Orleans! Home of pirates drunks and whores!
New Orleans! Tacky, overpriced souvenir stores
If you want to go to hell, you should take that trip
To the Sodom and Gomorrah on the Mississip!*

Many residents of New Orleans did not take these lyrics well. Criticisms were strong enough that the president of Fox issued an apology.²⁴⁹ Ten years later, *The Simpsons*

²⁴⁶ Mark I. Pinsky, *The Gospel According to "The Simpsons": The Spiritual Life of the World's Most Animated Family* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 5.

²⁴⁷ John T. Woolley, "George Bush: Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters - January 27, 1992," The American Presidency Project, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20540>.

²⁴⁸ Rich Moore, dir., "A Streetcar Named Marge," in *The Simpsons*, October 01, 1992.

²⁴⁹ Mark Lorando, "Fox Apologizes for 'Simpsons'," *The Times-Picayune* (New Orleans), October 2, 1992.

remained unchanged. In the 2002 episode “Blame it on Lisa”, the Simpson family travels to Brazil in order to find one of Lisa’s pen pals who has gone missing.²⁵⁰ It relied heavily on stereotypes associated with Brazil and surrounding Latin American countries. Brazilians were depicted having Spanish accents and wearing mustaches, which was more indicative of other Latin American nations. Additionally, Rio de Janeiro was portrayed as a crime ridden and rat infested slum. Neither the residents of Rio nor its tourism board took the lampooning well. The board of tourism threatened to sue *The Simpsons* for defaming the city.²⁵¹ In 2007, reflecting on another international tussle that occurred after *The Simpson*’s portrayal of Australia in “Bart vs. Australia” (1995), writer Mike Reiss said “Whenever we have the Simpsons visit another country, that country gets furious”.²⁵² The relevance of these international controversies is they are part of what becomes the key defense most prime-time animated shows, which is that they satirize everyone.

Controversy surrounding *The Simpsons* also crosses over into the area of racial and cultural stereotyping. The Simpsons’ hometown of Springfield hosts an uncountable number of stereotypical figures. These include, but are definitely not limited to Italian mobster Fat Tony, Luigi the pizza maker, Japanese restaurant owner Akira, ill-tempered Scot Groundskeeper Willie, aggressive Chinese realtor Cookie Kwan, Mexican television star Bumble Bee Man, and, perhaps the most egregious, East Indian convenience store

²⁵⁰ Steven Dean Moore, dir., “Blame It on Lisa,” in *The Simpsons*, March 31, 2002.

²⁵¹ Alex Bellos, “Doh! Rio Blames It on The Simpsons,” *The Guardian* (London), February 27, 2007, accessed October 11, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2002/apr/09/broadcasting.internationalnews>.

²⁵² Penelope DeBelle, “Simpsons’ Secret Is Eternal Youth,” *The Age*, February 27, 2007, accessed November 03, 2017, <http://www.theage.com.au/news/tv--radio/laughter-through-the-ages/2007/02/26/1172338545039.html>.

clerk Apu Nahasapeemapetilon. Apu garnered more criticism than any other character on *The Simpsons* and is voiced by Hank Azaria, who is not Indian. Critics of Apu argue that he is the equivalent of a character from a vaudeville minstrel show, a white man in brown face.²⁵³

The criticism of Apu is so great that it has spawned an upcoming documentary chronicling the effects of the character on Indian youth. The creator of the documentary is Hari Kondabolu, an Indian-American comedian. He produced the piece not to ridicule *The Simpsons* for the Apu's existence, but to question why it persists.²⁵⁴ To their credit, *The Simpsons'* writers addressed the controversy surrounding Apu in the 2016 episode "Much Apu About Something".²⁵⁵ The episode revolves around Apu losing control of the Kwik-E-Mart to his younger and hipper nephew Jay who updates the store to be more modern by becoming the convenience store version of a Whole Foods. Jay is voiced by Indian-American actor Utkarsh Ambudkar who has been a vocal critic of Apu's stereotypical aspects. Ambudkar related in an interview that he grew up being called "slushie boy" as a racial slur by his classmates because of Apu.²⁵⁶ In the episode, *The Simpsons'* writers address the issue by having Jay call out his uncle's stereotypical nature. Jay says to his uncle, "You're my uncle and I love you, but you're a stereotype, man. <In Stereotypical Voice> *Take a penny, leave a penny. I'm an Indian, I do yoga. Why don't you go back to the Temple of Doom, Dr. Jones!*" The point is clear that Apu is a stereotype and a relic of the past. However, in typical fashion, the episode concludes

²⁵³ William Hughes, "Hari Kondabolu Explains The Problem With Apu," TV Club, July 27, 2017, accessed October 14, 2017, <https://tv.avclub.com/hari-kondabolu-explains-the-problem-with-apu-1798264487>.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Bob Anderson, dir., "Much Apu About Something," in *The Simpsons*, January 17, 2016.

²⁵⁶ Mallika Rao, "Is It Time To Retire Apu?" The Huffington Post, September 20, 2013, accessed October 16, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/09/20/the-simpsons-apu-racist_n_3956603.html.

with everything going back to normal and all the modern changes that Jay made fall to the wayside. Apu resumes his old ways, and Jay leaves the show yet to resurface.²⁵⁷

“Much Apu About Something” demonstrates the defense mechanism that *The Simpsons* has relied upon for nearly thirty years, namely that they target everyone. This approach is often described as being an “equal-opportunity offender”. *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, and *South Park* all utilize this tactic. No one is off limits. The question though, remains whether that is truly a justification. Most of these shows are predominantly written by white males who are ascribing their own versions of stereotypes onto characters. This should be enough to render the “equal-opportunity offender” defense moot, but it is not. These cartoons have been some of the most prominent critiques of modern American society. While they rely on this defense and do often promulgate stereotypes, they also confront many issues that are important to minorities in America. For instance, Apu has been used to demonstrate the hardships immigrants face in America as an outsider in a primarily white world and dealing with increasing xenophobia. Ultimately, the barometer of his worth becomes how the audience views him. If viewed as a tool to question society and learn about the hardships that immigrants face in America, he is a force for positive change, but if they just laugh at his funny accent and take him as a true representation of all Indian-Americans, then he perpetuates harmful stereotypes.

Apu’s unchanging presence and *The Simpsons’* attitudes toward his stereotypical nature demonstrates how the show depicts Native Americans as well. *The Simpsons* does

²⁵⁷ Dennis Perkins, "A Visitor Takes a Long Look at Apu on a Funny, Thoughtful Simpsons," TV Club, January 17, 2016, accessed October 16, 2017, <https://tv.avclub.com/a-visitor-takes-a-long-look-at-apu-on-a-funny-thoughtf-1798186427>.

not have a re-occurring Native American character; therefore the references to Native American issues in the show are often brief one-off scenes or part of an individual episode's narrative. These depictions often skew toward stereotypical, but similar to Apu, they also address broader issues. This does not mean that the show does not engage in outright racist depictions of Native Americans, especially in its early years. Like many of the prime-time animated shows, the level of cultural sensitivity increased as the show matured. The following examples, presented chronologically, is not an exhaustive list of Native American presence in the series. There are simply too many small jokes and sight gags to chronicle. These examples, however, demonstrate how the portrayal of Native Americans evolved in *The Simpsons* over its twenty-nine year run.

The first reference to anything remotely Native American in *The Simpsons* comes in the first "Treehouse of Horror" episode in 1990.²⁵⁸ During the segment "Bad Dream House", the Simpson family relocates to a mansion that is inexplicably low-priced. It turns out to be haunted, as it sits on top of an ancient Indian burial ground. The ancient Indian burial ground trope was nothing new when *The Simpsons* used it in this episode.²⁵⁹ In fact, it was considered a "dead horse" trope by the time *The Simpsons* employed it.²⁶⁰ In order to take this joke trope to the next level, *The Simpsons'* writers included names of readily recognized famous Native Americans on the tombstones in the burial ground. They include Sitting Bull, Cochise, Pocahontas, Geronimo, Sacajawea, Crazy Horse and, for added comedic value, Tonto, Not So Crazy Horse, and Mahatma Gandhi. Confined within the outward silliness of this sight gag is the old notion that there is some sort of

²⁵⁸ Wesley Archer, dir., "Treehouse of Horror," in *The Simpsons*, October 25, 1990.

²⁵⁹ David Shulman, *The Presentation of Self in Contemporary Social Life* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2017), 213.

²⁶⁰ A "dead horse" trope is a trope that has been used so much that it is no longer seen as an effective plot device; rather it is used more for comedic effect.

supernatural aspect to Native Americans. Here, they haunt the Simpsons who are unwitting encroachers on their sacred site. This trope also offers unique insight into white guilt toward the treatment of Native Americans. A typical view of a haunting is that there is a justifiable reason behind it. In this case, white America's treatment of Native Americans in the past serves as the justification.

The Simpsons' writers employ the Indian burial ground trope multiple times in the series run. In the 1992 episode "Kamp Krusty," it foreshadows the camp's failure. This time the episode goes a step further by adorning Krusty the Clown in a headdress while he leads a sing-a-long with the campers.²⁶¹ Most works of fiction that evoke this trope point out that the burial ground is Indian. This speaks to not only the idea that Indians have some sort of supernatural bond to the earth, but that also white people should be careful of encroaching on these sites due to a history of land thievery and poor treatment of Native Americans. This usage of a stereotypical Native American trope reflects how many films and cartoons use Indian mysticism to advance narratives. While there may not be any actual Native American characters present, Indian spirits assume the role of the antagonists by seeking revenge on the people who have defiled their sacred grounds.

Over the course of the 1990s, Native American references were fairly rare in *The Simpsons*, but two are noteworthy. First, in the 1991 episode "Lisa's Substitute", substitute teacher Mr. Bergstrom arrives in class dressed like a cowboy.²⁶² After saying the year is 1838, Bergstrom asks the kids to point out what is wrong with his costume.

²⁶¹ Mark Kirkland, dir., "Kamp Krusty," in *The Simpsons*, September 24, 1992.

²⁶² Rich Moore, dir., "Lisa's Substitute," in *The Simpsons*, April 25, 1991.

Lisa points out that he has a “State of Texas” belt buckle and a revolver, neither of which existed in 1838. She then says “You seem to be of the Jewish faith... and there weren’t any Jewish cowboys.” Bergstrom responds to Lisa’s assertion saying, “And for the record there were a few Jewish cowboys... big guys who were great shots and spent money freely.” Although this joke has nothing to do with Native Americans, it does demonstrate how the Simpsons approached issues of race and culture. Bergstrom both accentuates the cultural diversity of the West, but acknowledges a stereotype by saying that the Jewish cowboys “spent money freely.” Shortly after this exchange, Mr. Bergstrom begins singing “Home on the Range” to the class. When reciting the line “where the deer and the antelope play” he offers an aside to educate the students about the real West. He says “But unlike the efficient Indians, cowboys only used the tongue of the antelope and they threw the rest away.” It is quick line, but it one that has no ulterior motives. It is purely a line that pays deference to the Native Americans over the brutish settlers who became cowboys.

The second reference is brief, but brilliant. In the 1992 episode “Itchy & Scratchy: The Movie” Homer finds himself struggling with his attempts to discipline Bart for his rambunctious behavior.²⁶³ In the context of the episode, Marge always ends up as the bad parent because of Homer’s inability to make his punishments stick. The scene begins with Bart smashing mustard packets on the living room floor. Enraged, Homer sets out to punish Bart for his actions, but he is distracted by the sound of an oncoming ice cream truck. The truck has a Native American caricature on the side that resembles the racist Chief Wahoo used by the Cleveland Indians. It also has Native American designs on it

²⁶³ Rich Moore, dir., “Itchy and Scratchy: The Movie,” in *The Simpsons*, November 3, 1992.

and a multi-colored tipi on the top with the ice cream truck speakers sticking out of it. The joke, however, lies in the name on the truck. In big bold letters it says “NATIVE AMERICAN ICE CREAM” and below it, in parentheses, it reads “Formerly “Big Chief Crazy Cone””. In this one simple gag, *The Simpsons* highlighted one of the major problems with the politically correct movement of the 1990s. The renaming of the ice cream truck can be seen as proper by going from an offensive name to a more culturally sensitive one, but the imagery and memory of stereotypes from the past remain. The cultural critique offered by this scene accentuated the growing debate in the early-1990s as to the proper terminology to use for Native Americans and the notion that simply choosing a non-offensive term would somehow make up for centuries of cultural degradation.

The first time *The Simpsons* devoted any sizeable airtime to a Native American character came in the 2000 episode “Bart to the Future.”²⁶⁴ In it, the writers introduce what became a new Native American stereotype, the slick businessman casino Indian. The episode begins with the Simpsons attempting to go on a family camping trip only to be thwarted by a mosquito infestation. With their hopes dashed, they chance upon an Indian casino which prompts Homer to say “God bless native America.” The introduction of the casino uses a trademark Simpsons visual gag. The name of the casino is Caesar’s Pow-Wow, and the marquee reads, “Now Appearing: Carrot Scalp.” A version of Vegas Vic, the cowboy that welcomes people to Las Vegas, appears leaning next to a tipi only to bend over and expose a stereotypical Indian that has shot arrows into his back. This scene sets the tone for how Native Americans are depicted in this episode. After arriving

²⁶⁴ Michael Marcantel, dir., “Bart To the Future,” in *The Simpsons*, March 19, 2000.

at the casino, Homer urges Lisa to join him but she hesitates saying “Something troubles me about Indian gaming. On the one hand the revenue helps the tribes...” Homer interrupts Lisa’s moral crisis about Indian gaming and heads into the casino. Lisa’s point is well-taken though. Tribal gaming has its fair share of benefits and problems. Tribes across the country use gaming revenues to bolster educational, health, employment and cultural programs. For instance, in the year 2008, Cherokee Nation Enterprises collected over \$441 million in revenue from its gaming operations. Of that revenue, \$116 million went to social programs and \$131.7 million to payroll. The latter is important as many Indian casinos have preferential hiring for Native Americans.²⁶⁵ The success of the Cherokee Nation in its gaming endeavors is not universal. Increased competition to capture gambling dollars and the geographical isolation of tribes has led to increased failures of casino gaming operations.²⁶⁶ In addition to financial failures, some studies that suggest gambling is more detrimental to Indians, citing higher rates of early on-set gambling addiction among Native Americans than other ethnicities.²⁶⁷ The debate about the costs and benefits of Indian gaming continues today, but for the foreseeable future casinos will remain a cornerstone of many tribal revenues.

Once Homer and Bart make it into the casino, a large Native American security guard informs Bart that minors are not allowed on premises. An unsympathetic Homer tells Bart, “Although they seem strange to us, we must respect the ways of the Indian.”

²⁶⁵ Cherokee Nation Enterprises, "Where the Casino Money Goes," Cherokee Nation Reports "Where the Casino Money Goes," April 25, 2008, accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.cherokee.org/News/Stories/23634>.

²⁶⁶ John Wolfson, "America's Casino-Saturation Problem," *The New Yorker*, June 20, 2017, accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/business/currency/americas-casino-saturation-problem>.

²⁶⁷ National Research Council, *Pathological Gambling a Critical Review* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1999), 116.

This moment of absurd deference to perceived Indian culture is quickly eradicated by Homer dancing and waving while singing “Hi, how are ya?” to a stereotypical Indian rhythm. Unfazed by the security guard’s warning, Bart manages to sneak into the casino only to be captured. At this point, the episode introduces the now well-trod trope of the casino Indian. The audience is first introduced to this character as he talks on the phone, he says, “Your linen service has broken many promises to us. Laundry bill soar like Eagle.” Here the writers employ the use of what Philip Deloria calls an “ideological chuckle”, taking a known historical aspect of a culture and layering a modern reference on top of it.²⁶⁸ This is a common trope used when depicting modern Native Americans. It allows for a quick laugh at the expense of historical tragedy by juxtaposing modernity over antiquity.

The casino manager warns Bart that he has to change his ways or face a lackluster future. Bart is taken aback and says “I thought you were some kind of Indian mystic that could see the future.” Of course, he is. The unnamed casino manager tells Bart: “If you want to see your future, throw a treasured item in the fire.” This prompts Bart to throw a firecracker into the flames. This is followed by another racist exchange.

Casino Manager: *Not a firecracker!*

Bart: *Hey! I bought it from a guy on your reservation!*

Casino Manager: *That’s Crazy Talk.*

Bart: *No, it’s true.*

Casino Manager: *No, I know. That’s my brother Crazy Talk, we’re all a little worried about him.*

Here the writers fall into the same stereotypical trap to which so many had succumbed before. They insult Native American culture by lampooning the concept of Indian names.

²⁶⁸ Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence, Kan.: Univ. Press of Kansas, 2004), 9.

Although naming ceremonies vary from tribe to tribe, they are considered an important part of Native American culture. The writers return to this joke later in the episode after an ad appears in Bart's vision of the future. The casino manager says "Crazy Talk came up with that, got idea from Dances with Focus Groups."

The portrayal of Native Americans in this episode is problematic. It debuted nine years after Mr. Bergstrom's discussion of noble Native Americans in "Lisa's Substitute." Now, Indians are presented as sly modern businessmen who are operating with one foot stuck in past stereotypes, a premise that will be revisited later in the discussion of *South Park* and *King of the Hill* episodes. Indian gaming creates a troublesome dynamic for both Native Americans and non-Indians. For non-Indians, casinos are indicative of modernity, greed, and capitalism, which are three things not typically associated with Native Americans. As the size and prominence of Indian casinos grow, those traits only increasingly become associated with Native Americans, since money, not culture, is the true driving force of every casino. This concept is present in "Bart to the Future." The idea that the casino has overtaken Native American culture is seen throughout the casino manager's office. Two Indian blankets hang on the casino manager's wall, their design depicting slot machine reels and dice instead of more traditional patterns. For Native Americans the issue has arisen on how to balance culture with the need to attract customers. Over the years this strategy has changed. In the early years of Indian casinos, tribes tried to meld culture and casino together. Casinos would feature Native American art installations or provide access to art and literature in gift shops.²⁶⁹ This tactic has

²⁶⁹ Danielle Newton and Nancy Van Leuven, "Jackpot! Marketing the American Indian Casino," in *American Indians and Popular Culture. Media, Sports, and Politics*, ed. Elizabeth Hoffman, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012), 186-189.

changed. While patrons may find some link to the tribes lingering in gift shops, more Indian casinos have jettisoned any aspect of tribal culture or kitsch in favor of customer-friendly themes. This practice can be experienced easily in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is home to Cherokee and Muscogee Nation casinos that have been branded as Hard Rock and Margaritaville properties respectively. Both Nations have opted to eschew on-site tribal culture at their casinos in favor of generating higher revenues for use at off-site cultural centers.

One of the key facets of *The Simpsons*' portrayal of Native Americans includes the writers' reliance on Homer's ignorance of their culture and American history. Similar to their treatment of Apu, many times the portrayal comes off as offensive. It is a dangerous ground upon which to tread. It relies on the fact that the audience understands the joke. Undoubtedly many are, but others just see stereotypical depictions of Indians and take them at face value. There are two episodes in particular that use this narrative device. In "Dude Where's My Ranch" (2003), the Simpson family attempts to escape the constant radio airplay of Homer's recently penned parody song "Everybody Hates Ned Flanders" by visiting a dude ranch that does not allow electronic devices.²⁷⁰ The subplot of the episode revolves around Homer and Bart helping a displaced Indian tribe reclaim their land that has been flooded due to a dam built by their "ancient enemy, the beaver." When Marge asks why they do not just chase the beavers away, the unnamed Indians says, "Unfortunately, the beaver is also our god. In retrospect it was a poor choice." This joke can be considered offensive as it makes light of Native American religions that often featured a reverence for various animal spirits. Homer's lack of historical knowledge

²⁷⁰ Chris Clements, dir., "Dude, Where's My Ranch," in *The Simpsons*, April 27, 2003.

enters the narrative following the introduction of the tribe's dilemma. Homer says to the Indian, "You people are guests in our country and the beaver have no right to treat you that way. If I get back your land do you promise to build a casino on it?" The joke in Homer's statement entails the ridiculous inverted history that treats Native Americans as immigrants. After several failed attempts, Homer and Bart are able to destroy the beaver dam and the Indians rush back to their homes, which are stereotypical tipis.

The premise of this subplot is absurd, but the presentation of these Native Americans and Homer's interaction with them provide some insight into what *The Simpsons'* writers believe their audience will infer. Homer's assertion that Native Americans are "guests" in America is presented clearly as a joke meant to invoke the historic settler versus Indian dynamic. This is relatively harmless. More troublesome, Homer follows his offer to help the Indians by asking them if they will build a casino. The visual depiction of Indians in this cartoon is stuck in the past. These are not modern Indians. They are drawn with headbands with feathers, no tops, and breechcloths. The assertion is that getting their land back will allow them to join their fellow modern Indians by constructing a casino. What the writers convey in this story is that twenty-first century Americans still stereotype Indians. Either they remain primitive cultures forever stuck in the past or they are modern businessmen who run casinos. The casino Indian stereotype parallels the rich oil Indian stereotype from the 1950s; it allows white audiences to discount Native American poverty and social issues because of the existence of a few wealthy Indians.²⁷¹

²⁷¹ Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *"All the Real Indians Died Off": And 20 Other Myths about Native Americans* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016), 116.

The same comedic device of misunderstood culture is revisited again in the 2003 episode "The Bart of War".²⁷² Following a brush with the law, Bart and Milhouse Van Houten are separated from one another because they constantly get in trouble. With his best friend gone, Marge tries to fill Bart's spare time with a positive youth organization. They settle upon the Pre-Teen Braves. The brochure for the organization says that Braves will go on cookouts, hayrides, and bowl. In response to this Marge observes, "Just like real Indians." The next scene depicts Homer sitting "Indian-style" in front of a large drum wearing nothing but a vest, breechcloth, and a full headdress, and rest of the children wearing vests and headbands with a single feather in them. Change the skin tone and facial features, and the scene conveys the exact same visual as any Indian present in a cartoon from the Golden Age. The dress is not the only offensive aspect. Homer begins beating the drum and in an Indian rhythm signs "I am Homer tribal Chief. I am wearing tiny briefs. Braves teach values boys should know...". This is coupled with a naming ceremony that imparts the name "Burger with Fries" upon Nelson Muntz. When Homer reads out of the Pre-Teen Brave's activity book, it becomes abundantly clear that the writers are lampooning the Boy Scouts of America who infamously butchered Native American customs with its Indian Lore merit badge.²⁷³²⁷⁴ Eventually, Homer gives into his inherent laziness and takes the kids inside to watch a football game. The writers could have opted for a Washington Redskins joke at this point; instead, they went with the Kansas City Chiefs. Homer provides commentary for the game saying, "The noble Chiefs

²⁷² Michael Polcino, dir., "The Bart of War," in *The Simpsons*, May 18, 2003.

²⁷³ John Moore, "Truth and Tolerance in Native American Epistemology," in *Studying Native America: Problems and Prospects*, ed. Russell Thornton (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 299.

²⁷⁴ The cover of the Pre-Teen Braves activity book reads "Forward by Larry Storch". Storch is famous for his role on *F-Troop*, a show that had its fair share of jokes at the expense of stereotypical Indians.

outsmarted the treacherous cowboys with a seven-yard screen pass. Unfortunately, after further review the great father in the sky determined that the receiver's moccasins were out of bounds." Lisa tells Marge, "I don't think dad is accurately portraying Native American life." Clearly, Lisa is correct. This valid point is unfortunately followed by a racist comment from Marge who says, "Yeah, Indians don't sit around drinking beer and watching TV." This is a clear nod to the racist stereotype that Indians are often lazy drunkards.

Realizing that Homer has led the kids astray, Marge takes over the tribe and begins to instill in them all the stereotypical values associated with Native Americans, which in the narrative of this episode revolves largely around an appreciation for nature. The episode doles out Native American stereotypes and clichés as it continues. Perhaps the best line of the episode, and one that justifies the stereotyping and offensive jokes comes from Apu. In an apparent nod to their own realization that Apu is also a stereotype, the writers have him say, "Is this another one of those youth groups that apes the culture of those indigenous people you invaded and destroyed?" Marge retorts "Exactly!" The self-awareness of the episode does not forgive its racist aspects. The episode's main joke premise is clear; Homer and, to a lesser extent, Marge do not understand Native American culture and are piecing it together from what little knowledge they have likely attained from popular culture. Rather than rejecting the concept of the Pre-Teen Braves, Marge fixes it by utilizing what are supposed to be actual Native American values. These values, however, are stereotypical. Thus, the episode reinforces the idea that Native American culture exists outside the modern world.

Like cartoons before it, *The Simpsons* tackled historical events. Typically, these occur in a three-part story format reminiscent of the Treehouse of Horror episodes.²⁷⁵ One short includes a discussion of Native American history in the 2004 episode “Magical History Tour”.²⁷⁶ In it Marge tells the story of Sacagawea and the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The Shoshone in this episode are depicted like all other Indians in *The Simpsons*, wearing stereotypical garb and having nothing that distinguishes them from any other tribe. When Lewis and Clark first meet Sacagawea’s father Smoked Lodge, they offer him a flag and welcome him to the United States of America. This is a play on the joke from “Dude Where’s My Ranch” that implies Native Americans are somehow guests in this country. The episode portrays Sacagawea in an overly-positive light. She saves members of the expedition from their own ignorance and leads them to the Pacific Ocean. There are a couple sly jokes that appear in the episode. Sacagawea is played by Lisa whose character on *The Simpsons* is often overbearing. Her father, played by Homer, says that Sacagawea means “little know-it-all- who won’t shut her maize hole.” This aspect of the character prompts Lewis, played by Lenny Leonard, to say “you could be a little more grateful to us for civilizing you.” Later in the episode Clark, played by Carl Carlson, increases the disrespect saying, “We’ll never forget you Pocahontas.” Both of these jokes convey essentially the same message -- that Native American history has been skewed by the American conqueror mindset. Many Americans know the names Pocahontas and Sacagawea, but do not know their story or conflate the two. In addition,

²⁷⁵ The 1990 episode “Treehouse of Horror” spawned yearly episodes labeled numerically like “Treehouse of Horror II”.

²⁷⁶ Mike B. Anderson, dir., “Magical History Tour,” in *The Simpsons*, February 08, 2004.

colonization apologist work often reflects an attitude that what Europeans and Americans did to Indians was wrong, but the spread of civilized life justified the ends.

The final episode from *The Simpsons* discussed here comes from the year 2007. “Little Big Girl” begins with Lisa bemoaning the fact that she has been tasked with creating a presentation about the Simpson family’s cultural heritage.²⁷⁷ While sitting at the kitchen table, Bart asks Lisa if she would like to see the Land-o-Lakes butter box trick. This is a childish trick that makes it appear as though the Indian maiden on the box has exposed breasts. Lisa rejects Bart’s offer stating, “Native Americans are a proud people with a noble heritage. <In a sneaky voice.> A noble heritage that anyone can claim.” What occurs next is one of the first examples in mainstream entertainment of a show addressing the issue of cultural appropriation. Lisa asks herself: “Is it wrong for me to appropriate the culture of a long suffering people?” She knows it is wrong, but faced with the prospect of getting a bad grade she does it anyway. Instead of adopting an existing tribe, Lisa fabricates her own tribe called the Hitachi, a name she got by looking at the microwave. The next day, she goes to school to present her cultural heritage. Adorned in a dress made from the corn-print curtains that had been in the Simpsons’ kitchen, she gives the best presentation of the day and is told she will speak in front of the city council as a prize. Lisa’s internal monologue chimes in again saying, “Why did I have to lie about my heritage? By speaking with forked tongue I am in heap big trouble. Ah! Now I’m thinking in stereotypes! That’s even worse!”

Despite her misgivings, Lisa continues down the path of cultural appropriation and building the fictional heritage of her tribe. Lisa’s actions are not too dissimilar to

²⁷⁷ Raymond S. Persi, dir., “Little Big Girl,” in *The Simpsons*, February 11, 2007.

many Americans who insist they have Native American blood in their family. In 2010, nearly eight hundred and twenty thousand Americans claimed to have at least one Cherokee ancestor. This number is certainly exaggerated given that slightly fewer than three hundred thousand people are enrolled in the Cherokee Nation. Many people claim Indian heritage because often it authenticates their Americanness and alleviates their guilt over American colonialism.²⁷⁸ Eventually, Lisa finds herself at the National Tribal Conference to speak about her lost tribe. Even in this progressive episode, *The Simpsons'* writers could not resist a few quick stereotype gags. A reporter who Lisa encounters is called John Squawking Bear who says his boss is "Screaming Editor." In addition, the marquee outside the conference reads "10 AM: LISA SIMPSON" on the top and "11 AM: TEEPEE VS. WIGWAM: THE DEBATE CONTINUTES" on the bottom. While continuing to weave a web of lies about the Hitachi tribe, Lisa loses her nerve and comes clean. The audience begins to boo, but the host interrupts and asks who could blame her for wanting to coop Native American culture because "We have a noble heritage and cheekbones to die for." At the host's urging the crowd forgives Lisa and several other people stand up and admit that they are not Indians either.

Either wittingly or unwittingly, this episode addresses one of the continual issues surrounding cultural appropriation, the question of whether appropriation is wrong or a homage to the culture appropriated. There is no question that Lisa is not simply borrowing from Indian culture. She is taking Indian culture and commodifying it for a

²⁷⁸ Gregory D. Smithers, "Why Do So Many Americans Think They Have Cherokee Blood?" *Slate Magazine*, October 01, 2015, accessed October 15, 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2015/10/cherokee_blood_why_do_so_many_americans_believe_they_have_cherokee_ancestry.html.

better grade on her assignment. This represents the same type of commodification exhibited in tourist traps and souvenir shops across the country or the use of headdresses in the fashion industry.²⁷⁹ Unfortunately, *The Simpsons*' writers take the position that Lisa's adoption of a Native American heritage is an homage. Her guilt bubbles over and forces her to expose the lie, but no punishment follows her deceit. Instead, her lies are justified by the conference host who asserts that it is understandable why people would adopt Native American culture. This seems as a reminder that the majority of writers for *The Simpsons* are white men who do not have to deal with issues of cultural appropriation. Were it not for a few quick jokes, this episode could very well have been released in 2017. One can only speculate whether a more recent release would have resulted in a different ending that chastises Lisa more for her cultural theft.

The fact that *The Simpsons* has been on the air for nearly thirty years makes it a viable barometer of how Hollywood writers have or have not changed their depictions of Native Americans. The show demonstrates an awareness of the negative implications of the settler and Indian dynamic of American history throughout its run; however, it still relies on many visual and narrative stereotypes. *The Simpsons* have now gone through multiple generations of writers who are predominantly white males. Herein lies the main problem in the portrayal of not only Native Americans, but any minority. Awareness of cultural and political issues is good, but if writers do not have lived experience with those issues, they tend to marginalize them. The social narrative in "Little Big Girl" exemplifies this. The writers conclude cultural appropriation is wrong, but they do not

²⁷⁹ Jennifer Guiliano, *Indian Spectacle College Mascots and the Anxiety of Modern America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2015), 12.

see it as truly damaging. The point is that Lisa learned her lesson. So, if the use of a Native American character, such as a Native Alaskan medicine woman in *The Simpsons Movie* (2007), advances the narrative in a positive fashion, then the stereotype becomes acceptable. If the treatment of Apu is juxtaposed with the depiction of Native Americans in the series, the idea of the “noble minority” becomes the dominant trope.

After several years of failed prime-time animated shows following the debut of *The Simpsons*, Fox once again gambled on another animated show, *King of the Hill*. Created by Mike Judge, who had made a name for himself as the creator of *Beavis and Butthead*, *King of the Hill* joined the Fox prime-time lineup in 1997. Unlike *The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill* was firmly rooted in reality. It was a family-based sitcom set in suburban Texas. It lacked any outlandish violence, Halloween horror episodes with space aliens, or characters that could not exist in the real world. The format of *King of the Hill* differed little from any other family-based sitcom on television. Every week, a core problem was presented that was typically solved within the confines of a single thirty-minute episode. During its run, *King of the Hill* was not always as appreciated as its more established predecessor *The Simpsons*, or its cruder counterparts *Family Guy* and *South Park*. It did, however, receive its fair share of praise. A 2005 *The New York Times Magazine* article examined the politics of *King of the Hill*. The author argued that this show gave unique insight into rural and suburban voters who were often glossed over in political debates of the day.²⁸⁰ An article on *TheAtlantic.com* made a similar argument in

²⁸⁰ Matt Bai, "'King of the Hill' Democrats?" *The New York Times* (New York), June 26, 2005, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/26/magazine/king-of-the-hill-democrats.html>.

2016, stating that *King of the Hill* was the last true bipartisan television comedy.²⁸¹ Both of these articles pay homage to what made *King of the Hill* so culturally relevant. It actually presented issues in a manner that paid credence to weighing the true pros and cons of a situation, rather than relying on rhetoric and entrenched political thea. *King of the Hill*'s narrative allowed its characters to become multifaceted. Their outward appearance as beer drinking, presumably conservative, and rural Texans is belied by their humanity and attempts to do what is right in the framework of their lives. Hank Hill said it best in the episode "A Rover Runs Through It" (2004): "Dang it, I am sick and tired of everyone's asinine ideas about me. I'm not a redneck, and I'm not a Hollywood jerk. I'm something entirely... I'm... I'm complicated!"²⁸²

Part of the complicated world of *King of the Hill* manifests itself in the narratives of its two key Native American characters, John Redcorn and Joseph Gribble, who are a biological father and son separated by culture. Joseph is the product of an extramarital affair between Redcorn and Nancy Gribble, who is white. Her husband Dale and Joseph are both completely unaware of Joseph's true parentage. This device provides humor and drama throughout the series.²⁸³ The Indianness of Redcorn and Joseph could not be any more culturally different. While both exhibit physical features of Native Americans, Redcorn is depicted as a proud Indian who desperately wants to impart his cultural knowledge to his son. Joseph, on the other hand, shows no interest whatsoever in Native American culture and is content to play the role of a white suburban kid. Redcorn's

²⁸¹ Bert Clere, "King of the Hill: The Last Bipartisan TV Comedy," *The Atlantic*, February 22, 2016, accessed October 03, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/02/king-of-the-hill-the-last-bipartisan-tv-comedy/470025/>.

²⁸² Tricia Garcia, dir., "A Rover Runs Through It," in *King of the Hill*, November 07, 2004.

²⁸³ Booker, *Drawn to Television*, 72.

presence in *King of the Hill* stands as one of the few Native American characters to have an active role in television comedies. He is also one of even fewer re-occurring Native American cartoon characters. Unlike, Marshal BraveStarr who came before him, Redcorn exists in a cartoon version of the real world. He is not mystical or imbued with super powers. He is a modern Native American trying to make it in the modern world.

Over the course of the series, Redcorn appears in over fifty of the two hundred and fifty-nine episodes. Because of this large number of appearances, the discussion of his portrayal here is limited to the episodes that develop his character and address Native American issues. Redcorn's initial speaking appearance comes in the first-season episode "The Order of the Straight Arrow" (1997).²⁸⁴ In the first season, Yaqui actor Victor Aaron provided Redcorn's voice. Aaron, who resembles someone that might be seen on the cover of a romance novel, also serves as the model for Redcorn's appearance.²⁸⁵ "The Order of the Straight Arrow" finds Hank and his friends Dale, Boomhauer, and Bill Dauterive taking Hank's son Bobby and Redcorn/Dale's son Joseph on a camping trip as part of a Boy Scouts-like group called the Order of the Straight Arrow. Because of the organization's allusion to Native American culture, Hank and Dale approach Redcorn for some "good Indian stuff for the ceremony around the campfire." The exchange between the men goes as follows:

Redcorn: (In a subdued by angry tone.) *Our rituals are considered sacred and are passed down only in the nation.*"

Hank: *Oh well, that doesn't bother us.*

Dale: *Oh hell no. We'll take a sacred one.*

²⁸⁴ "Klay Hall, dir., "The Order of the Straight Arrow," in *King of the Hill*, February 2, 1997.

²⁸⁵ Vincent Terrace, *Encyclopedia of Television Subjects, Themes, and Settings* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2007), 32.

Redcorn: *There is a very sacred ancient ceremony that I learned from my grandfather. We call upon the sacred We-mawt-uhh-aw and we ask him to breathe life into our spirit bag.*

Hank: *Let's see. Spirit bag, We-mawt-uhh-aw, funny looking headband. Ah, the boys are gonna eat this stuff up.*

Redcorn: *The spirit bag is very sacred. You should not make light.*

Dale: (Laughing) *I like how you say everything is sacred. That's funny too. Let's do that Hank.*

Redcorn: (Walks off angrily.)

In this exchange, the callous attitude toward cultural appropriation exhibited by Hank and Dale is apparently taken in stride by Redcorn. Historian Dustin Tahmahkera observes that in the show notes for this and many other of Redcorn's appearances the writers initially gave Redcorn more agency.²⁸⁶ In this particular case, Redcorn snidely played a trickster by creating a fake ceremony to make Hank and Dale look foolish. While these show notes provide insight into the character's development, they are not what made it to the public. Redcorn's role in this exchange centers on his desire to see his biological son learn something about his heritage, even if it is being co-opted by the white man.

As the episode progresses, Hank and Dale continually bastardize the ancient ceremony Redcorn shared with them. In what becomes a standard plot device, Bobby is far more interested in Native American culture than Joseph. This storyline adds drama and depth to Redcorn's character in later seasons. Joseph represents a culture lost to the modern world. Put in historical context, he is the whitewashed Indian that would have made Progressives proud. Any semblance of Indianness is only skin-deep.

The second season episode "The Arrowhead" (1997) deals with Native American heritage in a similar fashion.²⁸⁷ While doing yard work, Hank's rototiller breaks after

²⁸⁶ Tahmahkera, *Tribal Television*, 100.

²⁸⁷ Klay Hill, dir., "The Arrowhead," in *King of the Hill*, October 19, 1997.

running into an Indian artifact buried in the yard. Hank decides to ask Redcorn about this piece. Once again, the exchange between the two men finds Hank ignoring the value of Native American culture.

Hank: *Listen, I found this Indian, uh Native Indian thing in my yard, and I was wondering if you knew what it was.*

Redcorn: *It's a tool used for straightening the shaft of an arrow.*

Hank: *Uh-huh. In a pinch, though, you could jam it into someone's brain-stem right?*

Redcorn: *Yes, but that's true of almost any tool.*

Hank: *Yeah, sure I guess.*

Redcorn: *A treasure such as this is priceless to my people.*

Hank: *Really? What do you suppose it's worth to my people?*

Redcorn: *A museum or university might give you \$50.*

Hank: *\$50, huh? Well that'd get me a new rototiller blade.*

Redcorn: *Hank, think about what you're doing. It is wrong to take what belongs to another person and... (Nancy Gribble calls for Redcorn) Well, food for thought.*

This brief exchange highlights the level of sensitivity that *King of the Hill's* writers conveyed when it came to using Native American culture in their narratives. Hank is clearly wrong here for not only assuming the artifact is weapon, but for discounting the cultural value of the piece to Native Americans. The exchange also illustrates one of the major flaws in Redcorn's character, his adulterous relationship with Nancy. His inability to admonish Hank for wanting to sell the artifact stems from sounding hypocritical since he has stolen Nancy from Dale. Tahmahkera states that originally the episode had a completely different narrative in which Hank's land was the location of a souvenir stand that Redcorn's grandfather once operated. This led to a more heated confrontation between Hank and Redcorn over the artifacts on the land, but the relationship with Nancy negated this storyline.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Tahmahkera, *Tribal Television*, 112.

In the second season of the show, Jonathan Joss, who is of Comanche and White Mountain Apache decent, took over as the voice of Redcorn. The replacement came as a result of Aaron's death in a car accident in 1997.²⁸⁹ The change in voice actors proved fortuitous for the character. Joss became more outspoken about the role Redcorn played in the show. He wanted to make Redcorn matter and not just be an adulterous Indian who did not take care of his own child.²⁹⁰ Spurred by Joss's efforts to improve the character, and realizing that the Redcorn/Nancy love affair narrative was becoming limiting, the writers decided to end the affair in the 2000 episode "Nancy's Boys".²⁹¹ In the episode, Nancy accidentally sleeps with Dale after a wine-fueled night of dancing. One night, Redcorn sneaks through Nancy's window only to find Dale nestled up to her in bed. Dale leaves the room and when he returns hits Redcorn over the head thinking he is an intruder. Knowing of Nancy and Dale's rekindled love life, Redcorn ends the affair. Dale, who remains oblivious, mistakenly believes his actions unfairly ended the client-healer relationship he thought Nancy and Redcorn had. The cover-up for the entire affair was that Redcorn was a new age healer who cured Nancy's headaches.

Eventually, Dale visits Redcorn to apologize and see if he will heal Nancy once again. Here the episode introduces a new dynamic. Redcorn is visibly upset at Dale's presence in his trailer home and lashes out that he has "no wife, no land" and that "over half of Arlen, the fictional town the series is set in, used to belong to [his] people."

Redcorn mentions to Dale that he has an outstanding lawsuit with the Bureau of Indian

²⁸⁹ Terrace, *Encyclopedia of Television Subjects, Themes, and Settings*, 32.

²⁹⁰ Dustin Tahmahkera, "Actor Jonathan Joss Talks 'Parks and Rec,' 'King of the Hill,' and His NAMA Nomination," Indian Country Media Network, March 04, 2013, accessed October 03, 2017, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/culture/arts-entertainment/actor-jonathan-joss-talks-parks-and-rec-king-of-the-hill-and-his-nama-nomination/>.

²⁹¹ Tricia Garcia, dir., "Nancy's Boys," in *King of the Hill*, April 30, 2000.

Affairs which “refuses to return land that is rightfully ours.” This prompts Dale to begin working on Redcorn’s behalf utilizing the Freedom of Information Act and his policy knowledge to attack one of his mortal enemies, the federal government. Following Dale’s offer, the two engage in an exchange that provides one of the few direct apologies from a white man concerning the historical treatment of Native Americans.

Redcorn: *Dale, you are a good man. All of this effort on behalf of my struggle, and you are not even a Native American.*

Dale: *Isn’t it time we put aside our differences? On behalf of the white man, I would like to formally apologize for everything my people have done to your people.*

Redcorn: *And I would like to apologize for everything I have done to you, uh, and your people.*

Although Dale’s intentions were good, the exchange is problematic. Once again, Redcorn’s adulterous affair trumps Indian culture and history. Dale is apologizing for centuries of abuses, which is somehow equated to an extramarital affair. In the context of the story, it made sense. Dale was being genuine, and Redcorn respected him for it. This made it possible for Redcorn to offer the apology. A few months after this episode, Kevin Gover, a Pawnee Indian and head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, made a similar apology to Native Americans for the way the bureau had treated them over its one hundred and seventy-five year history.²⁹²

Redcorn’s land lawsuit story arc was an anomaly for *King of the Hill*. Since the Fox Network wanted to utilize the show in syndication, studio heads demanded that there not be story arcs that spanned multiple episodes.²⁹³ Nevertheless, the issue of Redcorn’s

²⁹² Matt Kelley, "Indian Affairs Head Makes Apology," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), September 8, 2000, accessed November 01, 2017, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/20000908/aponline153014_000.htm.

²⁹³ Jaime Weinman, "A Brief History of King of the Hill," *Macleans.ca*, October 31, 2008, accessed October 18, 2017, <http://www.macleans.ca/uncategorized/a-brief-history-of-king-of-the-hill/>.

land appeared in several episodes over the course of the series. Native American culture and land disputes reappeared the following season in the episode “Spin the Choice” (2000).²⁹⁴ This was *King of the Hill*’s attempt at a non-traditional Thanksgiving episode. The underlying premise lies in Redcorn’s increasing concern that Joseph knows nothing about his Native American heritage. Keeping with themes developed early in the series, his attempts to entice Joseph to learn about Native Americans falls on deaf ears but is taken to heart by Bobby. At their friends and family Thanksgiving, Bobby speaks about Native Americans. He takes this opportunity to discuss alleged Anasazi cannibalism and presents a human head fabricated out of a melon to Redcorn in an attempt to honor his people. This scene demonstrates that the writers did their research as it is believed by some that the Anasazi did eat their enemies following battles. Nevertheless, Redcorn is a man of the twenty-first century not the tenth.²⁹⁵ Joseph is appalled by Bobby’s revelation and believes Redcorn to be a cannibal. This sends Redcorn into a destructive spiral.

The land issue resurfaces later in the episode when Dale arrives with good news concerning their case. Originally, Redcorn asked for one hundred and thirty thousand acres of land citing a real case in which the federal government returned eighty-four thousand acres of land to the Ute tribe.²⁹⁶ Dale informs Redcorn that the government has agreed to give him twelve acres, “eleven of which are connected.” This infuriates Redcorn who is now bent on informing everyone, including Dale, about Joseph’s real parentage. Before he has a chance to tell Dale, Joseph informs Redcorn that his mom told

²⁹⁴ Allen Jacobsen, dir., "Spin the Choice," in *King of the Hill*, November 19, 2000.

²⁹⁵ Alexandra Witze, "Researchers Divided Over Whether Anasazi Were Cannibals," *The Dallas Morning News*, June 1, 2001.

²⁹⁶ Robert Gehrke, "U.S. Agrees To Return 84,000 Acres To Utah Tribe," *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2000, accessed October 18, 2017, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-500173.html?refid=easy_hf.

him “a lot of things” that included how Redcorn’s people’s land had been taken from them and that, since they are all “children of the earth” and that “in a weird way” they were related. Moved by Joseph’s speech, Redcorn agrees to take the land and pass it on to Joseph so he can live on his forefathers land.

A great deal is embedded in this episode. Bobby’s mishandling of Native American history and his newly-adopted disdain for colonialism mirrors the concept of playing Indian discussed by Philip Deloria. Bobby attaches himself to Native American history not only because he truly feels there have been injustices, but also as a way to rebel against his established authority figure, Hank. The Redcorn, Joseph, and land narrative is an exercise in compromise. Redcorn feels as though he and his people have been slighted once again by the federal government. That slight, coupled with watching a white man raise his Indian son boils over to the point of near catastrophe. Joseph’s speech pacifies Redcorn, however. The risk of completely losing his son, land, and friends outweighed the grievances of the past. This represents a broader, real world narrative of many Indians coming to terms with past abuses in order to move forward. It is an unfair compromise, but one that is necessary for survival.

Freed from his extramarital affair with Nancy and having a better relationship with Joseph, Redcorn’s character was allowed to develop further as the series progressed. By 2004, Jonathan Joss tired of the Redcorn character and wanted to find new ways to involve him in episodes. He pitched various ideas that were rejected by the writing staff until he decided to take a break and form a band called Big Mountain Fudgecake (BMF). BMF served as a release for Joss’s frustrations with the Redcorn character. He recorded an album with the band, now called the Grey Wolf Band, and presented it to the *King of*

the Hill writers with no real expectations as to what they would do with the material. The writers liked the album and decided to integrate the band into the show.²⁹⁷ Joss accomplished what he wanted Redcorn to do on the show, take ownership of his own life. This was the first time an Indian actor demonstrated clear agency over a Native American character in televised animation.

Redcorn's newfound music pursuits debuted in "Redcorn Gambles with His Future" (2005).²⁹⁸ Although briefly mentioned in an earlier episode, BMF makes its first on-screen appearance in this episode. Unlike the real life band, the television version of BMF included Redcorn, Lucky Kleinschmidt, and Elvin Mackleson. The latter two were voiced by Tom Petty and Trace Adkins, respectively. Continuing their odd relationship, Dale serves as BMF's manager and describes the band's sound as a mix between Deep Purple, Electric Light Orchestra, and Bachman Turner Overdrive. Congruent to Redcorn trying to get BMF off the ground, Hank is tasked with finding entertainment for his employer Strickland Propane's upcoming Family Fun Days. The BMF sound, which includes songs that mention suicide, reaping souls, and getting money, hardly fit the event, but Redcorn tries to land the gig anyway. Hank flat out refuses to hire the band and tells Redcorn that he has to start betting on himself. Redcorn takes this advice literally and decides to open a casino on the land he acquired in "Spin the Choice."

In order to get his casino off the ground, Redcorn turns to the Tribal Gaming Corporation for financing. He receives a visit from the white-looking head of the corporation named Henry Mankiller. When Lucky asks what kind Indian he is, Mankiller

²⁹⁷ Tamahkhera, *Tribal Television* 130-132.

²⁹⁸ Matt Engstrom, dir., "Redcorn Gambles with His Future," in *King of the Hill*, April 10, 2005.

responds, “I’m 1/64th Creek on my mother’s side.” Mankiller is a parody of the now-reviled Washington lobbyist Jack Abramoff who fleeced various tribes for over \$80 million between 2000 and 2003 to lobby on their behalf for gaming-friendly legislation.²⁹⁹ With financing secured, the casino comes together quickly. It is named the Speaking Wind Casino and Entertainment Center, a name chosen by the writers because of its similarity to a casino in Texas opened by the Tigua Pueblo called Speaking Rock Casino. Texas state law enforcement closed down the casino in 2002 after a nine-year battle over gaming rights.³⁰⁰ Redcorn’s casino is not the most culturally sensitive establishment. The card dealers all wear headdresses and the servers are dressed like Indian maidens. This does not matter to Redcorn though. Like other Native Americans, he sees the casino as a means to an end. For him it is making enough money to help launch his band. Like the Tigua Pueblo, Redcorn is shut down by the police for being an Indian gaming establishment.

Although the writers had researched Indian gaming in Texas, they make the mistake of saying that the reason casinos are not allowed is because of a trade for tribal recognition. Texas insists that state law supersedes federal Indian gaming laws. The state argues that any tribe recognized after the passage of the Native American Restoration Act of 1987 is subject to Texas laws that do not allow casino gaming.³⁰¹ As such, only tribes

²⁹⁹ Susan Schmidt and James Grimaldi, "The Fast Rise and Steep Fall of Jack Abramoff," *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C.), December 29, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/12/28/AR2005122801588.html>.

³⁰⁰ Ross Milloy, "Texas Casino Shut Down as Hope for Reprieve Dies," *The New York Times* (New York), February 13, 2002, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/13/us/texas-casino-shut-down-as-hope-for-reprieve-dies.html>.

³⁰¹ ICMN Staff, "As Texas Goes, What for Indian Country?" Indian Country Media Network, August 23, 2002, accessed November 03, 2017, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/news/as-texas-goes-what-for-indian-country/>.

who reside on federally-granted reservations or gained recognition prior to 1987 can operate casinos. Currently, the Kicakpoo are the only tribe in Texas that are allowed to operate a traditional casino because they gained state recognition in 1977. The Tigua Pueblo, who inspired the episode, have recently successfully opened a gaming center that features Class-I bingo-based slot machines since they reside on a federally granted reservation. They do not call their establishment a casino. It is more of an electronic bingo hall.³⁰² The episode's simplified treatment of casino gaming laws in Texas is forgivable given their convoluted nature

With his casino shut down, Mankiller informs Redcorn that he has plenty of the "white man's lawyers" to make sure that he pays his debt. Heavily in debt and without a venue for his band, Redcorn's situation seems hopeless until Hank, who does not have any entertainment for the company picnic, gives in and books BMF. Redcorn's band mates are not interested in playing a family picnic because they view it as selling out. Without his band mates, Redcorn considers pulling out of the gig until Dale convinces him that the "fudgecake sound is universal" and he can adapt. Redcorn indeed adapts by changing the lyrics of his songs to become more kid friendly. The episode culminates with Redcorn having transitioned from hard rock lead singer to what Dale refers to as the "Native American Raffi." Similar to the Tigua Pueblo, Redcorn transitions his casino into an entertainment center.

Redcorn's transition to a self-sufficient entertainer continues a narrative of the white man rescuing Native Americans. It is Hank who spurs Redcorn to "bet on himself",

³⁰²Anna Tinsley, "Texas Casino to Open in 2016?" *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* (Ft. Worth), November 7, 2015, accessed November 3, 2017, <http://www.star-telegram.com/news/politics-government/article43627107.html>.

and it is Dale who directs Redcorn to make the transition into children's entertainment. In this instance, Dale and Hank become surrogates for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Nevertheless their efforts work.

Jonathan Joss states that one of his favorite episodes involving Redcorn was "Manger Baby Einstein" (2009).³⁰³ In this episode, Redcorn is depicted as a self-sufficient business owner who operates John Redcorn Presents, an entertain company that produces DVDs. This represents a fully matured Redcorn. He is no longer defined by an adulterous affair nor does he rely on the help of his white friends. He is a modern Native American who has succeeded in the white man's world.

Over the course of its thirteen season run *King of the Hill* accomplished what no other cartoon, or really any television show, had done or has done since -- develop a multi-layered Native American character. Redcorn's story is one of personal growth. He represents what so many Native Americans try to do in the modern world, which is to survive and excel against the odds. Although he begins as a duplicitous figure engaged in a morally corrupt affair, he ends his journey as a self-sufficient businessman. One of key facets in making Redcorn a groundbreaking character is that, unlike in most cartoons, an actual Native American provided insight into the character's development and the writers actually listened to his input. The character is by no means flawless. His early depiction as a new age healer plays on the medicine man stereotype, and his Indianness at times seems to be more of a commodity than a deeply held reverence for culture. Yet, he still stands as one of the few examples of a positive Native American character who is allowed to stand equal with his white character counterparts.

³⁰³ See Tamahkhera, *Tribal Television*, 133; Kyounghee Lim, dir., "Manger Baby Einstein," in *King of the Hill*, May 10, 2009.

While *King of the Hill* offered a chance to follow the development and growth of a single Native American character, its cruder contemporary *South Park* provides two particularly pointed episodes concerning Native American issues. *South Park* is by far the crudest of all cartoon series in this study. *The Simpsons* may have been the first to employ the equal opportunity offender motto, but *South Park* redefined it. Trey Parker and Matt Stone created the concept for *South Park* in 1992 when they produced a short called *The Spirit of Christmas*. The short caught the attention of people at the Fox Network who commissioned the duo to produce a video Christmas card. Eventually after negotiating with various networks, *South Park* debuted in 1997 on the Comedy Central Network.³⁰⁴ Over the course of its run, *South Park* confronted its fair share of controversies and refused to back down. It is one of the few cartoons in the world to feature a depiction of Mohammad and profusely use “the n-word” on broadcast television.³⁰⁵ One of the attributes that making *South Park* relevant to political discourse is that the show is produced quickly and coincides with current events. The show typically only takes a week to produce, and sometimes an episode does not make it to Comedy Central until just a few hours before broadcast. This allows Parker and Stone to cover current events in a timely manner unlike other cartoons that take longer to produce.³⁰⁶ Because of *South Park*’s willingness and ability to cover current events, it has tackled Native American issues in ways far different than other cartoons.

³⁰⁴ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, *Taking South Park Seriously* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2008), 112, 232.

³⁰⁵ Ted Gornelos, *Popular Culture and the Future of Politics: Cultural Studies and the Tao of South Park* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2009), 116-117.

³⁰⁶ Jake Tapper and Dan Morris, "Secrets of 'South Park'," ABC News, September 22, 2006, accessed October 18, 2017, <http://abcnews.go.com/Nightline/Entertainment/Story?id=2479197&page=3>.

The 2004 episode “Red Man’s Greed” adapts the traditional narrative of white conquest of Native Americans and turns it on its head utilizing an Indian casino as the main narrative device.³⁰⁷ The prevailing analysis of this episode asserts that Parker and Stone set out to criticize Native American tribes for losing sight of their culture in order to gain profits, a theme that runs throughout.³⁰⁸ In their typically offensive fashion, no one is treated sensitively in this episode. The episode begins with the South Park kids, along with their parents, arriving at the Three Feather’s Casino where they are quickly met by Chief Runs with Premise. One of the few stereotypes that the writers do not utilize is “Ugh speak”, surprising given that the Chief is dressed in a suit and tie, but with a full headdress. Many small digs are taken at Indians throughout the episode. For instance, whenever the Indians laugh, they do so to a stereotypical Native American rhythm. The jokes told in the casino’s comedy club all revolve around animals. The buffalo serves as the main point of comparative allegory. A couple examples of this include a card dealer saying to players “May luck run through you like the spirit of the buffalo,” and one of the casino executives stating: “The cash flows out of them like diarrhea from the buffalo.”

The main plot of the episode is revealed after South Park kid Kyle’s dad, Gerald Broklovski, loses twenty-six thousand dollars playing blackjack. The casino, which is new, needs to increase its profits to keep its investors. To achieve this, Chief Runs with Premise devises a plan to build a super highway that runs directly from Denver to the

³⁰⁷ Trey Parker, dir., "Red Man's Greed," in *South Park*, April 30, 2003.

³⁰⁸ Melanie Taylor, "A Killing Greed: Capitalism, Casinos, and Violence: Contemporary Native American Literature," in *Class and the Making of American Literature: Created Unequal*, ed. Andrew Lawson (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2014), electronic.

casino. The plans for this highway would require that the town of South Park be destroyed. From this point on, the social critique within the episode revolves around how these Native Americans have lost sight of their own history and are doing exactly what the white man did to them. Using their superior finances, the Indians purchase all the land in South Park and begin their plans for forced removal of its citizens. The townspeople attempt to buy back their land by gambling at the casino, but are thwarted by their own greed. The idea that the Native Americans have been consumed by greed themselves is accentuated in how they decide to deal with the continued resistance of the South Park residents who decide to stand up to the bulldozers coming to their town. The chief hatches a plan to offer blankets to the people of South Park that are infected with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The choice of SARS was timely due to the international outbreak of the disease in 2003. Its affects, while bad, hardly compare to the spread of small pox that the episode is parodying.

The writers complete the flipped settler and Indian narrative by having one of the South Park kids, Stan Marsh, go on a vision quest to find a cure for SARS. Stan's father tells him: "The spirit of middle class white people is strong in you". Playing on a Native American Hollywood trope, Stan must go visit a wise old man to take him on the quest. The man Stan encounters lives in a trailer and takes him on a quest fueled by huffing paint thinner out of a paper bag. Stan's vision reveals a cure for SARS that uses the medicines of his people, Campbell's chicken noodle soup, Dayquil, and Sprite. Meanwhile, the chief's son, who is named Premise Running Thin, has contracted SARS. The episode skews into the racist realm by showing a Native America medicine man who tries to use herbs to cure SARS. Given that the Indians in this episode have been depicted

as members of modern society to this point, it seems an odd choice to suggest they have no understanding of modern medicine. Nevertheless, this plot device advances the narrative by allowing Stan to teach the Indians about his cure for SARS. This gesture prompts the chief to call off the plans to demolish South Park. Even in this narrative that attempts to flip the triumphant colonialist stereotype, the white man comes out on top.

The overall message of “Red Man’s Greed” is that Indian gaming has sent Native Americans down a path toward abandoning their culture in the name of greed. The episode, however fails to explore why tribes seek these revenues. This is part of the problem with the casino Indian stereotype. The negative views of gaming almost always overshadow the positives that come from increased tribal revenue. This view is not limited to white people. Renowned Native American poet and author Sherman Alexie echoed this sentiment in a 2012 interview. When asked about his feelings toward Indian casinos, he commented, “When an Indian tribe gets a casino, they’ve officially declared that they’ve lost the war. It’s the final submission.”³⁰⁹ The stereotype and negative views associated with Indian gaming exert real world ramifications. In his 2003 California Gubernatorial special election campaign, Arnold Schwarzenegger relied heavily on the concept of rich and greedy casino Indians for his proposed economic reforms. Schwarzenegger argued that tribal gaming siphoned much needed revenue away from the state of California and that Indians were unfairly becoming rich off of gaming profits. Some tribes indeed gained inequitable wealth off of gaming in California, but many more

³⁰⁹ Belinda Luscombe, "10 Questions for Sherman Alexie - Video - TIME.com," Time, October 29, 2012, accessed October 14, 2017, http://content.time.com/time/video/player/0,32068,1908400416001_2127147,00.html.

continued to live in poverty.³¹⁰ Shows like *South Park*, *The Simpsons*, and *Family Guy* all contributed to entrenching this stereotype into the American conscience. Indians had once again become villains. They were no longer mindless hordes out to kill settlers with flinging arrows; they were worse. They became shrewd calculating businessmen who sought their revenge on American whites by taking their money. Slot machines, poker tables, flashing lights, and the sound of jackpots being won replaced the bow and arrow as the Indian's primary weapon.

In keeping with their practice of discussing topical issues, *South Park*'s writers tackled the Washington Redskins mascot debate in the 2014 episode "Go Fund Yourself".³¹¹ Controversy surrounding Native American mascots is not a twenty-first century liberal issue as some believe. The first concerted effort to address the ills of Native American mascots came in 1968 when the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) launched a campaign to address stereotypes found in print and other media.³¹² Since this initial campaign, over two thousand schools and universities have dropped Native American mascots. As of 2005, fewer than one thousand sports teams still had Indian-related names or mascots.³¹³ The University of Oklahoma was one of the first to address the issue when it dropped its mascot Little Red in 1970, and Stanford University soon followed when they changed their name from the Indians to the Cardinal in 1972.³¹⁴

³¹⁰ Joanne Barker, *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 156-158.

³¹¹ Trey Parker, dir., "Go Fund Yourself," in *South Park*, September 24, 2014.

³¹² Gordon Hylton, "Before the Redskins Were the Redskins: The Use of Native American Team Names in the Formative Era of American Sports," *North Dakota Law Review*, January 1, 2010, 86.

³¹³ National Congress of American Indians, "Anti-Defamation & Mascots," Anti-Defamation & Mascots, accessed October 22, 2017, <http://www.ncai.org/policy-issues/community-and-culture/anti-defamation-mascots>.

³¹⁴ ChangeTheMascot.Org, "History of Progress," ChangeTheMascot.org, accessed November 03, 2017, <http://www.changethemascot.org/history-of-progress>.

The NCAI's success in getting schools to change their mascots has not translated to the professional sports world. There are no examples of professional sports teams changing their Indian-related names with the exception of teams that have moved cities or folded.

The resistance to name change on the professional level appears twofold. One of the arguments against a name change holds that for professional franchises, a mascot or name change would be too costly. Teams make vast amounts of money off of a wide array of branded products that would be rendered obsolete.³¹⁵ This same argument is being used in 2017 regarding the removal of Confederate leaders' names on schools throughout the country. Perhaps for an elementary school in a low income neighborhood concerns about cost make sense, but for a professional sports team this argument is quite specious. Amidst all the discussion of excessive cost, people fail to make the argument that a rebrand of a popular sports franchise would actually be a merchandising boon. Fans who love the team would be faced with purchasing new merchandise or representing a team from the past. This would generate a tremendous amount of new revenue. The concept of brand-equity applied to sports concerns the value of a franchise's public image calculated through merchandise sales. Recent studies have also shown that the two NFL teams with the worst brand-equity trends are the Chiefs and Redskins.³¹⁶ General consumers are reluctant to wear or own merchandise from these teams due to the potential culturally insensitive feelings associated with their names. Clearly, the economic argument does not hold water.

³¹⁵ Phyllis Emert, "Native American Mascots: Racial Slur or Cherished Tradition?" *Respect 2* (Winter 2003): 4.

³¹⁶ Michael Lewis, "Redskins' Is Bad Business," *The New York times*, June 24, 2014, accessed October 19, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/25/opinion/redskins-is-bad-business.html>.

The other typical argument against the changing names insists that it simply does not matter or that Native Americans are not offended by the names. The resurgence of the naming controversy occurred in the early-1990s when both the Atlanta Braves and Washington Redskins made it to the World Series and Super Bowl respectively. Occurring at the dawning of the culture wars, many came to view the controversy as a liberal fabrication, just one more case of unnecessary political correctness. This argument remains alive today, and again, is often also applied to other naming issues like schools that revere Confederate leaders. The subject of “Go Fund Yourself” is the Washington Redskins; therefore this brief history will be limited to the Redskins.

At the core of the “does it really matter” debate are two positions. First, some, including the Washington Redskins’ owner Dan Snyder, argue that the term Redskin is not derogatory but a sign of respect. The history of the term is somewhat murky. Interpretations of its origin typically allude to the Delaware tribe, which had a fondness for red makeup, the simple concept of skin color, or the much more brutal theory that the term stemmed from the eighteenth-century practice of American frontiersmen and soldiers scalping Indians for a bounty.³¹⁷ The latter makes it difficult to see this name as a sign of respect. Second, supporters of keeping the Redskin name often point to multiple polls that indicate indifference among Native Americans about the name. The polls most commonly cited by those who support the Redskin name are the Annenberg polls of 2004 and 2016 that revealed ninety percent of Native Americans were not offended by the team being named Redskins. Additionally, the poll asserts that eighty percent of Native

³¹⁷ Bruce Stapleton, *Redskins: Racial Slur or Symbol of Success?* (San Jose: Writers Club Press, 2001), 15-16.

Americans would not be offended if someone called them a Redskin to their face.³¹⁸ As with any poll, there are those who embrace the findings because they support their argument, and those who deride the poll as flawed because it does not. The main criticism of this poll, in both its iterations, is that it made no attempt to validate the Indianness of the people polled and relied on a small sample size. Some supporters of the name change even spun the poll as a positive, claiming that it demonstrated that Native Americans were a resilient people who were not going to let continued bigotry on behalf of the Washington Redskins drag them down.³¹⁹ If polling data is in fact to serve as the barometer, then the Redskins name is clearly problematic. Other recent polls have shown significant increases in those who find the name offensive among younger Americans. As baby boomers die out, the long-entrenched support for the name may also fade away.³²⁰ While polls may provide Redskins' owner Dan Snyder a sense that he is justified in keeping the team's name, it means nothing to those who do find the name offensive. In a 2013 interview with the *Tulsa World*, president of the Tulsa Indian Coalition Against Racism, Louis Gray, succinctly challenged the validity of these types of polls. When asked about a poll concerning the use of the Redskin name for the local Union High School, Gray responded, "Why would you take a poll to see if something is racially offensive? You wouldn't do that with any other race. You wouldn't have African-

³¹⁸ John Cox Woodrow, "New Poll Finds 9 in 10 Native Americans Aren't Offended by Redskins Name," *The Washington Post*, May 19, 2016, accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/new-poll-finds-9-in-10-native-americans-arent-offended-by-redskins-name>.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ James V. Fenelon, *Redskins?: Sports Mascots, Indian Nations and White Racism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), 92.

Americans vote to decide whether or not any sort of racial epitaph would be offensive.”³²¹

In “Go Fund Yourself”, *South Park*’s writers align themselves with those who believe Snyder’s argument about the Redskin name serving as an homage to Native Americans is absurd. The episode was inspired by a 2014 ruling by the Trademark Trial and Appeal Board that stated the Redskin name violated the Lanham Act, which disallowed the trademarking of disparaging terms or phrases.³²²³²³ The episode contains two satirical targets, the Washington Redskins and the website Kickstarter. It starts with the Stan, Kyle, Kenny, Cartman, and Butters trying to come up with the perfect name for their start-up company, upset that seemingly every offensive name they come up with has already been trademarked. After settling on a name that they do not really like, Cartman asserts that he has the perfect name, Washington Redskins. He cites the fact that the trademark had been removed and it was now available for use. The gang agrees to use the name and embarks on their dream of launching a Kickstarter for a start-up company that does absolutely nothing. The commentary on Kickstarter is beyond this study, but *South Park*’s writers clearly find it absurd that people are willing to give money to start-ups that have no real business model, but just sound interesting. They also point out that the

³²¹ John Hoover, "Gray: Redskins Is a Slur, but Other Nicknames Objectify Native Americans," *Tulsa World* (Tulsa, OK), October 19, 2013, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://www.tulsaworld.com/blogs/sports/johnehoover/gray-redskins-is-a-slur-but-other-nicknames-objectify-native/>.

³²² Mark A. Lemley, "The Modern Lanham Act and the Death of Common Sense," *The Yale Law Journal* 108, no. 7 (1999): 1689, doi:10.2307/797447.

³²³ Ian Shapira, "'Take Yo Panties Off' Defense: Redskins Cite Other Protected Products in Trademark Appeal," *The Washington Post*, November 3, 2015, accessed November 3, 2017, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-38940911.html?refid=easy_hf.

company behind Kickstarter basically makes money off of people giving other people money.

Quickly, the gang's start-up begins to take off and adds numerous investors. The purpose of the company is to find new ways to tell people to "Go fuck themselves," by taking their money and doing nothing with it. With public support amassing, Redskins' president Dan Snyder shows up at the offices of Washington Redskins and asks that they stop using his team's name. He argues that they have no right to use the name to gain attention, and that they are "a proud team", and it is offensive to them to have it associated with a company that does nothing. The writers use Snyder's own words against him when Cartman says that the company chose the name because they have a "deep respect for your team and your people." As the episode progresses, the South Park kids' company, Washington Redskins, continues to gain popularity. When the NFL asks them to at least change their logo, which is the exact Washington Redskins logo, made allowable by the recent ruling, they make it even more offensive by adding to it a stick-figure body with breasts and a penis. The show is quite crude. Cartman is urged once again to stop using the name out of decency, but states "Digging in heels and pissing on public opinion are what the Washington Redskins are all about." Of course, if Dan Snyder and polls are to be believed, public opinion is on their side.

If the allegory that Dan Snyder's Redskins in the episode represent Native Americans in real life was not clear enough, the writers take it a step further by having Snyder and Redskin players lead an Indian-style raid on Kickstarter's offices in an attempt to shut down Cartman's Washington Redskins company. Undaunted by Kickstarter being down and losing their money, Cartman's Washington Redskins decides

to adopt an augmented Kickstarter model. Instead of taking five percent of donations meant for start-ups and passing the rest along, he decides to have people raise money for their start-ups on their own, and just give it to his company. The next scene finds Dan Snyder standing pensively in front of his team while sad Native American flute music plays. One of the players speaks up and says “It’s over. Our name has been reduced to a stereotype and a joke.” Dejected, the team leaves. Unwilling to give up, Snyder puts his tie on like a stereotypical headband and heads out to the football field to take on the Dallas Cowboys single-handedly. He is quickly destroyed on the field, leaving him beaten nearly to death. The next day, an angry mob appears outside of the offices of Cartman’s Washington Redskins and demands that they change their name. The gang does not understand what has changed until one of the protestors says: “There’s nothing sweet about a people who were decimated, a once proud nation that finally lost hope and left their leader to be massacred by cowboys in a defiant last stand.” Unlike Snyder, the boys realize that the protestors are right and give up on their venture.

What this episode does well, and what makes it such a good commentary on the Redskins name controversy, is that it puts the situation in a relatable, albeit ludicrous, light. By substituting Native Americans with a rich white NFL owner, it accentuates how preposterous the arguments for keeping the Redskins name are. Cartman’s trashing of the name by adding sexually suggestive symbols to it is no different than the persistent use of the logo in the NFL and the fans who wear headdresses to game. The indictment of the general public lies in the notion that people may be too far removed from the suffering of Native Americans to understand why the use of the name is offensive. Only when they see actual suffering, does the public realize that their support of Cartman’s Redskins is

wrong. Unfortunately for those who favor a name change, a more conservative Supreme Court in 2017 overturned earlier rulings that invalidated the Redskins trademarks, and the real Snyder is just as recalcitrant in his refusal to change the team name today as he was then.

As prime-time animation continues to pursue topical storylines well into the twenty-first century, it appears likely that Native American issues will once again appear in animated form on television. The episodes covered in this chapter are not the only examples of Native Americans in prime-time television, but they are indicative of the subject matter that is typically broached. Other notable examples of Native Americans in prime-time animation include the *Family Guy* episode “Life of Brian” (2013) that posits a U.S. created after Native Americans drove the white man from America and the *Futurama* episode “Where the Buggalo Roam” (2002) that treats Martians like futuristic space Indians.³²⁴³²⁵ Viewing the genre as a whole, a few conclusions emerge. First, the continued white dominance in animation writing rooms means that issues are not always covered with a Native American point of view. *King of the Hill* bucked this by allowing Jonathan Joss to have a say in John Redcorn’s development. Second, even though they are used for comedic purposes, the stereotypical images of war paint, feathers, tipis, and breechcloths persists in animation. While this may seem inconsequential given the satirical nature of these cartoons, it keeps old stereotypes alive. Finally, on the positive side, prime-time animation as a whole has attempted to treat Native American history and culture positively by exposing social injustices and deriding the white conquest of Indians

³²⁴Joseph Lee, dir., “Life of Brian,” in *Family Guy*, November 23, 2013.

³²⁵Pat Shinagawa, dir., “Where the Buggalo Roam,” in *Futurama*, March 03, 2002.

in America. By no means are these cartoons perfect in their handling of these issues, but it is a major departure from the mindless Indian hordes that defined Native Americans in the cartoons during the Golden Age of Animation.

CHAPTER VI

THE VANISHING ANIMATED NATIVE AMERICAN IN THE MILLENNIUM AGE OF ANIMATION

No distinct beginning to the Millennium Age of Animation exists. The name suggests that it began in 2000, but the transition from the Renaissance to the Millennium Age started in the mid-1990s. From 1995 into the mid-2000s, cartoon production techniques, intended audience, and content gradually changed. While animation underwent changes, American popular culture continued to develop its understanding of culturally sensitive depictions of minorities in media. For Native Americans, these transitions proved detrimental. Over time Native Americans gradually vanished from mainstream animation. The result was, with few exceptions, that Native Americans went from flawed representations to no representations.

In this era of limited representation, Native Americans faced many of the same issues that had plagued them in past. Concerns over tribal sovereignty and funding of aid programs remained a constant. The election of George W. Bush in 2000 put Indian policy on the backburner. Historian Scott Merriman argues that Bush was more concerned with leaving his mark with the War on Terror and foreign policy than dealing with domestic

issues. For Indian policy, this resulted in “benign indifference.”³²⁶ On the issue of tribal sovereignty, Bush echoed those who came before him. In a memorandum issued during this re-election campaign in 2004, he stated that the U.S. would “work with tribal governments in a manner that cultivates mutual respect and fosters greater understanding.”³²⁷ Not all of Bush’s actions proved benign. In both 2006 and 2008, Bush proposed massive cuts to urban Indian healthcare services. These cuts were to be the most drastic since the Reagan administration and would have crippled Indian healthcare services.³²⁸ Fortunately, these budget cuts died in Congress. In sum, George W. Bush effectively left Indian policy and issues in the same state that he found them.

In stark contrast to Bush, Barack Obama took a keen interest in Native American issues during his presidency. Like other presidents before him, he continually asserted the need to protect tribal sovereignty, but he also actively sought the voice of Native Americans on the issues that they faced. Ten months into his presidency, Obama created the White House-Tribal Nations Conference, which became a yearly event throughout his Presidency. He set the tone for his views on Indian policy and issues at the first meeting saying “few have been more marginalized and ignored by Washington for as long as Native Americans, our first Americans.”³²⁹ Determined not to ignore Native Americans,

³²⁶ Alys Landry, "George W. Bush: 'Actively Ignored' Indians; Struggled with Sovereignty," Indian Country Media Network, October 25, 2016, accessed October 28, 2017, <https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/george-w-bush-actively-ignored-indians-struggled-with-sovereignty/>.

³²⁷ National Congress of American Indians, "NCAI Comments on Tribal Trust Compliance and Federal Infrastructure Decision-Making," NCAI Online, November 30, 2016, accessed October 28, 2017, <http://nathpo.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/NCAI-Comments-Federal-Infrastructure-Decisionmaking.pdf>, 29.

³²⁸ Nicolas G. Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country Native American Migration and Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 162

³²⁹ Washington Post Staff, "President Obama Delivers Remarks at White House-Tribal Nations Conference," *The Washington Post*, November 05, 2009, accessed November 01, 2017, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/05/AR2009110502365.html>.

Obama facilitated legislation that went beyond simply funding programs for Indians. In 2010, he signed the Tribal Law and Order Act that increased the punitive authority of tribes. The law was meant to tackle drug, domestic violence, and artifact theft crimes in tribal courts by allowing stricter punishments.³³⁰ The Obama Administration also increased standards and support for the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act. The act was established to stem the tide of Indian children being removed from families and placed into non-tribal foster homes. It enjoyed only limited success over time and lacked adequate support from the federal government to accomplish its goals. The Obama Administration reinforced the provisions of the act and dedicated more resources to its enforcement.³³¹

Obama's main contribution to Indian affairs involves his policies diverging from the typical discussion of tribal sovereignty and dealing with real issues that affected Native Americans' day-to-day lives. While Native Americans disappeared from mainstream media, the challenges they faced in everyday life did not. Despite the efforts of the Obama Administration, Native American women are three and a half times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than women of other races. In addition, certain tribal communities have poverty rates bordering on three times the national average.³³²

Other issues such as high rates of suicide and substance abuse also persist. The presence

³³⁰ "Barack Obama: Remarks on Signing Legislation To Protect Indian Arts and Crafts Through the Improvement of Applicable Criminal Proceedings, and for Other Purposes - July 29, 2010," The American Presidency Project, July 29, 2010, accessed November 01, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=88254>.

³³¹ Brando Ecoffey, "President Obama Demands More ICWA Compliance," *Lakota Country Times*, April 7, 2016, accessed November 05, 2017, http://www.lakotacountrytimes.com/news/Front_Page/President_Obama_Demands_More_ICWA_Compliance.html

³³² Julian Brave NoiseCat, "13 Issues Facing Native People Beyond Mascots And Casinos," The Huffington Post, August 31, 2015, accessed November 05, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/13-native-american-issues_us_55b7d801e4b0074ba5a6869c.

of these issues seemingly indicates a need for more awareness among the general public. But over the course of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Native American culture has slowly faded into the background. Obama may have highlighted issues on a political stage, but in mainstream media, Indians vanished.

In order to understand how Native Americans disappeared from animation, it is necessary to discuss how cartoons changed in the Millennium Age. The massive success of *Toy Story* in 1995, coupled with box-office failures for Disney animated features in the late-1990s, started a movement away from traditionally hand-drawn to computer generated 3D animation.³³³ At its onset this type of animation was expensive, but it proved the benefits of using computers to create cartoons. Over the course of the next two decades, nearly all major animated properties transitioned to computer generated animation.³³⁴ Simultaneously animation studios increased their efforts to overcome the animation age ghetto, the idea that cartoons are only for children, which had been the norm since the end of *The Flintstones*. The debut of *The Simpsons* in 1989 challenged this concept, but the overwhelmingly adult content of that show did not lead to the coveted diversified audience.³³⁵ In order to overcome the age restraint, cartoons began to include winks and nods to adult audiences to keep them entertained, while continuing to provide bright colorful content that appealed to children. By the mid-2000s, most mainstream animated features were billed as being for the entire family, not just children.

³³³ 3D animation does not mean images that require special glasses; rather it is computer generate animation with an added layer of depth beyond the traditional 2D.

³³⁴ Kate Torgovnick May, "A New Age of Animation," *The Atlantic*, May 20, 2016, accessed November 05, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/05/a-new-age-of-animation/483342/>.

³³⁵ Richard Rosenbaum, *Raise Some Shell: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2014), electronic.

The changes in production methods and intended audience alone did not contribute to the decline of Native American depictions in animation. Instead, it was a mix of content change and a growing sense of cultural sensitivity. Regarding content, the major change occurring over the course of the 2000s is that cartoons became increasingly removed from the real world. Shows like *SpongeBob SquarePants* (1999), *Adventure Time* (2010), and *The Amazing World of Gumball* (2011) represent this change. These shows relied on settings completely outside of reality that did not facilitate the inclusion of human characters, let alone minorities. There were cartoons that remained set in a semi-realistic world. Some of those include the prime-time animated shows discussed in previous chapters. Others, however, like *Phineas and Ferb* (2007), *Teen Titans Go!* (2013), and *Ben Ten* (2005), existed in worlds that had different races, but rarely, if ever, was any character allowed to explore their racial background. This represented essentially a whitewashing of cultures.

Animated features began to address their lack of diversity in the late-2000s. For instance, movies like *Up!* (2009) and *Big Hero Six* (2014) featured minority characters in leading roles and allowed those characters to demonstrate tastefully done portrayals of their culture. In addition to including non-white characters, these cartoons casted voice actors representative of the cultures they portrayed.³³⁶ Hollywood's handling of the diversity issue was not always even-handed, however. By the conclusion of 2017, two major animated features had been released focusing on the Mexican Day of the Dead holiday. These films include, *The Book of Life* (2014) and *Coco* (2017), which shed light

³³⁶ Charles Solomon, "Diversity Can Be Seen and Heard in Animated Films.," *The Los Angeles Times*, February 14, 2015, accessed November 06, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-animation-diversity-20150215-story.html>.

on two of the problems with Hollywood's views on diversity in animation.³³⁷³³⁸ First, both examine only a sliver of Mexican heritage, which is the Day of the Dead. It is an intriguing holiday, but hardly indicative of the entire culture. Second, and more relevant in explaining the lack of Native Americans in cartoons, these features aim to capture both interested white audiences and the expanding base of Latinos in the U.S. It is good business to create cartoons for a growing segment of the population. A study conducted at UCLA concluded that movies with diverse casts in 2014 had a median ticket revenue over double that of those that had a predominantly white cast.³³⁹ Diversity, therefore, started to equal more profit.

The question arises that if diversity is profitable, then why are Native Americans excluded? The subject of Native American exclusion in a renewed age of diversity has yet to garner much research. Therefore, making sense of this omission requires relying on two key assumptions. The first is the simplest, namely that Native Americans simply do not account for a large enough segment of the population to make it onto Hollywood's radar. Census data in 2017 indicates that Native Americans account for slightly less than three percent of the total U.S. population. Conversely, Hispanic Americans account for nearly twenty-four percent, Asian Americans nine percent, and African Americans twenty percent of the population. Of these groups, only African Americans had a slower growth rate than Native Americans.³⁴⁰ These numbers indicate that if diversity is going to

³³⁷ *The Book of Life*, dir. Jorge Gutierrez (Los Angeles: 20th Century Fox, 2014).

³³⁸ *Coco*, dir. Lee Unkrich (Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures, 2017).

³³⁹ Kerry Close, "Movies with Diverse Casts Make More Money," *Time*, February 25, 2016, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://time.com/money/4237685/movies-diversity-casts-money/>.

³⁴⁰ Bill Chappell, "Census Finds A More Diverse America, As Whites Lag Growth," NPR, June 22, 2017, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/06/22/533926978/census-finds-a-more-diverse-america-as-whites-lag-growth>.

be approached for economic reasons, it is logical to target other races over Native Americans. The second reason skews into the realm of the accusatory. While Indians compose a small segment of the population, the outrage that comes with the mishandling of Native American culture ranks among the most vocal. While this outrage is warranted, it is also bad for business. Unfortunately, instead of meeting this criticisms with concerted efforts to portray Native Americans properly, Hollywood tends to simply avoid the subject.

Animation studios' distaste for dealing with cultural controversy means that there are very few examples of Native American depictions in the Millennium Age. Some of the examples that do exist come from the prime-time cartoons that were discussed in the previous chapter. So, this chapter focuses on four examples that include an educational series, a late-night adult-focused cartoon, and two animated features. Though the examples are few, they demonstrate the tropes and highlight the difficulties in the portrayal of Native Americans in Millennium Age animation.

The concept of reality almost completely disappeared in young children's entertainment during the 2000s in favor of fantastical settings and characters that offered universal appeal and could be easily syndicated in other countries. A show that countered this trend was PBS's *Liberty's Kids* (2002). Created by the masters of low-budget animation from the 1980s, DiC, *Liberty's Kids* follows the exploits of four fictional young protagonists coming of age in Revolutionary War America. The series is quite unique for the twenty-first century, as it has limited appeal outside of the U.S. and presents challenges for syndication since it cannot be shown out of order. Its forty episode run from 2002-2003 may not seem impressive, but it became very important

regarding the portrayal of Native Americans as a standard complement to Revolutionary War education in elementary classrooms across the U.S.³⁴¹ The show's depiction of the American Revolution is problematic at times. The writers tried to portray the war and the pursuit of liberty from all sides. Given that the intended audience was pre-teens, they did a good job of demonstrating the complexity of issues surrounding the war. However, they were handcuffed by standards at some points. One criticism of the early episodes of the show was that it included too many guns. Letters from parents came into PBS's offices wondering why there were so many guns in the cartoons their children were watching. The animators responded to these complaints by limiting the amount of violence in the series. The end result was a cartoon that adequately explained the causes of the American Revolution, but also sanitized and glorified war.³⁴² In addition, while the show does often portrays the dirtier side of colonial tactics and behaviors during the period, the end result is the same pro-American liberty narrative that has existed for over two centuries. Freedom and liberty are so important and uniquely American that the ends justify the means.

The series' treatment of Native Americans falls victim to that same sentiment. Two episodes of the series deal specifically with Native Americans during the war. Both of these episodes are relatively unique in the genre of animation because they discuss specific historical figures and tribes. With the notable exception of John Redcorn in *King of the Hill*, most cartoon Indians on television exist without a specific tribal affiliation.

³⁴¹ Andrew M. Schocket, *Fighting Over the Founders: How We Remember the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 144-147.

³⁴² Ibid.

The two episodes of *Liberty's Kids* containing Native American characters are “The New Frontier” and “Bostonians”.³⁴³³⁴⁴

“The New Frontier” finds fictional protagonist Sarah Phillips wandering the woods and passing out from a lack of food. She is discovered by Shawnee leader Cornstalk, who nurses her back to health and through fortuitous happenstance reunites Sarah with father. Her father plays the role of a fictional British Major who is acting as an intermediary between colonial troops and the Shawnee. The narrative of the Native American portion of the episode explains that the Shawnee fear that if the American colonists win the war, they will drive them from their lands. The episode establishes the idea that colonial troops did not honor their agreements with the Shawnee and burned corn fields and harassed Indians who simply wanted to live peacefully. Calls for war among the Shawnee are compounded when a fishing party is attacked by the Continental Army. In an effort to maintain peace, Cornstalk visits Captain Matthew Arbuckle at Fort Randolph. When Arbuckle learns that war with the Shawnee may be imminent, he imprisons Cornstalk. Sarah and her father are angry at this decision. Major Phillips alludes to the grim fate that will actually befall Cornstalk, which is his murder at the hands of an unruly mob in 1777.³⁴⁵

Given the intended audience’s age, the complexity of the history in the episode is handled well. The inclusion of two fictional characters as conduits for the narrative obviously skews some of the historical circumstances surrounding Cornstalk’s capture. This simplification and fictionalization of the historical events does not detract from the

³⁴³ Judy Reilly, dir., “The New Frontier,” in *Liberty's Kids*, November 05, 2002.

³⁴⁴ Judy Reilly, dir., “Bostonians,” in *Liberty's Kids*, November 11, 2002.

³⁴⁵ Roger M. Carpenter, *Times Are Altered with Us: American Indians from First Contact to the New Republic* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 252.

lesson learned. What the episode does well is demonstrate the unenviable position in which Native Americans found themselves during the American Revolution, which was to either fight for the British or face losing their land following an American victory. In addition, this episode, as well as “Bostonians”, accurately portrays the tribes discussed within the episodes. The generic Plains Indian headdresses, bare chests, headbands, and breechcloths were thankfully put to rest.

The story of “Bostonians” is similar to “The New Frontier”, just with different Native American characters. Mohawk leader Joseph Brant, whose people are facing the same fate as the Shawnee, replaces Cornstalk. An aggressive Continental Army is burning homes and corn fields, and forcing the Iroquois Confederation to choose sides. This episode goes as far as to argue that the British were great friends to the Native Americans and did not pose the same threat as the Americans.

While these episodes are essentially accurate in their physical depictions of Native Americans, the overshadowing tone and historical interpretation proves problematic. In both episodes, the tribal leaders Cornstalk and Joseph Brant are characterized as dispensers of wisdom. They act as a noble foe to the uncivilized nature of the white man’s war. There is absolutely nothing new in this depiction of Native Americans. Although devoid of mystical powers, they do hold an overwhelming command of philosophical knowledge. More troublesome, while both episodes highlight the looming conquest if the American colonists were to win the war and the atrocities that were carried out against Native Americans during the war, no real lesson is learned. The plight of Native Americans at the hands of the Continental Army ultimately becomes a footnote to the idea that the war established American liberty. Liberty is the greatest

achievement and the means to achieve it are warranted. Like the wise Indian trope, this narrative is nothing new. Native Americans are treated as roadblocks to progress and, while it is sad what happened to them, it ultimately led to the advancement of America. Again, while not new, it is worrisome that this well-established narrative is included in a post-millennium cartoon that has become a standard teaching tool in American classrooms.

The next entry from the Millennium Age could not be any more different from *The Liberty Kids*. One of the pervasive developments in animation during the 2000s concerned the creation of the *Adult Swim* programming block on Cartoon Network. *Adult Swim* went beyond prime-time cartoons and offered animated programs that were solely geared toward adults. Cartoons on *Adult Swim* were not only shown after most kids' bedtimes, but contained language and jokes unfit for adolescent consumption. One of the shows that anchored the Adult Swim block in its early incarnation was *Sealab 2021*. This was part of Adult Swim's group of cartoons that took characters developed in the 1970s and created new absurd adult-oriented storylines. The show that *Sealab 2021* was based on was *Sealab 2020*. The original program was an "attempt at intelligent programming for children" while *Sealab 2021* was "intentionally stupid programming for adults".³⁴⁶ Embedded within its stupidity, the show often poked fun at other cartoons and used satire for social commentary. The Native American-centric episode "Casinko" demonstrated both of these characteristics.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁶ M. Keith Booker, *Drawn to Television: Prime-Time Animation from the Flintstones to Family Guy* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2006), 175.

³⁴⁷ Adam Reed and Matt Thompson, dirs., "Casinko," in *Sealab 2021*, March 06, 2005.

The premise of the episode “Casinko” is that Sealab is sinking into the ocean because it was built on a Native American burial ground and is cursed. This was absurd considering Sealab resides on the ocean floor. Sealab’s communication officer Sparks sets the tone for the episode when he says, “Turns out Sealab was built on an Injun Burial Gr... Oh sorry John Bear. A Native American burial ground.” The character John Bear is a never-before-seen crewmember who is depicted as stereotypical Native American complete with war paint, bow and arrow, headband with a feather, and pet eagle on his shoulder. An example of the intelligence of the writing of the show occurs when John Bear replies to Sparks saying “Native American is a PC label forced on us by white man. I, John Bear, Lacoche warrior, urinate in the river of your ancestors.” Although steeped in absurdity due to John Bear’s mimicking of urination, he makes a valid point concerning the usage of “Native American” to refer to Indians being a modern construction.³⁴⁸ As the episode progresses, the writers go to great lengths to be offensive in regard to Native American stereotypes and culture. The captain of Sealab asks John Bear to perform a dance to stop them from sinking. John Bear decides to help only if he is allowed to open a casino, and not just any casino. He says: “John Bear’s not gonna do it for a bunch of half-assed video slots. Have we learned nothing from Wounded Knee.”

The cultural insensitivities escalate throughout the episode. The casino displays stereotypical imagery throughout, and is called the Buffalo Chip Casino. It even has a wampum money exchange instead of a regular cashier’s cage. In addition to imagery, a complete mockery of Indian culture is provided. At one point John Bear, who is reluctant to do the dance throughout, is seen playing cards and says: “Ancestors say always split

³⁴⁸ Dennis Gaffney, ""American Indian" or "Native American,"" PBS, April 24, 2006, accessed November 10, 2017, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/roadshow/fts/bismarck_200504A16.html.

8s.” The first eight minutes of this episode arguably rank as one of the most offensive portrayals of Native Americans in television history, but then there is a change. The final act of the eleven-minute episode begins with the characters Sparks and Debbie singing a duet in a Las Vegas-style show that begins “Racism is funny and sexism too”. The remainder of the song directly acknowledges that everything in this episode is offensive and that shows often hide behind the equal opportunity offender argument. The chorus of the songs ends with the phrase “make fun of minorities because of our inferiorities, but it doesn’t matter because we’re only joking.” In this instance, this incredibly offensive and silly episode makes a profound point concerning adult-focused cartoons. The idea that because everyone is a target justifies racist jokes is shown to be invalid. Clearly, *Sealab 2021*’s writers think that this practice perpetuates stereotypes, even though they are allegedly rendered moot by the fact that it is a satirical joke. If the moral of the episode was not clear enough from the song, the writers emphasize it in an absurd reveal at the end when John Bear removes a mask to expose that he is a white guy and then removes that mask and exposes that he is a non-racist Native American. The episode ends with John Bear saying the simple line “Racism is for the birds.”

Stepping away from televised cartoons, feature-length animation adopted a new approach to Native American narratives in the Millennium Age. In order to avoid potential cultural insensitivities, feature-length animation removed human Indians from the narrative and replaced them with animal surrogates. The first film to do this was the 2005 Disney feature *Brother Bear*.³⁴⁹ The film is not completely devoid of humanoid Indian characters. It begins with three Inuit brothers -- Kenai, Denahi, and Sitka --

³⁴⁹ *Brother Bear*, dir. Aaron Blaise and Robert Walker (Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures, 2004).

returning to their tribe so Kenai can receive his spirit totem. Kenai is upset that his totem is the bear of love because he believes that bears are thieves. Following a salmon theft incident, the brothers pursue a bear resulting in a fight and ultimately the sacrificial death of the eldest brother Sitka. Blaming the bear for his brother's death, Kenai sets out on a quest for revenge and kills the bear. Because his actions were rash and violent, the spirits appear and transform Kenai into a bear. The narrative of the cartoon goes down a predictable path of redemption through sympathetic understanding of others.

As opposed to many other cartoons, *Brother Bear* handles Native American culture and depictions fairly well. With the exception of showing the Inuit living alongside woolly mammoths, *Brother Bear* provides an accurate assessment of spiritual practices and clothing.³⁵⁰ The issue with *Brother Bear* is not its physical depiction of Native Americans; rather it is how it augments the conquest narrative. The film avoids the typical problems of white and Indian reactions by eliminating the white half of the equation. The result, however, is that Indians assume the role of the imperialist aggressors and the bears become the surrogates for Native Americans.³⁵¹ The innocent bears only want to live and survive in peace, but their natural homes are encroached upon by the Inuit forcing them to lash out. The transference of the conquest narrative is insulting to Native Americans because it portrays them as no better than the white imperialists who drove them from their lands.

³⁵⁰ Tali Schroeder, "Inuit Myth in the Film 'Brother Bear,'" *Oglethorpe Journal of Undergraduate Research* 1, no. 1 (2012): 3.

³⁵¹ Justyna Fruzinska, *Emerson Goes to the Movies: Individualism in Walt Disney Company's Post-1989 Animated Films* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 90-91.

The transference of the conquest narrative also serves as a key factor in the much sillier 2013 animated feature *Free Birds*.³⁵² The plot of *Free Birds* revolves around a modern turkey traveling back in time to the first Thanksgiving with the goal of stopping turkeys from becoming the main dish associated with the holiday. The movie begins with a title card and voiceover that states: “The following film is a work of fiction. It is loosely based on historical events and is no way meant to be historically accurate.” This same statement could be applied to most mainstream treatments of the first Thanksgiving. The entire premise of the film is flawed given that turkey may not have been served at the first Thanksgiving.

Putting its flaws aside, the film suffers from an incredibly stereotypical depiction of Native Americans. One review of the film stated: “The movie’s animal rights, vegetarian message should go down easily with politically correct parents – at least until they choke on the offensive depiction of 17th century turkeys as face-painted, headband-wearing native Americans.”³⁵³ This reviewer could not have been more accurate. The turkey protagonists of the film, although portrayed as the heroes, fall firmly within the well-established Indian stereotypes from Hollywood Westerns. Their chief, Broadbeak is the stereotypical stoic and wise Indian. His accomplice is a turkey version of the standard old mystical shaman named Leatherbeak. The story plays out like a Western as well. Miles Standish is portrayed as a black hat-wearing villain hell bent on capturing turkeys for his feast. The turkeys, like the bears in *Brother Bear*, just want to live in peace but are faced with this foreign aggressor. The bulk of the movie is devoid of human Indians, but

³⁵² *Free Birds*, dir. Jimmy Hayward (Dallas: Reel FX Creative Studios, 2014).

³⁵³ Liam Lacey, "Free Birds: This Undercooked Effort Leaves Bad Taste.," *Globe and Mail*, November 1, 2013, accessed November 10, 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/film/film-reviews/free-birds-this-undercooked-effort-leaves-bad-taste>.

when they do appear briefly, their depiction is no better than that of the turkeys. The writers demonstrate a complete lack of historical research by having the Wampanoag arrive atop horses and wearing Plains Indian headdresses. The movie culminates as ridiculously as it starts when the main protagonist arrives back from the future with pizzas. Pizzas, rather than turkeys, becomes the main Thanksgiving dish. One final insult is made to the Wampanoag when one of the tribesmen dances around foolishly after replacing his breechcloth with a slice of pizza, a final insult tacked on top of ninety minutes of racial stereotypes.

When compared, *Free Birds* makes *Brother Bear* seem like a triumph of modern animation, but both treat Native American culture insensitively. The faulty logic behind both of the films is the contention that if certain human elements are removed then the potential for portraying culture incorrectly or negatively is also removed. This obviously is not the case. Both bastardize Native American history by transferring it to anthropomorphic surrogates. In *Brother Bear* the removal of white men from the story forces Indians into the antagonist role. The problem in *Free Birds* is simply one of taking stereotypes, removing them from humans, and placing them on turkeys. Of the two, the latter is far more egregious, not only because of the blatant stereotypical and ahistorical portrayals, but for the fact that it was released in 2013.

As the Millennium Age of Animation continues, the future of Native Americans in cartoons remains uncertain. Trends toward multicultural casts and stories would indicate some hope that accurate and relevant depictions of Indian history and culture could be on the horizon. This has yet to happen. If those cartoons are developed, there are three key lessons that can be learned from this period. First, well-formed Indian

characters and stories need input from actual Native Americans. This is demonstrated in the development of John Redcorn's character after the writers gave Jonathan Joss more input. Second, the concept of equal opportunity offenders may have some merit, but is completely dependent upon the audience's ability to discern fact from satire, a dangerous assumption to make. Finally, the conquest narrative, whether acted out in human form or through anthropomorphic transference, remains powerful. Animators have to exercise extreme caution when dealing with this narrative or run the risk of insulting Native American by marginalizing their role in American imperial conquest.

CONCLUSION

In a 1995 review of *Pocahontas* appearing on the scholarly website *H-Net*, Pauline Turner Strong wrote: “Disney has created a marketable New Age Pocahontas to embody our millennial dreams for wholeness and harmony, while banishing our nightmares of savagery without and emptiness within.”³⁵⁴ What Disney did in 1995 was exactly what Hollywood did for decades, use Native Americans to address white American insecurities. The usage of Native Americans in this manner stretches far beyond Hollywood. As Philip Deloria argues, Americans have been “playing Indian” since the genesis of the U.S. and will continue to do so into the future.³⁵⁵ Deloria’s argument about Americans love of playing Indian remains alive and well in 2017. For \$50, any American can casually appropriate Native American culture and purchase their own officially-licensed Disney’s *Pocahontas* Princess costume. A look at one of the sites selling the costume supports Deloria’s argument. The costume description reads: “Slip on this Women’s Disney Pocahontas costume and become one of the strongest women in Disney history. You will be the embodiment of unity, trying to bring two peoples

³⁵⁴ Pauline Turner Strong, “Review of Pocahontas.” in *H-Net Discussions List, Popular Culture and American Culture Associations*. June 30, 1995, accessed November 12, 2017, <https://networks.h-net.org/node/24029/reviews/30033/strong-pocahontas>.

³⁵⁵ Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 7.

together.”³⁵⁶ The power of this cartoon has withstood over twenty years of allegedly increasing cultural sensitivity.

Cartoons prove a near perfect medium for playing Indian. Every aspect of cartoons, unlike live-action entertainment, is constructed. Narratives, characters, and settings all serve a singular purpose and can be devoid of agency outside that of the animator. Over the course of the near-century’s worth of Native American depictions in animation, Indians have played every role imaginable. The Silent and Golden Ages relied on Indians as villains or dupes. The Dark Age, despite the criticism of cartoons’ artistic quality, gave American viewers sympathetic portrayals of Native Americans and addressed the newfound white guilt over the appropriation and settlement of Indian land. The Renaissance Age capitalized on growing cultural awareness and sensitivity, and commodified Indians to sell everything from action figures to licensed Halloween costumes. Lastly, in the Millennium Age, animation is searching for its stance on Native Americans. It is seemingly lost somewhere between the pitfalls of the noble savage and no Indian depictions at all.

The main failure in Native American depictions in animation is a lack of Indian agency. Cartoons like *Pocahontas* and *Brother Bear* consulted tribes, listened to Indian advocate groups, and casted Native Americans in voice-acting roles, but the final approval of the films still fell to predominantly white executives and animators. Having a former Native American civil rights figure like Russell Means involved in the production of *Pocahontas* is all well and good, but it amounts to little more than window dressing if the final product overlooks indigenous concerns. The most successful example of Indian

³⁵⁶ "Women's Disney Pocahontas Costume," HalloweenCostumes.com, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://www.halloweencostumes.com/womens-pocahontas-costume.html>.

agency in animation is Jonathan Joss's input into the John Redcorn character on *King of the Hill*. But even he had to navigate within the confines of the white animators who created the show.

The lack of Indian agency exacerbates the problematic depictions of Indians in animation. If animation is viewed as a medium controlled by white Americans, the need for Indian agency becomes clear. White Americans struggle to understand Native American history, culture, and issues. Numerous reasons account for this, but in animation it stems from two main and mistaken ideas. First, Indians no-longer exist. They are characters from the past that do not have a defined role in the modern world. If positive modern adaptations of Indians are attempted in animation, they mask stereotypes in the guise of apologist narratives that root Indian existence in the past. This approach keeps the noble savage alive and well in animation. The noble savage is the most enduring Native American stereotype. It fits within the context of modern multicultural sensibilities because it seems to pay homage to Indian culture. If Indian agency was included in cartoons, noble savagery could be replaced with actual modern cultural participation. Instead, the extent of Indian cultural participation in modern cartoons is often relegated to the new villainous casino Indian. This character shares a link to the past with the modern noble savage. Casino Indians are agents of revenge for past abuses, their bows and arrows replaced with one-armed bandits and stacked decks.

The second major issue concerning white understanding of Native Americans in animation includes the consistent portrayal of Indians as a monolithic entity. This problem exists in other mediums of entertainment, but is far more pervasive in animation. Throughout this study, only *Pocahontas*, *An American Tail: The Treasure of Manhattan*

Island, and two individual episodes of *The Funny Company* and *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, mention real tribes with any sense of historical accuracy. The vast majority of cartoons rely on fictional stereotypical feather-bonnet tribes. The inability of cartoons to portray Native Americans with any true sense tribal individuality is not surprising. Any chronicler of Native Americans in popular culture wrestles with the concept of tribal identities. The term Native American itself is a generic label that lumps a diverse population under a singular name, culture, and history. Ultimately, pragmatism rules the day when it comes to the portrayal of Native Americans in animation. If cartoons struggle to depict generic Native Americans with care and sensitivity, it is illogical to think they would be able to deal with nuanced tribal differentiations. This does not mean animation is blameless for perpetuating stereotypes, but it is important to establish a basic level of cultural understanding before attempting to delve into complex tribal characteristics.

The remedy to reverse stereotypical representations of Native Americans in animation is increased Indian agency in the media industry; but this is easier said than done. The conundrum surrounding Native Americans in popular media in the twenty-first century is that other minorities are also benefitting from a swell of multiculturalism in Hollywood. The success of television shows like *Blackish* and *Fresh Off the Boat*, and movies like *Hidden Figures*, demonstrates that white American audiences are willing to watch and spend money on multicultural entertainment. Yet, Native Americans are often left out of the equation.

In order to achieve increased agency, Native Americans must find a way to enter the mainstream media market. In February 2016, *Variety* reported that Castalia Communication planned to launch the first ever Native American network in the U.S.

called the All Nations Network.³⁵⁷ Over a year later, talk of the new network has vanished. This proposed channel's struggle to gain traction is both real and imagined. In reality, the small population of Native Americans in the U.S. compared to other minorities, and their higher levels of poverty make them undesirable consumers for network television. Kelly Faircloth, a columnist for the online magazine *Jezebel*, summed up the primary roadblock saying: "It's unfortunately all-too-easy to see unimaginative execs and advertisers looking at Native American poverty rates and taking a pass."³⁵⁸ The imagined roadblock for the network comes from the perception of Native Americans cultivated in popular culture. When asked about the network's potential struggles, Cherokee filmmaker and actress Heather Rae stated: "The perception is that Native Indians are a vanishing and near-extinct part of the population".³⁵⁹ Of course, Indians are perceived as vanishing because of their lack of representation in media.

The hope for Indian agency in popular culture, including cartoons, is the proliferation of streaming video services on the internet. Since 2006, the Red Nation Television Network has provided Indian-focused streaming content on the internet.³⁶⁰ The channel offers all manners of programming including some crude animation, but it lacks the brand recognition and production quality to capture a wider audience and challenge the lack of Indian representations in mainstream media. Fortunately, streaming services

³⁵⁷ Brian Steinberg, "All Nations Network, a Cable Outlet for Native Peoples, Wants to Launch in U.S.," *Variety*, February 18, 2016, accessed October 31, 2017, <http://variety.com/2016/tv/news/all-nations-network-native-american-programming-aptn-1201709055/>.

³⁵⁸ Kelly Faircloth, "Canadians Want to Bring an 'All Nations Network' for Native Americans to the U.S.," *Jezebel*, February 18, 2016, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://jezebel.com/canadians-want-to-bring-an-all-nations-network-for-nati-1759867025>.

³⁵⁹ Lenika Cruz, "A TV Network for Native Americans," *The Atlantic*, February 19, 2016, accessed October 31, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/02/native-americans-television/463392/>.

³⁶⁰ "About," Red Nation TV, accessed October 31, 2017, <http://rednationtv.com/about/>.

like Netflix, which do have broad audiences, have made commitments to diversity in programming.³⁶¹ In addition to hosting Native American-centric films like *Reel Injun* (2009) and *Songs My Brother Taught* (2015), Netflix recently signed award-winning Navajo director Sydney Freeland to produce a Netflix Original film for the Sundance Film Festival.³⁶²

Currently, there are no notable Native American animation projects in production. This does not mean that there is no future for Indians in animation. Despite what modern popular culture perpetuates, Native Americans still exist and are a growing segment of the population. Though they may never rival the population numbers of other minorities, the availability of new mediums of expression coupled with a slowly increasing embracement of multiculturalism promises a future for Native Americans in popular culture. Walt Disney once said: "Cartoon animation offers a medium of storytelling and visual entertainment, which can bring pleasure and information to people of all ages everywhere in the world."³⁶³ The greatest advantage that Native Americans enjoy is their rich culture, full of interesting stories and characters that can be explored in animation. Twenty-first century Americans still want to play Indian, but they want to do so in a culturally sensitive manner. It is not impossible for cartoons to adapt to this. Increased Indian agency in the animation community can facilitate culturally sensitive portrayals that still embody the absurdity and humor associated with cartoons.

³⁶¹ Pilot Viruet, "Why Netflix Has Decided to Make Diversity a Top Priority," *Vice*, February 24, 2017, accessed October 31, 2017, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/z4gmw5/why-netflix-has-decided-to-make-diversity-a-top-priority.

³⁶² Ryan Winn, "Five Native Films You Should Be Streaming in 2017," *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education*, January 02, 2017, accessed October 31, 2017, <http://www.tribalcollegejournal.org/five-native-films-streaming-2017/>.

³⁶³ Dave Smith, *The Quotable Walt Disney: Compiled by Dave Smith* (New York: Disney Editions, 2001), electronic.

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