The Depiction of Indigenous Women in Crime Fiction Written by Non-Indigenous Authors

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Abstract

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From the early days of colonization, the use of stereotypes has negatively impacted Indigenous women. One mode of transmitting those stereotypes is through fiction. This thesis examines Indigenous female characters in contemporary crime fiction, written by non-Indigenous Canadian authors, for evidence of stereotype depiction. Two novels were selected for this study, *The Last Good Day* by Gail Bowen, and *Cold Mourning* by Brenda Chapman. The books were critically scanned using characterization analysis for evidence the Indigenous female characters were depicted as stereotypical Indian Princess or squaw. Results indicated the characters did possess some traits associated with the stereotypes, but overall, the characters reflected a realistic depiction of Indigenous women. The characters are authentic, relatable Indigenous women in the two books discussed, and are examples of how characters who are Indigenous can be respectfully depicted in Canadian crime fiction.

Keywords: Indigenous women, stereotypes, Indigeneity, Indian Princess, squaw, colonization, relationships, crime fiction, mystery fiction

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Introduction

"The book to read is not the one that thinks for you but the one that makes you think."
Harper Lee

The foundation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships is precarious and unsolidified. From first contact, Francis (1992) professes, the relationship was precarious due to its origins being driven by errors. Francis (1992) alludes to Columbus' geographical blunder when he thought he landed in the East Indies, and thus called the Indigenous inhabitants who greeted him on the shore, Indians. Hence, the first stereotype, Indians. A construct created from the imaginations of the non-Indigenous colonizers. And so, it began.

While the blunders of the past created Indigenous stereotypes, those stereotypes have been weaponized by colonizers for over five hundred years. Good (2023) suggests the stereotypes are part of the colonization process creating a sense of "othering" (p. 151) between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Good (2023) proposes the stereotypes are passed on from generation to generation in non-Indigenous families, to the point in which the lines between fact and fiction blur and the origins of the beliefs, are unknown. Stereotypes may be just words, but as Justice (2018) suggests they: "seep into our bones and eats away at our spirits"(p. 3). Traditional knowledge tells us that what affects one generation, affects and infects seven, making the damage caused by stereotypes intergenerational. Challenging and disarming those

stereotypes is a step towards reconciliation, and one avenue in which to do that is by identifying the presence of stereotypes in literature.

Over time stereotypes have become embedded in stories and literature, giving the slurs initiated by the colonizers power to influence many people, and distorting fiction as facts. Justice (2018) concludes that stories written by non-Indigenous authors can be toxic, and the stereotypes create a tremendous obstacle for Indigenous people to overcome, as all are judged through the same misconceptions. Good (2023) provides an example of a stereotype in Kinsella's book *Dance Me Outside* in which the medicine person in the community is portrayed as a woman fond of the drink. Kinsella is a well-known Canadian author, and his portrayal of a medicine person as a drunk perpetuates negative stereotypes. Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe (2016) published, *Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws,* that examines the Indian Princess and easy squaw stereotypes in two short stories written by well-known Canadian non-Indigenous authors, Margaret Laurence and William Patrick Kinsella. Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe concluded that the short stories "The Loons", and "Linda Star", were built on negative stereotypes of the Indigenous female characters. The research also illustrates how stereotypes within literature, become fluid channels of misinformation, capable of creating harmful attitudes towards Indigenous women when readers interpret stereotypes as reality.

My study stems from the work conducted by Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe (2016). Using a similar methodology as Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe, I selected two contemporary crime fiction novels, written by non-Indigenous Canadian authors, and

critically reviewed the books to determine if the Indigenous female characters are stereotypical depictions. I also elected to use the same two stereotypes that Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe used for her research: Indian Princess and squaw. My research plan differed from Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe's in two main ways. First, I am approaching my research from a writer's perspective. I have a sound knowledge of fiction in general, crime fiction specifically, because I am a writer of crime fiction. The other difference is my mindset going into the research, and the outcome I hope to achieve. I would like to see more Indigenous characters in Canadian fiction, written by authors from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. I believe the key to doing so successfully is through education, respect, and integrity. I am not suggesting that non-Indigenous authors appropriate Indigenous stories. I am suggesting that non-Indigenous authors incorporate characters who are lawyers, police officers, pilots, athletes, or professors, into their stories who are also Indigenous.

Why crime fiction? There are three reasons why crime fiction, also known as mystery fiction, is my genre of choice. Firstly, I am an avid reader. I love books, especially mystery fiction. Books are gateways into new worlds, different experiences, and a relatively inexpensive form of escapism. A good mystery keeps me guessing, but must provide enough clues to solve the puzzle. The ultimate mystery fiction disappointment occurs when the author fails to provide enough evidence for a solution to be reached. For that, the author will never be forgiven. Secondly, crime fiction is hugely popular, with almost forty percent of Canadian readers favoring mysteries as their fiction read of choice (Leonhardt, 2023). With such a substantial readership, it is important to

investigate what those readers are exposed to in terms of the characterization of Indigenous women. Finally, the third reason I have selected the crime fiction genre; I am a writer, and mysteries are my genre of choice to pen. I understand the genre, and what defines compelling prose. This solid grounding in the writing of the genre, the love of reading the genre, and its national popularity, are the three reasons I chose crime fiction to explore in this study.

The planning process for this study started off seamlessly. After reading Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe's research, I was set on my plan. The shock occurred when I initiated the search for crime fiction novels that fit my proposed criteria. My criteria being crime fiction novels with Indigenous female leads, written by non-Indigenous authors. The selection was abysmal. I already had one selection in mind, *The Last Good Day* by Gail Bowen. I was familiar with Bowen's work, having read all her offerings to date in the Joanne Kilbourn series. I expected to have several novels to choose from, and initially feared that selecting a novel would be a huge undertaking. I was wrong. There was one other author to which I am familiar, William Kent Krueger. However, he is not Canadian, nor does he write about Canada. Even though he writes Indigenous characters into his crime fiction, he was outside my geographical profile, and therefore, reluctantly, I needed to move on and continue my quest. I approached librarians, book sellers, websites (including the Crime Writers of Canada site), and every other venue I could think of to find crime fiction with Indigenous female characters, written by non-Indigenous Canadian authors. I was sent on several leads by friends, family, and random people, I would meet in bookstores and libraries, who had the very best intentions, but

failed to understand my research needs. I must say, I was getting stressed over the situation. Finally, during a late-night internet search I came across an article on an Ottawa writer named Brenda Chapman. She was new to me. After exploring her books, I felt a glimmer of hope. I ordered Chapman's *Cold Mourning*, the first in the Stonechild Rouleau series. After reading the book, I that *Cold Mourning* fit into the established criteria for analysis. My research had its two novels.

The book selection method is not the most academic, and is one limitation of my study. I would have preferred several books from which to randomly choose my two novels. Perhaps I would have chosen a random method of selection such as tossing the books up a flight of stairs, and the two that travelled the farthest would win the opportunity to be in my study. Another limitation of my study is subjectivity. I selected the definition of Indian Princess and squaw to be discussed. I also selected the scenes in the books to support or refute the stereotypes. Even though I made every effort to be neutral, my own biases may be reflected in the study. The final limitation to the study is my enjoyment of the books, and my respect for the authors. I genuinely enjoyed the books. They are both good reads, with strong characters, interesting storylines, and sound plots. I also believe the writers, Gail Bowen and Brenda Chapman, are ethical, intelligent writers who have created authentic Indigenous female characters to tell a story. Perhaps, just perhaps, I might be a little biased, but I am aware of the study's limitations.

After several hours of researching, reading, thinking, and writing, I developed my research proposal and started the background research. I determined that there were

three main topics that required a place in the final draft to provide a strong background for my study: the Indigenous women – non-Indigenous colonizer relationship, history of stereotypes, and a brief synopsis of the history of crime fiction in Canada. With the background (or if this were a crime fiction novel, backstory) complete, I moved on to the analysis of the two novels, *The Last Good Day*, and *Cold Mourning*. I read the books, twice, once for fun, and the second time to mark scenes that I thought might be pertinent to the analysis. This section was so interesting to write. Difficult, but interesting. Halfway through the construction of the section, I realized that I was missing a piece. I needed to ground the characters in their Indigeneity. Without the grounding, analysis of stereotypes seemed vague and lacked depth. So, I created another section called the Indigeneity of Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild. With hours of researching, reading, thinking, and writing, complete I revisited the original research question, tweaked it a little to be more precise, and settled on: Are Indigenous female characters in contemporary crime fiction, written by non-Indigenous authors, depicted as stereotypical Indigenous female characters?

The study is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1, Indigenous Women and the Non-Indigenous Relationship, provides a brief history of the effects colonization has had on Indigenous women. Chapter 2 includes a definition, purpose, and effects of stereotypes on the Indigenous female population of Turtle Island. Chapter 3 offers an introduction to the crime fiction genre followed by a brief overview of crime fiction in Canada. Chapter 4 is an introduction to Indigenous characters in fiction. Chapter 5 is the heart of the study, and begins with an introduction to the authors and the books,

followed by a discussion of the two Indigenous characters, Lily and Kala's connection to their Indigeneity, and how other characters respond to their Indigeneity. The main section of chapter five, is the discussion of evidence supporting or refuting the suggestion Lily and Kala are depicted as Indian Princess or squaw stereotypes. The sixth and final chapter is the conclusion where I underscore the significant elements of my research, state the value of the research, and identify future research opportunities.

Positionality

It is important that I share a little about who I am and what I bring to this research. I am of Anishinaabe and Irish descent. I am from the Bear Clan. My community is Nipissing First Nation, but my home is in Curve Lake First Nation where I have lived for over twenty-five years with my husband, David, Turtle Clan. On my Irish side, my grandmother immigrated to Canada from the Belfast area of Ireland. I have the Anishinaabe sense of humour from my father, and the Irish stubbornness from my mother. My dad gave up his Indigenous status when he married my mom and moved off the reserve. At the time, that what was one had to do to build a life outside of the prescribed reserve borders. My siblings and I were born without status but were refranchised in the 1980s. Does it make me angry that I had to go through the process of acquiring status when I should have been born with it? No. For me, anger has no purpose; however, no anger does not mean it is forgotten.

My life experiences to date have shaped my thought process, broadened my knowledge base, and created my perspective on my research topics: Indigenous women

and fiction. The interest in issues facing Indigenous women comes from life lessons as well as lessons learned while obtaining my B.A. in Native Studies. My interest also comes from my work at a non-profit agency that supported Indigenous women who were, are, or at risk of being abused. So, basically the services were provided to all Indigenous women. The interest in fiction has been ever present. I cannot remember a time in my life when I have not had a book on my night stand. Writing fiction is also a passion. I am a published writer, with a novel in the works…a mystery, of course.

In keeping with the spirit of this research, I have elected to use a slightly informal, storytelling approach to the writing of my paper. Indigenous author, Drew Haydon Taylor (2024) calls himself a contemporary storyteller, noting that traditionally the sharing of information was achieved orally, and passed on from generation to generation through stories. Taylor (2024) brings that tradition forward through novels, plays, essays, and short stories. I did not realize that I was doing the same thing until I heard him speak at a book launch for his new novel, *Cold.* It was always my objective to write this paper as a story, sharing historical details of the Indigenous women's relationship with the colonizers, crime fiction writing culture, and how the two connect in this research. I understand and appreciate that my methods might not represent the academic rigors traditionally used in a graduate thesis. However, by taking this approach I am attempting to incorporate traditional oral storytelling, complete with the occasional insertion of humour, into a written academic paper. Taylor (2024) is a humorist, and states that it is through humour that we heal the body, mind, and spirit.

Methodology

The foundation

To effectively discuss Indigenous female characters in crime fiction, it was imperative to examine the historical context of the two main topics; Indigenous women's relationship with the settlers, and crime fiction in Canada. The topics provide the foundation for the discussion of Indigenous female characters in Bowen's *The Last Good Day*, and Chapman's *Cold Mourning*. The search for sources relating to Indigenous women was primarily an academic undertaking. I accessed sources from Trent library and Google Scholar using the key words: Indigenous women in Canada, Indigenous women, Indigenous settler relations, Indigenous women and stereotypes, and stereotypes of Indigenous women in Canada. The key words led to resources, and the references in those books and articles led me to further sources. The process to secure resources for information on crime fiction in Canada was also primarily through Trent library and Google Scholar using the key words: crime fiction in Canada, mystery fiction in Canada, and authors of crime fiction in Canada. I used various website sources related to writing fiction such as a site hosted by the Crime Writers of Canada. I also explored other sources to support my research such as YouTube, newspapers, blogs, and government websites.

The challenge with researching and writing the foundational piece for my thesis was maintaining a balance between including sufficient and focused content, and veering off topic into peripheral tangents. Either the Indigenous women and settler

relationship section, or the chapter on crime fiction in Canada could easily be stand-alone topics for in-depth further research.

Novel Selection

While drafting the proposal for this research I spent a great deal of time determining the criteria to use for selecting the two novels to analyze. I settled on the following criteria:

1. Two novels within the crime or mystery fiction genre.
2. Novels written by non-Indigenous Canadian writers.
3. Novels that contained a female Indigenous lead character.
4. The geographical focus is the Canadian eastern or central woodlands, eliminating the west coast and the far north.

Initially I determined that I would secure six to eight novels and randomly select two for my study. I did not anticipate the search for novels that fit the above criteria to be a tedious, stressful endeavor. I began my search for novels that fit my criteria through an Internet search using key words and phrases such as: Indigenous characters in Canadian crime fiction, crime fiction containing Indigenous characters, Crime fiction writers, and fictitious Indigenous characters. I tried several ways to configure the key words, but an online search did not aid in finding novels fitting my research criteria. Next, I elected to tap into experts in the field of fiction and consulted with local libraries, and bookstores, asking personnel if they were aware of novels that fit my criteria. The

queries were unsuccessful as I was not able to locate novels fitting my criteria through a search in libraries or bookstores. Clearly six to eight novels and a random selection was not going to be an option.

Since a random selection of novels to critically analyze was abandoned, I was questioning whether securing two books for the study was possible, or if a shift in research was required. I was aware of author Gail Bowen from Saskatchewan. I knew that Bowen had written at least one book in her Joanne Kilbourn mystery series that fit my criteria. I carefully reviewed books written by Bowen, and selected *The Last Good Day*, because it fit my criteria for selection.

I continued random Internet searches and finally found a phrase, crime fiction writers in Ontario with Indigenous characters, that produced a news story about a writer in Ottawa that has had success with her seven-book series about an Indigenous female detective and her French-Canadian supervisor. The series was called Stonechild Rouleau mystery series, and the writer was Brenda Chapman. Further Internet searches into Brenda Chapman indicated that she had written several murder mysteries but the series that was of interest to me was the Stonechild Rouleau mysteries. I ordered the first in the series, read it, and immediately knew that I had found a novelist and character that fit my criteria. I ordered the other six books in the series and read them as well. I chose the first book in the series, *Cold Mourning* because it introduced Indigenous female character, Kala Stonechild, in a manner that assumes the reader knows nothing about the character. *Cold Mourning* also provided an extensive backstory into Kala's childhood;

details required for the characterization analysis of the novel. Finally, I had two novels to feature in my research.

Analysis

The analysis of the novels, *The Last Good Day*, and *Cold Mourning* was a much larger undertaking than one might imagine. First the books were read to obtain a general sense of the story, plot, and author style. At the conclusion of the first reading, I documented general details such as point of view, setting, and novel synopsis. The books were read a second time. During this reading I was focused on elements of characterization analysis and flagged all pages that contained scenes relevant to the Indigenous female characters, Lily and Kala. Once the pages were flagged, I documented details from the scenes organizing the information into characterization categories.

To ensure a reliable deep dive into the two female Indigenous characters in the two selected novels I elected to use characterization analysis, a method that focuses on the depiction of a character. Characterization analysis critically examines what the character says, does, and thinks, their physical appearance, their motivation, and what other characters say or think about them (LitCharts, 2024). This form of analysis breaks down the elements of a character in a manner that easily identifies the presence, or lack of evidence, of stereotypical Indian Princess and squaw depictions. Every scene in which Lily or Kala was present, or discussed, or thought of by other characters, was reviewed against the definitions of Indian Princess and squaw. The result was a critical analysis of

Indigenous female characters Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild as the Indian Princess or squaw stereotypes.

Limitations

There is a limitation to my study's methodology. In a perfect world the selection would have been random from a pool of several book options; however, that did not happen. I managed to salvage the research with critical analysis of two novels that fit my criteria. Perhaps I could have broadened the geographical scope to include the United States and reframed the criteria to books containing Indigenous female lead characters written by authors of Turtle Island. Since the United States and Canada border is a creation of colonization, reframing the criteria might have been acceptable. However, I wanted to focus on Canadian writers, and the fact that it was so difficult to find two novels to study suggests that the Canadian writing industry needs this type of research.

Even though the research methodology is limited due to lack of diversity in novel selection, I am convinced it has academic merit and provides viable opportunities for further research.

Chapter 1

The First Nations Women and Non-Indigenous Colonizer Relationship

"Generation upon generation of non-Indigenous Canadians have been weaned on racism and bigotry and, rather that nurturing acceptance and respect, a bedrock of centuries-old disgust and disregard informs the social conception and treatment of Indigenous women in Canada. Indigenous women are disposable, objects to be used and discarded. Indigenous women are less than human and can be treated as such."
Good, 2023, p. 74

An examination of colonial history indicates a complicated and unbalanced relationship between the First Nations of Turtle Island and the settlers. Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe (2016) asserts that Indigenous women were controlled throughout their entire lives by policies, laws, actions, and cultural attitudes initiated by the colonial male suppressors. Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe further concludes that there is a connection between a society's literature and colonization, and that the evidence is in how the society depicts themselves in their writing, and those they oppressed (2016). A responsible discussion of the First Nations women and settler relationship, from early contact will denote how the settlers viewed Indigenous women providing background for my research into contemporary fiction. More specifically, background for my research question: are Indigenous female characters in contemporary crime fiction, written by non-Indigenous authors depicted as stereotypical Indigenous women? This chapter of the thesis looks at the impact of the First Nations women and non-Indigenous settler relationship. The concept of looking at relationships is based on the work of Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2020). Wilson's research on relationality and relationships suggests the Indigenous view of self is based on one's role as mother, brother, auntie,

teacher, wisdom-keeper, and so on (2020). In other words, rather than seeing himself as Shawn Wilson first, he achieves his identity through his community and what or how he contributes to it (Wilson, 2020 & Wilson, 2008). This chapter will begin with a discussion of early contact between Indigenous women and settlers, and move through time, touching on settler-initiated actions resulting in the disruption of Indigenous women's roles and relationships.

The initial contact between First Nations societies and early Europeans was a meeting laced with compassion and respect. Odawa/Ojibway elder Edna Manitowabi (2021) asserts that the First Nations peoples treated the Europeans like brothers: "When Europeans came, we treated them with kindness and honesty, and we agreed to share. We helped them and cared for them. We had compassion" (19:48). According to Shoemaker (1995), even though there are few historical accounts, most research indicates that First Nations women were respected and held positions of power in their communities prior to European contact. Colonization, and more specifically the relationship between the First Nations women and settlers altered women's roles in their communities, families, and most important; how they viewed themselves.

All First Nations people experience racism, but life is tougher for First Nations women because they experience sexism as well (LaRocque in Miller & Chuchryk, 1996). Van Kirk (1980) suggests that it is essential to look at the history of First Nations women from a gender perspective simply because experiences were different for the women than First Nations men. The introduction of the European hierarchical system to First Nations' social and cultural structures compromised the gender roles within the family

and communities (Van Kirk, 1980). Where the First Nations gender balance was built on respect and common good, the settlers asserted male dominance supported by hundreds of years of influence obtained through legal channels created by men: "The British common law developed through the legal traditions of the Romans, the Normans, church canon law, and Anglo-Saxon law" (Boyer, 2009, p.72). Men manipulated the European system. Women were controlled by their fathers until marriage at which time control switched to their husbands, and women had no legal rights. This is the system that the Europeans brought with them to Turtle Island. Many First Nations societies prior to contact were matriarchal, or, if not, at the very least valued women in the community. This system was not supported by the Europeans who supported a male-centric settlement on Turtle Island.

> "Indigenous communities were either matriarchal or matrilineal and, at the time when the Europeans came over, European women weren't even considered human beings: they were the property of the men. The men could beat them or rape them, and they had no say about it. So, these European women were looking at Indigenous women and wanted some of their power, wanted that voice, that sense of equality within their relationships and so the European men began to teach our men how to get their women 'under control'. How to make their women not so vocal." J. Dallaire, personal communication, March 20, 2017, as cited in Baskin, 2020, p. 2087.

Along with a difference in social and familial structure, the European settlers had a different view of the division of labour. Settlers were accustomed to a hierarchical system that identified men's work as more important than women's work (Anderson, 2000, Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009). Prior to contact, First Nations women tended the gardens and nurtured their relationship with the earth. The European settler system

assumed male dominance which included male ownership of land and property. In addition, the missionaries disrupted roles further as they taught First Nations men to farm the European way, thus separating women from their roles as tenders of things that grow. According to Métis scholar Kim Anderson (2000), this altered the balance in the marriage relationship, and the women's relationship to Mother Earth. The connection that women had to creating life changed as well. Yes, she could still produce life from her body but the ability to produce life from the soil was altered (Anderson, 2000) causing further disruption in the relationships First Nations women had with their partners, family, and Mother Earth. The disruption, also extended into the position First Nations women procured in the economic system communities effectively developed over generations.

Prior to European contact, First Nations women played a major role in the economy, specifically, trade. She was responsible for the production and distribution of food, and goods; and, she was responsible for deciding which goods were surplus and available for trading (Anderson, 2000). Colonization introduced a different economic system. Europeans saw food as property and therefore were surprised that First Nations women, and not the men, controlled the resource (Anderson, 2000). Anderson (2000) writes that European men were astounded at the level of power Native women wielded within society, and figured out quickly that to achieve their colonization goals, Native women needed to be suppressed. For example, Boyer (2009) advises that European fur traders refused to barter with First Nations women, because they were women. A woman with furs to trade required a male relative to perform the transaction on her

behalf. As Anderson (2000) posits, the new economic system severely disrupted the role of First Nations women in society and altered her relationship with First Nations men, "The split between public and private labour and the introduction of the moneyed economies were devastating to the traditional economic authority of Native women" (Anderson, 2000, p. 62).

Public labour was a foreign concept to First Nation women, but as money became more of a requirement for survival, they adopted avenues to acquire income. One of the ways they expressed themselves in the public economy was through prostitution (Boyer, 2009). Perhaps the stereotype of promiscuous First Nations women that circulated in Europe had an element of truth to it. Or, perhaps it is because of the myth, First Nations women were lured into prostitution. It is unclear which event occurred first but Boyer (2009) states that First Nations women prostitutes were considered a "social evil and a racial problem" (p. 77). It was deemed as such because of the interracial aspect. Settler leaders were not accepting of the superior race mingling with the lessor one. Missionaries and Indian Agents viewed First Nation prostitutes as their personal battle with evil and worked extremely hard to prevent prostitution and preserve the white bloodline (Boyer, 2009). In response to the condemnation by colonial male leaders on Turtle Island, Statutes, laws, and amendments were issued to deal with the prostitution problem. Between 1879 and 1892 there were several changes and amendments in the *Indian Act* relating to prostitution (Boyer, 2009). Through the *Indian Act*, First Nations women lost the right to decide what she could do with her own body.

In 1892 prostitution was removed from the *Indian Act* and written into the *Criminal Code of Canada* (Boyer, 2009).

Whether it is racism or sexism or something else that I cannot perceive, First Nations women's involvement in prostitution is a product of colonization. Allen (1986) states that traditionally Indigenous women develop their identity through their nation, community, and family. This interpretation of identity is different from women in western culture in which women's identity is of a sexual nature (Allen, 1986). It is obvious that these differences are destined to create a clash from the beginning of the Native women non-Native settler relationship. Objectifying Native women as sexual objects has been a settler practice for years. Good (2023) describes the practice of "sex for food" in which DIA employees would use the desperation of her family to convince Native women to trade food for sex. It was also reported that young Native girls were being sold to non-Indigenous men for a mere ten dollars (Good, 2023). Human trafficking in this country is not a new concept. It has been a practiced for well over a century initiated by the colonizers.

In addition to adjusting and adapting to their relationship with the non-Indigenous settler, First Nations women had to survive foreign social constructs as well as policies and laws implemented by a system not her own. There are three aspects of the colonization process I will briefly discuss as impactful to the lives of First Nations women: the fur trade, *Indian Act*, and residential schools. Each of these can and have been studied at length with a tremendous body of evidence indicating the harm and disruption caused to First Nations women on a multi-generational level. I am merely

offering a glance at each topic to enhance the background of my research and to provide a historical base for later discussions on stereotypes.

One of the earliest relationships between First Nations women and the Europeans was through the fur trade. During the fur trade, Scottish and French men, and First Nations women started families together. Boyer, (2009) contends these marriages initiated the myths that surfaced in Europe that depicted First Nations women as more promiscuous than European women. These marriages were often long-term unions that created families and communities; not mere sexual encounters (Van Kirk, 1980). First Nations women and non-Native men marriages were mutually beneficial to the success of the fur trade. Van Kirk (1980) recognizes the benefits to the First Nations women from a materialistic perspective. First Nations women appreciated the tools from Europe that made life easier such as knives, pans, and wool cloth. European fur trade men also brought with them chivalrous notions that women were a weaker lot and required protection due to their fragility. The men were quite appalled by the amount of work and drudgery faced by First Nations women such as carrying supplies during a camp move and fetching animals harvested by the Native men of the community (Van Kirk, 1980). The men benefitted from the First Nations women's knowledge of the language and basic survival techniques. Shoemaker (1995) acknowledges that Native women played a major role in the success of the fur trade. "Women processed hides, manufactured and sold pemmican (buffalo and berry jerky), and through alliances with French and British traders became the bilingual, bicultural intermediaries between Indians and Europeans" (p. 11).

As the fur trade progressed and the European influence increased, the First Nations women and non-Native fur traders' relationship changed. Fur traders were no longer seeking marriages with First Nations women. Perhaps the fur traders no longer required the First Nation women as language translators or as educators in wilderness survival. Shoemaker, (1995) attributed the change to "gender and racial ideologies" (p. 11). The European influence strongly discouraged marital unions with First Nations women, and encouraged the men to seek white women as marriage partners. Like European marriages of the time, wives were to provide arm candy rather that work partners. As the more fragile gender, fur traders should not expect their wives to contribute to the "fur trade economy" (Shoemaker, 1995, p. 11). So, the fur trade economy became male domain. The First Nations women were ousted as marriage partner material, and were forced to adapt once again to their roles changing due to influences not of their choosing.

Along with the European social influence, the missionaries also contributed to the decline in the role of First Nations women in the fur trade. Racially motivated, the missionaries determined mixed marriages were a sin, and such unions were detrimental to non-Native social standards (Van Kirk, 1980). This decree by the missionaries considerably altered the relationship between First Nations women and the fur traders. The women were no longer considered marriage material and potential life partners, but rather casual sex objects. The missionary agenda was supported through the First Nations women being labeled promiscuous by the non-Indigenous settlers, politicians, and law makers, and supported through gossip.

The missionaries viewed the First Nations women as inferior. Their gender systems stemmed from Christianity which viewed men as authority figures and women as submissive pawns (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009). The missionaries brought with them to Turtle Island, the Bible, as their guide to leading the good life. The Bible suggested women were not equal to, but rather, secondary to men, “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (King James Bible, 1970, I Timothy, 2:12). The disruption in the relationships between First Nation women and their partners, and family, continued with her status being diminished through European influence.

First Nations women were losing their position and authority through the introduction of European political and legal structures as well as social decree directed by the missionaries. For example; preceding the *Indian Act* in 1876 was the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* in 1869. The name of the act itself clearly indicated the intent.

> “Provided always that any Indian woman marrying any other that an Indian, shall cease to be an Indian within the meaning of this Act, nor shall the children issue of such marriage be considered as Indians within the meaning of this Act; Provided also, that any Indian woman marrying an Indian of any other tribe, band or body shall cease to be a member of the tribe, band or body to which she formerly belonged, and become a member of the tribe, band or body of which her husband is a member, and the children, issue of this marriage, shall belong to their father’s tribe only.” *An Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians, 1869* as cited in Joseph, 2018.

This act stated a Native woman and non-Native man marriage would result in the woman losing her status. A Native woman marrying a Native man from a band other than her home territory would result in the woman losing rights within her home territory (Anderson, 2000). The *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* totally ignored the

matrilineal system that governed many First Nations, severely diminished First Nations women's right to choose a life partner without dire consequences, and altered the gender balance within families and communities because women were not treated the same as men.

The *Indian Act* further diminished the gender balance by documenting fewer rights to First Nations women than First Nations men. For example, First Nations women were not allowed to hold political office or even speak at public meetings. Nor were they allowed to vote on issues pertaining to their home territory (Anderson, 2000). In addition, First Nations women were defined through the men. This very action removed women from the central role in society. The *Act* stated, upon marriage to a non-Indigenous man, a First Nation's woman would lose her status. However, the same did not apply to a First Nation's man marrying a white woman (Joseph, 2018). Derived from a male dominated hierarchical notion of lineage, the "*Indian Act* disrespected, ignored, and undermined the role of women in many ways" (Joseph, 2018, p.20). As Anderson (2000) accentuates, the patriarchal system supported by the *Indian Act* diminished the women's relationality and hence, identity, "Whatever the intent, the patriarchal provisions of the *Indian Act* removed Native women from their roles as decision makers and teachers and robbed them of their voice in community affairs" (p. 70).

So much more could be discussed about the effects of the *Indian Act* on First Nations women. To touch briefly on the some of the most significant points will have to suffice. The most important issue to acknowledge is legislation influenced by European

culture diminished the relationships First Nations women had with their partners, family, and communities and thus initiated a loss of identity on Turtle Island.

In addition to the *Indian Act*, residential schools had a horrific impact on First Nations women. This paper cannot address the issues of residential schools at length, but will briefly identify issues pertaining to First Nations women.

Residential schools had a specific purpose: to train children in the image of the colonizers. Milloy (1999) proposes that officials believed removing children from their families was the most efficient means of assimilation, "To achieve this transformation, the Department considered it necessary not only to remove children from parents and community and place them in the guardianship of the Department and the churches, but also to maintain that separation for as long as possible" (p. 30). The schools separated women from their children. The relationship between First Nations women and their children was severed and therefore that part of her identity was eliminated. Parenting skills were lost and the children lost the ability to function within a family (Boyer, 2009). Children grew up and became parents; because they did not experience effective parenting, were not able to parent their children. First Nations women lost their children, children lost their childhood, and women lost their parenting skills. In essence, generational female relationships were demolished.

This section of my paper discusses the relationship between First Nations women and settlers on Turtle Island. There are two main points that relate directly to my research question: are Indigenous female characters in contemporary crime fiction,

written by non-Indigenous authors, depicted as stereotypical Indigenous women? The first point is how the roles of Indigenous women were influenced and changed by the settlers, through policies, laws, actions, and cultural attitudes. If Wilson's (2020) concept of identity through relationships is applied, traditionally, women's roles were identified through relationships with their partner, family, and community. Initially, relationships with the non-Indigenous men were positive; the women were partners, teachers, wives, mothers, wisdom-keepers, and equals. Over time the relationships changed, as reflected by the labels non-Indigenous settlers placed on First Nations women. This brings me to my second point; how the women were viewed and treated changed from teachers, wisdom-keepers and equals to sexual objects, burdens, trouble-makers, thieves, beggars and prostitutes. Slurs such as lazy squaw, and slut, replaced terms of respect one shares with an equal. The change in cultural attitudes has a long-lasting impact as the labels are still in use today, as tools of oppression, by the dominant settler society. The change in cultural attitudes supported the use of stereotypes as a tool for oppression. A tool that can be used many ways, including the depiction of Indigenous women in fiction. Both points noted contribute to the stereotypes employed by non-Indigenous settlers on First Nations women, and will be discussed in the next section.

Chapter 2

Stereotypes

"Drunken squaw.

Dirty Indian.

Easy.

Lazy.

Every Canadian knows these words to commonly describe and identify Aboriginal women. Many Canadians are fooled by this construction of Native womanhood"
Anderson, 2000, p. 99

Name calling has been used by the non-Indigenous society as a weapon for centuries. Indigenous scholar Anderson (2000) speculates that every Indigenous girl has been called squaw before they are old enough to understand the meaning of the word. Ojibway elder Shirley Williams states that she remembers as a young girl, hearing white boys yelling rhymes at her that contained the slur squaw, and further lines suggesting she was promiscuous (Williams as cited in Anderson, 2000). Indigenous girls grow into Indigenous women who, like generations of women before them, have been exposed to name calling, negative gestures, or slurs, for most of their lives. Cree writer Michelle Good (2023) tells the story of how her mother refused to eat spoiled food while at residential school, and because of her willfulness, the principal called her an Indian slut. Good's mother was eleven years old at the time (Good, 2023). This negative exposure becomes imbedded into a woman's spirit, eats away at her soul, and contributes to a negative self-image. LaRocque (as cited in Miller & Chuchryk, 1996) emphasizes the

dehumanizing impact negative stereotypes have had on Indigenous women and girls, and combating the harm is another multi-generational challenge to overcome. This section of my research will discuss the definition, affects, origin, purpose, and consequences of stereotypes on Indigenous women.

Stereotyping a group of people suggests all in the group share certain qualities and is usually based on racist, or sexist, ideals that perpetuate fear and hatred (Literary Terms, 2015). To categorize a segment of a population is offensive, causes division, and a state of othering, (Bourassa et al., 2005) harmful to the group subjected to being labelled. Within the Indigenous community, stereotyping has been a part of life for generations and has caused tremendous harm and loss of identity. “For Indigenous people, it [stereotyping] diminishes self-esteem and cultural pride, and for the non-Indigenous, it dehumanizes and enhances negative perceptions of Indigenous people and their culture” (Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., 2015). With self-esteem and cultural pride depleted, identity, which is formed through family and community is also affected (Facing History & Ourselves, 2019). There are positive and negative stereotypes. Some examples of positive stereotypes include: highly spiritual, protectors of nature, brave, and traditional. Negative stereotypes include alcoholics, lazy, red-skin, uneducated, ungrateful, and druggie (Facing History & Ourselves, 2019). Whether positive or negative, stereotypes create division in a population and provide justification for treating a group in a specific manner. For Indigenous women, the effects of stereotyping have been massively detrimental.

The origin of the negative Indigenous female image is complex, and according to Anderson, (2000) the construct was generated in the sixteenth century as a means of comparing the majestic beauty of Turtle Island to an Indian Queen. The matriarchal monarch, was a symbol, to which the European population could identify. She, meaning the land was powerful, dangerous, and resource rich. Green (2007) suggests that the female symbol of Turtle Island, and the Indigenous woman, was initially not a Queen, but more of a mother-Goddess image with a full-figure, nurturing but still possessing an element of danger, and a wealth of natural gifts. According to Green, (2007) the mother-Goddess image resembled a woman from a classical Renaissance painting. However, to justify their claim to the land, the Europeans needed to view the land, and the Native women, as a lesser power. The Indian Queen image eventually needed curtailing to avoid any confusion with the European monarchy system and possible anti-monarchy sentiment (Anderson, 2000). Similarly, the mother-Goddess symbol required a decrease in stature to ensure public support for colonization. To secure European settlers to Turtle Island, a less threatening, softer, and gentler symbol needed to replace the Queen or mother-Goddess image. A lessor monarch symbol was constructed: the Indian Princess (Anderson, 2000).

The Indian Princess construct was an image of a young woman, a girl really; leaner and less threatening than her older image; a highly sexual being, ripe for the taking, with a virtuous persona that mirrored the natural resource wealth of the land. This sexually charged image started the legacy of the negative female Indigenous stereotype that has continued through centuries (Anderson, 2000; Green, 2007). The

Indian Princess represented not only the land, but the young Native woman as well. She became the fairy tale. Anderson (2000) maintains that the Indian Princess archetype has been used multiple times with the most well-known being Pocahontas. As Anderson points out, Pocahontas is the prime example of the good Indigenous woman envisioned by non-Indigenous men. She is strong, pretty, young, and vulnerable that edges towards naïve, virginal, and erotic. Good (2023) emphasizes that the story of Pocahontas has developed into a young-love romance. Pocahontas was a child of twelve when she met John Smith. Perhaps because the age of consent was 12 in England until 1875 (Dammery, 2016), a relationship between Pocahontas and John Smith was considered an acceptable match. She taught him her language, and assisted in land negotiations, and in turn he taught her English. Not only was Pocahontas sexually objectified in the popular rendition of her story, she was given the title of Indian Princess; a European designation (Good, 2023). However, not all Indigenous women fit into the Indian Princess image. And, what happened when the Native woman refused to bend to the will of the non-Indigenous colonizers? She was the striped of her Indian Princess title and unceremoniously labelled…the squaw, or as Green (2007) intimates, the anti-Pocahantas.

The stereotype “dirty, easy squaw” or “lazy squaw” was developed by the non-Indigenous colonizers to make it easier to treat Indigenous women like objects and lessor human beings (Anderson, 2000). Where the Indian Princess is lean and fit, the squaw is fat and lazy; the Indian Princess is capable and independent, the squaw relies on the non-Indigenous men for her livelihood (Green, 2007). Green (2007) suggests the Princess, like the squaw, is defined through her relationship with non-Indigenous men.

The Princess helps, even saves lives through her heroic actions. She is the "Good Indian". According to Green (2007) the princess may be the object of men's lust but she is above the role of sexual partner. The Princess, like the land, remains a symbol of virtue. If the Princess is not attainable, to whom does the non-Indigenous men turn to satisfy of their lust and desire? The squaw.

The stereotype provided a generic label representing Indigenous women and their living conditions. They, meaning Indigenous women, stood between the colonizers and their quest for the land and precious natural resources. By calling Indigenous women names and seeing her as uncivilized, primitive, and separate from them, the non-Indigenous colonizers were able to justify settling the land and removing resources (Anderson, 2000). The negative stereotypes fit perfectly into the colonizing scheme by providing an explanation to the public for the living conditions of the Indigenous people. Indigenous women were portrayed as lazy, dirty, and unable to adapt to a civilized way of life, or to even have the capacity to care for their children (Carter, 1997). Houses were reported to be dirty, and mismanaged, due to the lack of effort by the women. In actuality, the statements might have had some truth to them. The houses were little more than single room unventilated shacks with dirt floors. The tiny dwellings were often overcrowded, and became a haven for ill health (Carter, 1997). The condition of these shacks did not exactly inspire domestic fortitude. Carter (1997) writes of the lack of basic cleaning supplies, clothing, and household tools, documented by Indian agents and inspectors, however, there appears to be an absence of documentation that explains the role of the colonizers in the deplorable living conditions. The agents were quick to

point out the poor living conditions experienced by the Indigenous people but blamed the situation on the women.

The Indian Princess and squaw are examples of two stereotypes that have negatively impacted Indigenous women. The Indian Princess stereotype may sound innocent enough but the label maintains a level of sexuality attached to it; a virtuous quality. Non-Indigenous men might see a relationship with her, either for one night or longer, as a sort of rite of passage (Anderson, 2000). The Indian Princess is objectified, and as a symbol, her power as a woman diminishes negatively impacting her quality of life.

The squaw image is more forthcoming as a dangerous label in that it condones violence. Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe (2016) contends that it is not hard to establish a connection between the slur easy squaw and the alarming numbers of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. *The Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice* (2019) states that efforts are required to "break down the stereotypes that hypersexualize and demean Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people, and to end practices that perpetuate myths that Indigenous women are more sexually available and 'less worthy' than non-Indigenous women because of their race or background" (Calls for Justice, 6.1 iv.). While being interviewed by CBC about her experiences being called a squaw, Plains Cree, Lakota Sioux and Haudenosaunee Tala Tootoosis states: ""It becomes so much more ... of a slur, a hate crime in a word because that breaks you as a woman, to be referred to as that… There are people that sexualize

Indigenous women because that is a part of their lens" (Tootoosis as cited by Piapot, July 11, 2021). The breaking down of negative stereotypes requires effort on many levels, including the arts and more specifically, literature.

Over time stereotypes can become embedded in stories and literature. Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe (2016) challenges readers to look at how stereotypes in Canadian literature have shaped their views of Indigenous women. Can readers see the stereotypes for what they are – weaponized tools that perpetuate harmful cultural attitudes towards Indigenous women? Can readers see the stereotypes as fiction and not reality? The stereotypes have weaponized words such as squaw, slut, stupid, and lazy as tools to suppress, oppress, and disempower Indigenous women (Simpson, 2017) in stories and works of fiction. The words become even more powerful when as Justice (2018) proposes, the stereotypes are used for hundreds of years and "seeps into our bones and eats away at our spirits" (p. 3). Challenging and disarming those stereotypes within the literary canon is a modest, and yet impactful undertaking.

This section discussed the definition, affects, origin, and purpose of stereotypes and is significant to my research which focuses on the Indian Princess and squaw stereotypes in contemporary mystery fiction written by non-Indigenous authors. Two of the main takeaways from this section on stereotypes are: stereotypes were created with intent by the colonizers; and, stereotypes are harmful tools used to separate and objectify a specific population. The analysis section will discuss the characters Lily Falconer in *The Last Good Day*, and Kala Stonechild in *Cold Mourning*, at length applying

a working definition of the stereotypes to the characters to determine if they are depicted as stereotypical Indigenous women.

Chapter 3

Crime Fiction

"Let's get one thing clear right now, shall we? There is no Idea Dump, no Story Central, no Island of the Buried Bestsellers; good story ideas seem to come quite literally from nowhere, sailing at you right out of the empty sky: two previously unrelated ideas come together and make something new under the sun. Your job isn't to find these ideas but to recognize them when they show up"
King, S. 2000, p. 37

Author Stephen King makes writing good fiction sound so easy: take two unrelated ideas and put them together for the enjoyment of the reader. Anyone who has tried to write fiction, is aware that the blank white page can be a creative opportunity, or, a terrifying obstacle. For the author, writing fulfills a deep need to capture a story on paper before it vanishes and finds a new host. For the reader, fiction has multiple purposes: it provides the opportunity to experience a life different from their own, relive history, critically review specific events; and, of course entertain (Hulan, 2014). The relationship between the writer, and the reader, is powerful with both stakeholders sharing a responsibility to the story. Even though the reader in the writer/reader relationship holds tremendous importance, this chapter focuses on the writers of crime fiction.

Crime fiction is also known as detective fiction, or mystery fiction. Authors Gail Bowen and Brenda Chapman have written novels that fit my research criteria; crime fiction with Indigenous female lead characters, written by non-Indigenous authors. Bowen's *The Last Good Day*, fits into the crime fiction sub-genre amateur sleuth.

Chapman's *Cold Mourning* is an example of the police procedural sub-genre. Both sub-genres have a history within Canadian crime fiction. As well, Bowen and Chapman are Canadian women writers that contribute to the crime writing history of Canada that began in the mid-1800s. This chapter on the history of crime fiction provides a solid foundation for the discussion of Bowen's *The Last Good Day*, and Chapman's *Cold Mourning*.

To discuss crime fiction with any sense of credibility; a working definition of the genre must be established. The Crime Writers of Canada (CWC), (2014), has a suitable definition, and according to Thornton, is broad and flexible:

> "So, what is crime writing, according to the CWC? Their website states that it is a category that in broader terms includes any book-length work, novella or short-story that features crime or mystery as a central element. Which leaves a lot of room for maneuvering, as it goes on to say that this includes crime, detective, espionage, mystery, suspense, and thriller writing, as well as fictional or factual accounts of criminal doings and crime-themed literary works. Crossover novels and short stories such as romantic suspense and speculative thrillers are also considered part of the genre, as is SF and fantasy. It seems like the only category that is missing is political biographies, almost always criminal enough to qualify, but rarely entered for awards" Thornton, 2014, para. 16.

Now that a working definition is established, acknowledgement of the genre's humble beginnings is in order. The father of mystery, detective, or crime fiction is Edgar Allan Poe. In 1841, Poe introduced the world to protagonist Chevalier Dupin in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. Two other Poe novels followed; *The Mystery of Marie Roget* in 1842, and *The Purloined Letter* in 1844 (Sussex, 2010), and the genre was created.

Approximately 6000 English crime fiction novels were published between 1800 and 1900 with countless short stories during this time as well (Sussex, 2010). Because women were often writing under male pseudonyms, it is difficult to pinpoint the first female crime writer; but Sussex & Gibson (2023) credit England's Mary Braddon, with the unofficial title of first female writer of detective stories. In 1860 she published a novel entitled, *Three Times Dead,* later retitled, *The Trail of the Serpent*. Six years later, in 1866, American Metta Victoria Fuller Victor, writing under the pseudonym, Seeley Regester, published *The Dead Letter*. Canadian born, Australian citizen, Mary Fortune, also published in 1866 a novel called *Bertha's Legacy*, using the name, Waif Wander. She wrote between 1866 and a year before her death in 1909 and is best known for "The Detective's Album", the "longest-running early detective series" (Sussex, 2010, p. 3) in the world. These three women are detective fiction pioneers. They were writing detective fiction before it was called detective fiction, a genre name that was not coined until 1886 (Sussex, 2010).

Crime fiction is popular. Leonhardt (2023) from Happy Guy Marketing published survey results on his THGM blog in January 2023, stating of the 144 Canadian readers polled, 39% stated they read mysteries, leading in the fiction category, with science fiction and fantasy in a tie for second place with 37% (Leonhardt, 2023.). Crime fiction appeals to a mass audience, and Canadian crime fiction is no different. However, because of the diversity within the country, Canadian writers face the challenge of needing to appeal to a geographically and culturally expansive readership, while remaining true to the intent of their stories (Sloniowski & Rose, 2014).

Even though crime fiction is a popular genre, it is difficult for Canadian crime authors to make a living through their writing. The competition for the reader's dollar is fierce. Authors from other countries, such as the United States and Britian, are also competing for Canadian readership. Canadian authors, trying to break into the U.S. book sales market experience a complex process (Langer, 2014). Skene-Melvin (2014) professes that Canadian crime writers often create their stories in locales outside of Canada, or a generic type of place, simply to appeal to a more diverse readership. They do so not because they are without a sense of Canadianness, but out of necessity.

A writer writes because they have a story to tell in the hopes that someone wants to read it. An attempt at a broader appeal increases the chances that someone will read their story. Reader appeal is also achieved through thematic choices. Sloniowski and Rose (2014) identified some of the major themes in crime fiction by Canadian authors: healthcare, immigration, Indigenous issues, marginalized groups, and, "peace, order, and good government" (p. xiii).

Popular themes have changed over the years; so, has the overall appearance, and tone, of crime fiction. Skene-Melvin (2014) proposes Canadian crime fiction can be divided into five time periods: prior to 1880, 1880 to 1920, 1920 to 1940, 1940 to 1980, and 1980 to 1996. To provide a thorough, yet brief review, I will use Skene-Melvin's five time periods to discuss the popular fiction genre; crime fiction in Canada.

Prior to 1880

Crime fiction prior to 1880 centred on often melodramatic ballads, songs, and poetry, that shared tales of riots, horse thievery, murders, and mayhem (Skene-Melvin, 2014). There is some debate over who is the first Canadian crime fiction writer. Thornton (2014) contends Grant Allen is "the first great Canadian crime fiction writer" (para 3.). Allen was born on the St. Lawrence River's Wolfe Island near Kingston, and lived most of his life in the United Kingdom (Thornton, 2014). "He was a contemporary of Conan Doyle and although he probably would not have called himself a Canadian writer, we still claim him" (Thornton, 2014, para. 3). Skene-Melvin (2014) identifies Miss Mary Leslie, using the pseudonym, James Thomas Jones, as the author of the earliest known crime fiction novel written by a Canadian. The exact date is questionable: Skene-Melvin (2014) states it was 1876, but the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN), (2023) claims Leslie published in 1878. Leslie's *The Cromaboo Mail Carrier: A Canadian Love Story* was published in the southern Ontario town of Guelph by J. H. Hacking (CRKN, 2023). The *Cromaboo Mail Carrier: A Canadian Love Story* was based on real people and events in the small town of Drumbo, Ontario, a community south west of Guelph. Even though Leslie changed the name of the community to Cromaboo in her book, the residents of Drumbo recognized people, and events in the story. Due to the severe backlash from the residents of Drumbo following publication, Leslie withdrew the book (Skene-Melvin, 2014). The title of the book sounds innocent enough, but from the first paragraph the reader learns this town is far from perfect, and I can understand why the residents in Drumbo were not pleased with Leslie's tell-all.

> "Cromaboo is the most blackguard village in Canada, and is settled by the lowest class of Irish, Highland Scotch and Dutch. It consists of seven taverns, six churches, and about one hundred shabby frame houses built on little gravelly mounds. Fights are frequent, drunkenness flourishes, vice abounds; more tobacco is smoked there than in any village of the same size in the Dominion; swearing is so common that it passes unnoticed, and there is an illegitimate child in nearly every house – in some two, or others three, in one six – and the people think it no sin" Leslie in CKRN, 1878, para.1.

<u>1880-1920</u>

Crime fiction was gaining in popularity almost everywhere, and Canadian writers were finding their place in the crime fiction world. Roper (2014) suggests that this time period saw a boom in crime fiction written by Canadian authors, and readership increased nationally and internationally (as cited in Skene-Melvin, 2014). There were some obvious differences between crime fiction written in Canada, and novels set elsewhere. For example, in crime fiction written in the United States, there were depictions of the wild west with the right to bear arms resulting in shootouts, and rebels taking matters into their own hands (Skene-Melvin, 2014). There was a sense of wildness, lawlessness, and perhaps even hero worship in the crime fiction penned in the United States. Skene-Melvin suggests the Canada's crime fiction was "more subtle, more psychological, more caring" (p. 23), and even rather mundane with an absence of the hero protagonist found in crime fiction from other countries. The closest to the hero protagonist achieved in Canadian crime fiction are stories about Mounties. "If there is a Canadian hero, it is one that has been manufactured for us, but which we have willingly adopted, a symbol rather that a persona…commonly imagined as one who imposed law and order in the wilderness, making it safe for settlers, traders, and missionaries"

(Skene- Melvin, 2014, p. 25). The Mountie became an internationally known figure representing stability, and safety, in many crime fiction novels; interestingly enough, most of those novels were not written by Canadian authors. Writers from the United States, and the United Kingdom, sought out exotic and natural landscapes as settings for their novels and would use Canada. Canadian authors, seeking recognition for their craft would use settings outside of Canada believing that an exotic and foreign setting appealed to international readers (Skene-Melvin, 2014).

<u>1920-1940</u>

Canada's crime fiction between 1920 and 1940 was modernizing, and becoming similar to today's crime fiction. The stories were abandoning the frontier-like rural settings for more urban locales (Skene-Melvin, 2014). The pace of the stories was speeding up, the Mountie was left behind, and replaced with big city detectives (Skene-Melvin, 2014). Another notable change was the protagonist no longer needed to have credentials for solving crimes; the professional private investigator, and amateur sleuth, were nosing their way into stories, asking questions, following leads, and deciphering the carefully constructed puzzle (Skene-Melvin, 2014). Canadian writers were still writing, and living, outside Canada, or, writing in Canada about outside of Canada. For example, Arthur Herbert Joseph Moorhouse who wrote as Hopkins Moorehouse published a book in either 1920 or 1926 called *The Golden Scarab*. The book's lead character was Addison Kent, a Canadian novelist living in New York City (Skene-Melvin, 2014). Moorhouse's description of Kent gives the impression the character is between Clark Kent (Superman) and Tony Stark (Ironman).

> "The taxi was speeding for the comfortable quarters of Addison Kent, popular novelist and your man of good looks, health, wealth and fame, who lived in Minaki Annex, just off Riverside Drive…Malabar had first met the novelist some years ago at the Press Club in Wine Court Alley, London. Then the stories and articles of this hard-working Canadian newspaper youth were just beginning to attract attentions in various magazines…And as their friendship grew, Malabar had been delighted to find that his own hobby, criminology, was likewise Kent's" Moorhouse, p.13.

This time period (1920 – 1940) is between World War I and World War II. Skene-Melvin (2014) declares this time in Canadian crime fiction as the breakout time for Canadian authors. Canada was becoming more of a stand-alone country, and less of an appendage of the United Kingdom. Even though Canadian writers were still living, and writing outside of Canada, and often writing about places other than Canada, they were finding their voice in the world of crime fiction.

1940-1980

The popularity of crime fiction continued to increase in the four decades following World War II (Skene-Melvin, 2014). Like work in other countries, Canadian crime fiction continued to follow the trend towards the cities where crime fighting civil servants, private investigators, and amateur sleuths were following the trails of criminals into back alleys, dark hallways, and sketchy neighborhoods (Skene-Melvin, 2014). One of the most notable changes from the previous period is the crime motivator shifted from gold or raw riches, to paper money, even stocks or bonds (Skene-Melvin, 2014). An aspect of Canadian crime fiction that did not change; most writers continued to use locales outside of Canada as the setting for their novels (Skene-Melvin, 2014). An example of one such writer is Margaret Wetherby Williams, writing name: Margaret

Erskine (Skene-Melvin, 2014 & Williams in Gale, 2011). Williams was born in Kingston, Ontario, and utilized locations in the United Kingdom as settings for most, if not all of the twenty-seven books she wrote and published between 1938 and 1977 (Skene-Melvin, 2014 & Williams in Gale, 2011). It is suspected that Williams considered the United Kingdom home as she lived there for most of her life but Canada remains as her place of birth.

There were some writers who held fast to their Canadian roots and elected to stay in Canada and write Canadian settings into their fiction; or rather parts of Canada. Following World War II, Canada found its place as a nation, but it also found regionalism. Thornton (2014) maintains that crime fiction settings were becoming distinctly, prairies, coastal, northern, or eastern woodlands. The other distinction was the crime fiction of the time was either written in English or French.

1980-1996

The writing voice of Canadian crime writers continued to develop during this period. Canadian writers were finding Canadian settings to explore, and Canadian protagonists to feature (Skene-Melvin, 2014). In this period the numbers of Canadian crime writers dramatically increased and they started to organize. In June of 1982, the Crime Writers of Canada (CWC) was formed, as a non-profit organization to unify and promote professional, and associate crime, and mystery writers (CWC, 2022). The boundaries of crime and mystery fiction started to blur during this time period as well with more authors exploring genre hybrids such as crime science fiction or lesbian mystery (Skene-Melvin, 2014). This time period also witnessed an increase in female

crime fiction writers writing about female protagonists (Skene-Melvin, 2014). Skene-Melvin (2014) also acknowledges that Canadian writers known for their work in other genres were recognizing the popularity of the crime fiction genre and were testing their ability to write crime fiction novels. Writers such as Robertson Davies, Margaret Atwood and Timothy Findley, to name a few explored the crime fiction genre with some success (Skene-Melvin, 2014).

This concludes the five periods of crime fiction writing established by Skene-Melvin's essay published in *Detecting Canada* in 2014. I would suggest that what Skene-Melvin identified in 1980 to 1996 is even more prolific today with the next period encompassing 1996 to 2020. A quick scan of the Crime Writers of Canada membership list on their website indicates their membership numbers is in the hundreds. An equally quick scan of the crime fiction section of local bookstores clearly indicates the genre hybrids that started in the previous time period is expanding, as is sub-genres such as cozy mysteries, police procedural, paranormal, mystery thriller, historical, mystery romance, and dystopian mysteries. Skene-Melvin concludes crime fiction in Canada is built on a solid foundation with writers past and present making significant contributions to the genre.

> "Canadian writers of crime fiction have been and are in the fullest sense men and women of letters. They have a fascinating and illustrious heritage that is being continually enhanced by current practitioners. Canadians today are telling their own stories, no longer feeling obliged to hide their nationality or pretend to be either British or American, and those stories are being listened to. Neither as class-conscious as the British nor an egalitarian as the Americans, Canadian crime writers have developed a voice and manner all their own" Skene-Melvin, 2014, p. 42.

Authors Gail Bowen and Brenda Chapman have contributed to the genre. Together they have written over forty crime fiction books, and novellas, significantly adding to the genre's collection. Not only have they added by volume, but also by content. With so few books available suitable for my research criteria, it is evident Bowen and Chapman have also added to the genre, through incorporating Indigenous female characters as primary contributors to their novels. Chapman has received acknowledgement through the Ottawa Writer's Festival as having penned "one of the only female First Nations detective leads in a book series" (Rothbard, 2016, para. 2). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Canadian Mary Leslie published *The Cromaboo Mail Carrier: A Canadian Love Story* in 1876 (CRKN, 2023). Leslie is one of the first women in Canada to publish a work of detective fiction, and is therefore a detective fiction pioneer. Chapman can equally be considered a detective fiction pioneer, as she is one of the first non-Indigenous Canadian writers to publish a series, with an Indigenous woman as the lead character. I am thrilled that Chapman wrote the series, but embarrassed and saddened that it took one hundred and thirty-six years between Leslie, and Chapman, to recognise that Indigenous women can be effective lead characters in crime fiction.

The purpose of this section in my research is to create a solid knowledge base of crime fiction in Canada. Crime fiction has a vast history within the nation, and continues to be a driving force in the industry. Competition in the crime fiction genre is fierce with Canadian writers competing with each other, and on an international level. Canadian crime fiction has progressed over time with Canadian writers incorporating strong, relatable characters featured in compelling storylines and engaging plots. What is

noticeably absent from the genre is the presence of Indigenous women as lead characters.

Chapter 4

Characterization

"Good characterizations is good characterization, no matter the genre. A satisfying fictional character has dimension, believability, passions, strengths, weaknesses, a degree of self-knowledge, and curiosity about the world around him or her"
Bowen, 2018, p. 69

A writer breathes life for their characters, until they can breathe on their own. As a book lover, the sign of a good book for me is the mixed emotions when I finish the last page. I am a little smug because I figured out who did it. I feel satisfied because I just finished a really good book. I also feel sad because I already miss the characters. I have entered their world, and now they have abandoned me. A really good book will have me missing the characters for days, and even wondering what they are doing as I go about the tasks in my day. Allen (1986) suggests non-Indigenous fiction has a definite purpose. It tends to follow a character through a situation, or a series of situations while the character changes, evolves, or overcomes a conflict, flaw, or a crisis. A good or successful work of fiction allows the reader to relate to the character, or desires a positive outcome for the character. Strong, well-developed characters do and say things that provides wonderful clues into who they really are. King (2000) suggests that "It's dialogue that gives your cast their voices, and is crucial in defining their character – only what people do tells us more about what they're like, and talk is sneaky: what people say often conveys their character to others in ways of which – the speakers – are completely unaware" (p. 180). If the dialogue is so crucial, the creator of that dialogue,

and the relationship they build with the characters is also incredibly significant to the success or failure of the story. This section of my research will discuss the non-Indigenous writer and Indigenous character relationship in fiction.

The relationship between non-Indigenous writers of fiction and their Indigenous characters is both questionable and contentious. Questionable because as Allen (1986) asserts, non-Indigenous authors of fiction are looking through a window at their Indigenous characters. The character development is built from a non-Indigenous perspective, like an outsider watching the action and interpreting what they are seeing. Contentious because even though the characterization is developed through observation, (Monkman, 1981) the interpretation comes from the dominant culture often writing for a non-Indigenous audience (Allen, 1986). The suggestion from Allen (1986), and Monkman (1981), that non-Indigenous fiction writers witness the actions of Indigenous peoples through a window provides an effective metaphor for the separation between the writers and their characters.

Historically, fiction written by non-Indigenous authors containing Indigenous characters spouted specific themes such as cultural or population annihilation, or spirituality. The Indigenous characters are victims of situations beyond their control, and cultural, physical threat, or demise is embodied into both the story, and the plot. For example, novels such as *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper, and *Riverrun* by Peter Such, come to mind. Hulan (2014) claims the portrayal of Indigenous people in historical fiction are often written as two-dimensional characters supporting stereotypes created by the colonizers: “In American and Canadian literature, Indians

were innocent victims, the 'dying and disappearing' or 'noble savage' living tragically outside history, or the 'howling savage' obsessively killed in that most popular sub-genre of historical fiction, the Hollywood western" (p.104). This idea of the savage serves a purpose for the non-Indigenous writer as the character is a viable and negative antagonist bent on preventing either the acquisition of land, or as a character opposing conversion to a more civilized European lifestyle (Monkman, 1981). The Indigenous character as a spiritual being is another popular theme in fiction. Johnston (1987) maintains non-Indigenous authors have a history of depicting Indigenous characters with special connections to the natural world, utilizing charms and touting magic or special powers. Interesting to note that this same connection to spirit was a reason to claim Indigenous people as heathens in earlier times.

Whether the themes are cultural annihilation, or connection to spirit, Indigenous characters in fiction have allies in their real-life counterparts. I do not think I am speaking out of turn when I say Indigenous people are getting tired of being written about. Past and present colonization practices have given the non-Indigenous population unlimited creative license when it comes to sharing information about the Indigenous people of Turtle Island. Some non-Indigenous writers write in a manner that suggest Indigenous culture is in the past and has been replaced by the dominant non-Indigenous culture. That is offensive, untrue, and perpetuates the Eurocentric view (Younging, 2018). Indigenous writers such as Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (2017), and Lenore Keeshig-Tobias (1990) have voiced their concerns over appropriation of Indigenous stories. According to Keeshig-Tobias (1990) stories are more than simple yarns, stories delve into

the most intimate part of a people. “Stories, you see, are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks. Such wonderful offerings are seldom reproduced by outsiders” (para. 5). The more Indigenous writers specifically, and Indigenous people in general speak out about the need for a responsible non-Indigenous writer, Indigenous character relationship, the opportunity for change increases dramatically.

Some scholars such as Johnston (1987) believe that non-Indigenous authors seeing Indigenous people as “dying race” (p. 56) is passé and stories are reflecting a more realistic notion of the Indigenous people of Turtle Island. How should Indigenous people be depicted in fiction? I have suspected for some time that there is a fear that exists within the non-Indigenous literary world. Writers, publishers, editors, do not want to make a mistake and say, or write, the wrong thing and therefore say or write nothing. However, to say or write nothing becomes a form of erasure. Younging (2018) states: “A lot of people would like to talk about Indigenous issues honestly and don’t want to cause offence” (p. 51). There is also the problem of evolving terminology such as Native, Indigenous, Aboriginal, Ojibway, Anishinaabe, and so on. Taylor (2020) believes that non-Indigenous authors might be electing to avoid including Indigenous characters in their stories because of potential problems those characters might illicit. There is a difference between appropriating and incorporating characters into a story and Taylor argues that doing so with respect is a worthwhile undertaking. Chakasim (2022), a writer for The Indigenous Foundation, supports Taylor and has written tips on how to write Indigenous

characters into literature. The tips are on The Indigenous Foundation website (The Indigenous Foundation, 2024) .

It appears that there is opportunity to close the chasm between Indigenous characters and their non-Indigenous creators and for a strong positive relationship to emerge. My research looks at two novels written in the crime fiction genre, by non-Indigenous Canadian authors, to determine if the Indigenous female characters are depicted as stereotypical Indigenous women. The next chapter in this research will discuss my findings.

Chapter 5

Analysis of the Novels

If this research paper was a crime fiction novel, this would be the chapter that starts out soft and slow and builds to the climax. A thrilling reveal would have just occurred (and one might suggest that a reveal did happen at the end of chapter two). The next section would move the plot (physical), and or, story (emotional part) forward, but in a gentle manner. The writer needs to slow the pace down, and allow the reader, and characters, to catch their breath and prepare themselves for the finale.

In the spirit of the crime fiction novel, the first two sections of chapter three are gentle, easy reads relaying information about authors Gail Bowen and Brenda Chapman, and the novels *The Last Good Day*, and *Cold Mourning*. The third section examines the Indigeneity of Lily and Kala. The fourth and final section of the chapter is the discussion of the two leading Indigenous female characters as stereotypical Indigenous women.

Meet the Authors

Gail Bowen

Gail Bowen is a Canadian author born in Toronto, Ontario. She achieved her post-secondary education at the University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, and University of Saskatchewan, before beginning her career as associate professor in English with the First Nation University in Regina where she worked for over thirty years (Bowen

as cited in Picot, 2015). Bowen did not start writing fiction until she was forty-three, and her entry into the world of storytelling was quite by accident (Bowen, 2018). She was asked by her son's godfather to write Saskatchewan's chapter to a book in which each province contributed. Initially Bowen declined but upon further consideration, and a nudge from her husband, Bowen agreed. The publisher liked Bowen's writing, and encouraged her to participate on another project. Neither endeavor received much reader attention, but the projects did inspire Bowen to write, and in 1990 her first Joanne Kilbourn mystery novel, *Deadly Appearances*, was published (Bowen, 2018, Bowen as cited in Picot, 2015). With twenty-two books published to date, Gail Bowen continues to receive accolades for her work, including the Crime Writers of Canada's Grand Master Award, the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, and Reader's Digest named Bowen Canada's Best Mystery Novelist in 2008 (Bowen, 2023). Bowen is best known for the Joanne Kilbourn mystery series, but she has also written a collection of young adult novellas, as well as some plays (Bedore, 2014).

Bowen appreciates a strong central character, and has found writing success in Joanne Kilbourn; a white, educated, middle-aged widow, and mother living in Regina, Saskatchewan (Bowen as cited in McNally Robinson, 2021, Tiedemann Darroch & Jones, 2022). Joanne is a typical white, Canadian, middle-class character, who goes through the death of a spouse, a series of lovers, a second marriage, children, grandchildren, career changes, and so on (Tiedemann Darroch & Jones, 2022). Bowen maintains that Canadian readers appreciate and gravitate to fiction in which they can see a reflection of themselves (Bowen as cited in Calgary Public Library, 2016). It is my hope that the

relatability between Joanne and the reader ends there, and does not extend to the number of dead bodies Joanne and her family members discover over the course of 22 novels.

Through Joanne, Bowen states she writes about issues that worry her: racism, sexism, ageism, political corruption, and people abusing other people (Bowen as cited in Picot, 2015). Writing allows her to contemplate issues and situations from different points of view and perspectives (Bowen as cited in Picot, 2015). These complex worries and issues transition into themes that surface in Bowen's writing, and the reader then observes the situation through Joanne's eyes. Bowen believes she has found writing success within Canada because Canadians appreciate seeing themselves reflected in her work (Bowen as cited in Calgary Public Library, 2016).

Bowen chose the mystery genre for two reasons. First, it is the genre that she reads the most, and thus, is comfortable working within its structure. Second, the mystery genre is encompassing (Bowen as cited in McNally Robinson, 2021). Bowen asserts that anyone can find a reflection of themselves in characters within the mystery genre (Bowen as cited in McNally Robinson, 2021).

Bowen's connection to the Indigenous community is one theme that streams through Joanne Kilbourn's character in multiple books. Having worked for First Nation University and spending quality time with Indigenous colleagues for over thirty years allowed Bowen to immerse into a culture and reality not her own. She admitted in a book reading at the Medicine Hat Library that she has not experienced racism and

acknowledges her privilege (Bowen as cited in Picot, 2015). She recalls a student once saying to her that he does not recall a time when he did not wake up feeling anger (Bowen as cited in Picot, 2015). Going back to the Bowen's earlier statement that she writes about what worries her: racism, colonialism, and intergenerational trauma are clearly worries that she wants to raise with her readers.

Brenda Chapman

Brenda Chapman studied English Literature at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, and Carleton University in Ottawa. She holds a Bachelor of Education from Queen's University as well (Crime Writers of Canada, 2023). Her career so far has taken her into a couple of directions: special education teacher, communications officer with the Department of Justice, and recently, full-time writer (Robb, 2014). In the early days of her writing career, Chapman would work around her duties as a married woman with two children and employed full-time as either the teacher or communications officer (Alumni, 2015). She credits a very supportive spouse as the reason she was able to write at all during those days and as a result, she now writes full-time (Alumni, 2015).

As the communications officer, several files crossed Chapman's desk. Those files inspired her to create the Kala Stonechild character in the Stonechild Rouleau mystery series. The seven novels are police procedural mysteries that team an Indigenous female detective, Kala, with a French-Canadian Detective Sergeant Jacques Rouleau (Robb, 2014). Chapman believes the mystery genre market is inundated with police procedural mysteries and therefore her manuscript required a unique hook to catch the

publisher's attention (Chapman as cited in Robb, 2014). Her hook: an Indigenous female and a French-Canadian male who is almost an older brother figure to Kala. In creating the Stonechild character, it was important to Chapman that Kala was not a stereotypical Indigenous female (Robb, 2014). Stonechild is affected by a difficult past but it does not define her; in fact, it is because of her past that she wants to make a positive difference in the world through police work (Fage, 2021). The Stonechild Rouleau series is set in Ontario, with the first book in Ottawa, the next five in and around Kingston, and the last book, *Closing Time*, set just north of Sault Ste Marie. For Chapman, the Canadian setting is important: "I like to set my books in Canada because that's where I'm from…Readers like to read about places they know" (Chapman as cited in Senack, 2023, 9th para.).

Chapman's Stonechild and Rouleau books are receiving a positive response outside of Canada. The first in the series *Cold Mourning* was almost borrowed as often in libraries in the United Kingdom as J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* in audio book form (NG_Celia, 2021). According to Senack, (2023), Chapman's popularity is increasing nationally as well as United States and abroad.

Meet the Books

The two books central to this research are Gail Bowen's *The Last Good Day*, and Brenda Chapman's *Cold Mourning*. Bowen and Chapman's novels fit into my research question: Are Indigenous female characters in contemporary fiction, within the crime fiction genre, depicted as stereotypical Indigenous female characters? Both books are

examples of crime fiction novels, written by Canadian authors, with an Indigenous female lead character. I will be focusing my discussion of the research question on one Indigenous female character in each book and two aspects of their depiction: references to the character's Indigeneity, and references or suggestions of character stereotyping. This section of chapter five will begin with a brief synopsis of *The Last Good Day* and *Cold Mourning,* followed by an introduction to the Indigenous female characters central to this research.

The Last Good Day by Gail Bowen (2004)

The Joanne Kilbourn series is the work of Regina, Saskatchewan's Gail Bowen. The series is an example of the amateur detective sub-genre within the mystery or crime fiction genre. At the beginning of the series, Joanne Kilbourn is a fifty-something year old single mother, and university professor, who solves mysteries in her spare time. She is not the typical crime fiction novel snoop who interjects themselves into police activities. Joanne is more of a reluctant participant who gets involved because her family or friends are impacted by the crime. Bowen cleverly incorporates societal issues, ethical dilemmas, and errors in judgement, into her story lines inspiring the reader to examine their own belief system, or to contemplate what they would do if faced with a similar situation. Joanne is an intelligent, modern woman devoted to her family and friends. Through the series her family grows, and changes, in a realistic manner to which readers can relate.

The Last Good Day (2004) is the ninth installment in Bowen's Joanne Kilbourn series and therefore, some of the characters, and storylines, from previous novels in the series are known to readers of earlier books. Written in the first person, the reader sees the world and the unfolding of events through Joanne's eyes. The plot and story develop with interesting twists, relationships dissolve and re-spark, and a love interest for Joanne surfaces. There is a missing person, murder, deception, and resolution; all typical elements of an effectively written crime fiction novel.

Joanne is renting a cottage on a lake about seventy kilometers from Regina for the summer, with her adopted ten-year-old daughter Taylor, teenage son Angus, and his girlfriend Leah. The cottage is in a gated community called Lawyer's Bay, owned by a group who work together in a Regina law firm called Falconer, Shreve, Altieri, and Wainberg, also nicknamed the Winner's Circle. Joanne's friend, Kevin Hynd, owns the cottage she is renting but is away trekking through Tibet, is also a member of the firm. The members of the Winner's Circle are new characters to Bowen's Joanne Kilbourn series, but play major roles in this, and subsequent books.

The story begins at a July 1st party hosted by the Winner's Circle for friends, family, and clients of the firm. One of the lawyers, Chris Altieri, is obviously distraught over something and spends time with Joanne, a newcomer to the lake and group. Altieri divulges to Joanne that the reason for his pain is guilt; he caused a woman in his life to have an abortion. Early the next morning Altieri drives his car off the end of the dock into the lake. Altieri's death is ruled a suicide. While attending the funeral Joanne reconnects with Anne Millar, a past student of Joanne's that is now a lawyer. Anne

confides that she is concerned for a missing friend, Clare Mackey. Clare was employed at Falconer, Shreve, Altieri, and Wainberg, but apparently suddenly left the firm with little notice to work at her dream job, an all-female law firm in Vancouver. Anne explains that the sudden move is out of character for Clare, and there are holes in the story that just do not make sense. Joanne becomes curious about the missing Clare and starts asking questions.

The character that is the focus of my discussion on Indigeneity and stereotyping of Indigenous women in crime fiction is Lily Falconer, the wife of lawyer Blake Falconer, and mother of eleven-year-old Gracie Falconer. Words used by various characters to describe Lily include: beautiful, enigmatic, angry, erotic, and compelling. As the office manager at Falconer, Shreve, Altieri, and Wainberg, Lily is included as a contributor to the success of the Winner's Circle. Lily is a member of the Standing Buffalo reserve near Regina, Saskatchewan. (The term reserve is used here because it is the word used by Bowen.) Lily's backstory is not a unique depiction of life on the reserve; however, it does set her apart from the personal experiences of the non-Indigenous members of the Winner's Circle.

Joanne learns the story of Gloria Ryder, Lily's mother from a local newspaper archive. Gloria was married to John Ryder; both were Dakota from the Standing Buffalo reserve north-east of Regina. John Ryder was a mechanic; Gloria was a nurse at the local hospital. A non-Indigenous doctor became infatuated with Gloria. She avoided him knowing that if it came down to a sexual harassment issue, she would not win as it would be her word against his. She also kept the issue from her husband, John. One

evening the doctor arrived at the Ryder home and shot John while he was sitting in his living room reading a magazine. The doctor spied 10-year-old Lily, and immediately filled with remorse takes his own life, in the living room, beside John's body. The gossip and innuendos regarding the incident were not kind to Gloria and somehow, her neighbours and community blame her for the deaths of two good men. As a result of the incident Lily was also a victim of gossip and schoolmates with idle tongues. Lily carried the trauma of the murder suicide throughout her life. The experience motivated her to work hard, and leave the rez behind, thinking acceptance into the world of non-Indigenous privilege would solve past hurts.

Cold Mourning by Brenda Chapman (2014)

Cold Mourning (2014) is the first of seven novels in a series featuring, Kala Stonechild and Sergeant Jacques Rouleau, by Ottawa author, Brenda Chapman. The series is an example of the police procedural sub-genre in the crime fiction genre. Kala Stonechild is a young detective hired by Sergeant Jacques Rouleau to fill a position in the newly formed Ottawa Crime Unit special force. Unlike *The Last Good Day*, *Cold Mourning* is written in third person omniscient with third person limited when Kala is present in the scene. This means that the reader has access to a character's thoughts, and does not need to rely solely on Kala's interpretation. However, when Kala is present in a scene, the reader has less access to other character's thoughts. Chapman effectively uses this point of view to give the reader insight into the characters.

The story begins with Kala sitting in her truck in the Ottawa Police parking lot. It is 8:50 am, she is exhausted having driven all night from northern Ontario to begin the new job. She would have preferred to get some rest, and shower before work, but does not want to be late on her first day and create a negative first impression. Upon entering the building Kala is introduced to Sergeant Jacque Rouleau, and the other three men on the team. She is partnered with Clarence Whelan, a heavy-set, red-headed fellow wearing a wedding ring. Kala immediately relaxes when she sees the ring, thinking that the chances of having to side-step advances or awkwardness is decreased since he "had the look of a well-fed man happy with his lot" (Chapman, 2014, p. 34). There is little time given to Kala to become acquainted with her new surroundings as the team is directed to handle a missing person call. The missing person is wealthy businessman Tom Underwood, who is found a couple of days later in the trunk of his car, dead from exposure to Ottawa's freezing temperatures in December. Due to the fact it is highly unlikely Underwood voluntarily got into his trunk, the death is considered suspicious. Kala and the rest of the team spend most of the days leading up to and following Christmas solving Underwood's murder, as well as another murder at Underwood's company, and the attempted murder of an Underwood family friend. Kala's detection skills are tested, as is her patience, and ability to work as a team member.

The focus of my research in *Cold Mourning* is Indigenous female character, Kala Stonechild from the Birdtail Creek reserve. Kala was with the Red Rock OPP detachment in Northern Ontario before moving to Ottawa. The reason she gives for the move is a desire to experience police work in the city. The reader learns quickly that Kala is a loner

with trust issues. She has not had the easiest childhood. Kala spent most of her time in foster care moving from home to home until she was old enough to be on her own. A smart young woman, she achieved a scholarship allowing her to obtain a post-secondary education. She chose policing because of a need to help people, but the reader learns Kala shares a secret with someone she calls Lily, that suggests Kala's desire to enter policing, might also be out of guilt.

Kala and Lily were children together on the Birdtail Creek reserve. One summer day the two accepted a ride with a stranger even though both girls knew such a decision was unwise. The stranger drives to a deserted area off the main road, and sexually assaults Lily. The girls manage to escape and hide only to be found by the stranger a short time later. The stranger grabs Kala and threatens to assault her, Lily grabs a rock, strikes the man with it, and kills him. The girls do not divulge to anyone what happened that day. At the end of summer Lily is offered an opportunity to go to school in Winnipeg. She accepts, and the two are split apart until years later Kala finds Lily, now known as Rose, in Ottawa.

Bowen's *The Last Good Day,* and Chapman's *Cold Mourning,* employ female Indigenous characters, Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild respectively as significant contributors to moving both plot and story forward. Because of their pivotal roles, the frequency in which they are either in, or talked about, in scenes indicate they are lead characters in the novels. I have two areas of focus in my research that are dependent on what Lily and Kala say and do, and what other characters say and think about them. The first is how the women's Indigeneity is depicted in the novels. How do Lily and Kala

express their Indigeneity? What do other characters say, do, or think, about Lily and Kala's Indigeneity? The second area of focus is how Lily and Kala are depicted. Are they stereotypical Indigenous female characters? Are they portrayed as an Indian Princess, or a squaw? I will retrieve from the books, scenes or dialogue, that relate to the two areas of focus identified above and discuss the depiction of Lily and Kala.

The Indigeneity of Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild

Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild are Indigenous female characters in Gail Bowen's *The Last Good Day*, and Brenda Chapman's *Cold Mourning*, respectively. Their Indigeneity moves both the plot (physical part of the novel, the action), and the story (emotional part of the novel), forward creating dramatic tension. It is because of their Indigeneity that they are discussed in my research and contribute to the research question: Are Indigenous female characters in contemporary crime fiction depicted as stereotypical Indigenous female characters? To respond to the research question, I will be discussing whether or not the authors, Bowen and Chapman, have written Lily and Kala as characters possessing Indian Princess and/or squaw traits. But as I was making notes for the discussion, I realized that Lily and Kala first needed to be grounded as Indigenous women. I needed to include a section that discussed the Indigeneity of the two women; how they expressed their Indigeneity; and how others reacted to the two women being Indigenous. Hence, the Indigeneity of Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild section was created. My intention for this section is simply to establish evidence of Lily

and Kala's Indigeneity, how being Indigenous impacts them as characters, and how other characters treat them because they are Indigenous.

The Indigeneity of Lily Falconer in *The Last Good Day*

Author Gail Bowen reveals Lily Falconer's Indigeneity through a critical scene in *The Last Good Day,* providing the reader with insight into the cultural divide existing between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous characters. The scene is early in the novel, and involves Indigenous police detective, Alex Kequahtooway questioning Joanne Kilbourn, about the apparent suicide of Chris Altieri. Alex and Joanne had been in a romantic relationship that ended abruptly prior to these events, and Joanne is still bitter over the parting. Alex warns Joanne to be careful as the residents of Lawyer's Bay are not to be trusted. Joanne resents the implication that she is not capable of taking care of herself. Alex departs, and as Joanne watches his car turn into the driveway leading to Lily Falconer's cottage, she is reminded that Alex and Lily have a history extending to childhood. Like Alex, "Lily Falconer had been born and raised on the Standing Buffalo reserve too. Alex's epiphany that blood was thicker than water had clearly prompted him to remind Lily that, in this world, there were two camps, and the wise stayed with their own kind" (Bowen, 2004, p. 34). Joanne reads the Alex and Lily relationship as the two forming a protective pact, that separates them from outsiders, or the non-Indigenous players in the story. Alex makes his feelings known regarding the trustworthiness of the affluent residents of Lawyer's Bay to Joanne when he issues the warning. It is unclear if the lack of trust is due to an imbalance in financial status, an Indigenous non-Indigenous tension, or a combination of the two. Alex's trust issue does not extend to Lily who is

connected to the non-Indigenous characters through marriage, family, and work. Lily is in a complicated position as she resides in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, and is therefore continuously negotiating a cultural divide.

The cultural divide and the intergenerational trauma experienced by Lily as an Indigenous woman bleeds into her family life. Lily's daughter, Gracie, resembles her non-Indigenous father, Blake. "She was, in every sense, her father's child, big-boned, auburn-haired, ruddily freckled, and effortlessly charming" (Bowen, 2004, p. 17). Blake admits that he wishes Gracie looked more like Lily, perhaps more Indigenous, because maybe the two might share a reason to be closer. "I always sensed that Lily would have felt more connected to a child who was unmistakably aboriginal" (Bowen, 2004, p. 121). The reader sees multiple occasions when Lily basically ignores Gracie, and I cannot help but think Lily lacks parenting skills. Lily's ability to foster a healthy relationship with Blake, is also questionable. Blake admits that he wishes he could be closer to Lily. Even when their marriage was good Lily could not fully commit to Blake or the marriage and was always somewhat distant or guarded (Bowen, 2004). Lily's inability to parent, and maintain a meaningful relationship with Blake, are possibly the result of childhood trauma. Her father was murdered in front of her. Her mother was riddled with guilt that incapacitated her to the point where she could not function (Bowen, 2004). There is also evidence to suggest Lily attended residential school, possibly a day school (Bowen, 2004). Bowen does not explicitly state this point, but as an Indigenous female with some knowledge of intergenerational trauma, I believe the signs are apparent; Lily was affected by colonization.

The intergenerational trauma might also be evident in Lily's appearance even though she may try to mask it. Lily's physical self is pleasing enough to the eye to be used as the model for a carving, on the gazebo, at the Lawyer's Bay beach. "The carving was of a woman, seemingly a prisoner, her hands tied behind her back, her legs long and graceful, her breasts full, her face gentle but filled with an ancient and private sorrow" (Bowen, 2004, p. 28). The words used to describe the carving are significant to Lily's Indigeneity. The artist depicts Lily as a prisoner with her hands bound, and an "ancient and private sorrow" (Bowen, 2004, p. 28) on her face. Noah Wainberg, the husband of lawyer Delia Wainberg, in Falconer, Shreve, Altieri, and Wainberg carved the wooden figure. He was able to see the pain in Lily's face, and capture the essence of her being. I do not want to read too much into the wooden carving, but its' description suggests Lily's trauma is etched into her face, and that other characters can see she is a prisoner of her past.

The reader learns about Lily's Indigeneity primarily through dialogue between Joanne Kilbourn and other characters, and through what Joanne is thinking. Even though Lily Falconer is an essential character in *The Last Good Day*, she is actually in only five scenes. In each of those five scenes, I interpret Lily's contributions to the plot and story as; reckless, controlling, sad, angry, and desperate. What I did not observe was Lily expressing herself as an Indigenous woman. Bowen does not overtly portray Lily as Indigenous. There is no indication that Lily follows the traditional way of life, nor is it suggested that she has strong ties to her community. Besides her relationship with Alex Kequahtooway, Lily does have a live-in nanny, Rose Lavallee from the Standing Buffalo

reserve. The reader is aware that Lily is troubled, and that she is Indigenous, but the degree to which the two are related are revealed in the novel's climax. I believe that Lily spent a great deal of time, and energy, trying to distance herself from her Indigeneity. In the novels climactic scene Lily states: "After we built the houses at Lawyers' Bay, the people in town who had looked down their noses at me my whole life, who had called me names and treated me like dirt, like less than dirt, started treating me with respect" (Bowen, 2004, p. 225). Acceptance into the Winner's Circle gave Lily the opportunity to distance herself from her Indigeneity, and to prove herself as someone deserving of respect.

The Indigeneity of Kala Stonechild in *Cold Mourning*

Like Lily Falconer, Kala Stonechild in *Cold Mourning* has a past she would like to forget. She is very closed about her life with her new co-workers and offers vague replies when asked anything about her life. However, in a rather out-of-character, lengthy speech, Kala shares with Jacque Rouleau, during a meal together on Christmas Day, the story of her parents.

> "Both of my parents spent time in residential schools from age six to fourteen. If you know anything about that period, the federal government in its great wisdom travelled far and wide to scoop up Aboriginal children as young as six and place them in boarding schools far from their homes. Many of the children died of tuberculosis in the schools or were abused in one fashion or another. They could go years without seeing their parents or families. The idea was to take the Indian out of the child, and the nuns and priests took their jobs seriously. The children weren't allowed to speak their native language or practice their culture. When my parents returned home, it wasn't long before both were alcoholics with no parenting skills to speak of. I was taken from them when I was three because of neglect. From there, I spent time in a succession of foster homes until

> I graduate from high school. I got a scholarship and went into policing" (Chapman, 2014, p. 167).

Kala, sharing intimate details of her childhood, suggests that she trusts Rouleau with a glimpse into her Indigeneity. Perhaps Kala feels an obligation to trust Rouleau with her story because he was willing to hire her for the specialized Crime Unit. Or, perhaps being alone on Christmas in a strange city inspired Kala to share something of herself to form a connection with another human. Whatever the reason behind Kala sharing her story, the author, Brenda Chapman, has written a realistic history for Kala that shapes her into an authentic Indigenous female protagonist.

The reader, like Kala, feels that Rouleau can be trusted, and is not influenced by Kala's Indigeneity, but by who she is as a person. The same cannot be said of her co-worker Philip Grayson, or her superior, Inspector Vermette.

Philip Grayson is one of three male members of the Ottawa Police's special Crime Unit to which Kala has just been hired. He approaches Rouleau with concerns regarding Kala's lack of experience, and questions whether she will fit in with the rest of the team. Rouleau defends his hire stating that she comes highly recommended, and encourages Grayson to support Kala while she is settling into the job. Grayson concludes the discussion by saying: "I just want you to know it's not because Stonechild's…" Before Grayson can finish the sentence Rouleau responds with: "Descended from the original inhabitants of this great land?" (Chapman, 2014, p. 40). Grayson's next words agree with Rouleau's comment, but the exchange suggests the opposite. Grayson has been a police

officer for some time, and reflects a non-Indigenous, privileged, male attitude towards Kala.

In a scene between Inspector Vermette and Rouleau, Inspector Vermette's words reflect his feelings towards Kala's Indigeneity. Vermette orders Rouleau to enroll Kala in media training because he wants to "make use of her appearance" (Chapman, 2014, p. 67). Rouleau says he will ask Kala if she is interested in the training; Vermette's reply says a lot about his character. "She doesn't need to be asked. Either she does as she's told or we send her back to the reserve where she can spend her days locking up drunk relatives" (Chapman, 2014, p. 67). Vermette's attitude towards Kala's Indigenous heritage is not new to Kala, and most Indigenous women of Turtle Island. Kala is well-aware of the reason she was instructed to take police media training. Upon completion of the training Kala states to co-worker Whelan that: "Oh, I'll pass. This afternoon we get our final feedback and a certificate. Then I'll be the brown face of the department" (Chapman, 2014, p. 335). Kala, like most Indigenous women, have learned to pick their battles, and this is not the one which Kala wants to challenge.

Both Grayson's and Vermette's comments indicate a negative attitude towards Kala being Indigenous, and a woman. It appears difficult to separate the racism and sexism in their comments, as the two gentlemen seem afflicted with both. It is essential to recognize that Grayson, and Vermette, are the minority in the book. Kala's other co-workers, and Rouleau appear to be comfortable with Kala's gender, and heritage, and support her efforts to settle into the new job and new city.

Even though Ottawa is foreign to Kala, she finds a sense of familiarity in the character of Maya, the coordinator of an organization providing food for the city's homeless and marginalized population. Kala elects to spend her Christmas Eve serving dinner at the organization with Maya and several other volunteers. During a break in serving, Maya asks Kala to share her story, and Kala responds with a brief synopsis. Following Kala's story, Maya comments on how Kala looks like she has had a tough life. Afterwards Kala ponders Maya's intuition: "She thought that Maya might be more in tune with the rhythms of the land and water than most. In her home town, Maya would have been one of the Elders – one of the people in the community the others would go to for guidance" (Chapman, 2014, p. 156). Kala is aware that traditionally, she would seek an Elder for guidance, and she is comfortable with the notion of trusting Maya and asking her for help. This scene, in particular, allows the reader a sense of Kala's connection to traditional knowledge. It is not an overt example as I think the author, Chapman, respectfully avoids straying too far into Indigenous culture. Chapman, does not write Maya's character as Indigenous, but Kala makes the connection between her traditional knowledge of Elders in her community up north, and Maya.

Unlike Bowen's character Lily Falconer in *The Last Good Day*, Chapman has written Kala Stonechild in *Cold Mourning* with a greater focus on her Indigeneity. Lily never mentions her connection to her home community whereas Kala frequently speaks of hers. This might simply be because Lily is geographically close to her community, and Kala has left hers to move to a city. Kala's departure from community is more recent. Kala is also reminded by other characters of her Indigeneity more frequently than Lily.

The omniscient point-of-view used by Chapman allows the reader exposure to what characters are thinking and saying about Kala; whereas Bowen's first-person point-of-view is through Joanne Kilbourn and even though she has empathy for Lily's experiences as an Indigenous woman, Joanne does not treat Lily differently because she is Indigenous. Both Lily and Kala are identified as Indigenous women who have risen above tremendous obstacles to achieve their professional goals.

Before I move on to the next section, I want to acknowledge the authors Gail Bowen and Brenda Chapman for their efforts in creating the Lily and Kala characters. Bowen and Chapman have written story lines for Lily and Kala that taste real without appearing trite or wooden, and they have done so with respect and integrity. Earlier on in this paper, I discussed how Indigenous writers are taking a stand on non-Indigenous authors telling Indigenous stories. I do not think neither Bowen, nor Chapman, have written an Indigenous story. What they have done is written a story with Indigenous female characters. There's a definite difference between the two. Lily and Kala are strong Indigenous female characters with realistic back stories, allowing me, a woman with Indigenous heritage, to connect to the characters.

The Stereotyping of Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild

> *"In other words, stereotypes are constructed from within a patriarchal hierarchy that represents women somewhere between good and bad, or between madonna and whore.*
> Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe, 2016, p. 56

Stereotypes are weapons. Slurs such as slut, lazy, stupid, and squaw, were adopted by the non-Indigenous colonizers as a tool to disempower, oppress, and

suppress Indigenous women (Simpson, 2017). The venue in which the stereotypes are used is significant. Acoose-Miswonigeeskikokwe (2016) points out that stereotypes within literature have the potential to become weaponized tools creating harmful misogynist and sexist attitudes towards Indigenous women. The harmful attitudes gain momentum when readers interpret the stereotypes in fiction as reality.

After reading Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe's book, *Neither Indian Princesses nor Easy Squaws* (2016), in which she examines stereotypes of Indigenous women in two short stories written by well known Canadian authors Margaret Laurence and W.P. Kinsella, I felt compelled to explore the topic further. I followed Stephen King's advice on writing fiction that advocates for taking two seemingly unrelated ideas, putting them together to come up with something unique (King, S. 2000). Exploring stereotypes of Indigenous women in crime fiction written by non-Indigenous writers is the research question I developed, and chose to pursue, because I have a genuine appreciation for the genre and wanted to delve into it on a deeper, more thoughtful level. Acoose-Miswonigeesikokwe inspired me to examine two crime fiction novels featuring Indigenous females as lead characters to determine if they are depicted as either the Indian Princess or squaw stereotype.

The books selected for this research are *The Last Good Day* (2004) by Regina, Saskatchewan author Gail Bowen, and *Cold Mourning* (2014) by Ottawa, Ontario author Brenda Chapman. Both offerings are from the crime fiction genre and include an Indigenous female as a lead character. I selected two main stereotypes as my focus; Indian Princess and squaw, and established working definitions of each. I then looked

for scenes in the books that supplied evidence that the stereotypes were present, or not present, either in the two Indigenous characters, Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild or other character's perceptions of the women. The discussion is divided into two main sections corresponding to the character in each book and the two stereotypes with the discussion focusing on my research question: are Indigenous female characters in contemporary fiction, within the crime fiction genre, depicted as stereotypical Indigenous female characters?

Stereotyping of Lily Falconer

In this section of chapter five, I will discuss Indigenous female character, Lily Falconer, in Gail Bowen's *The Last Good Day,* focusing on two specific stereotypes; Indian Princess, and squaw.

Lily Falconer as the Indian Princess Stereotype

To effectively discuss Lily Falconer as the Indian Princess stereotype, I must first establish a working definition. I have selected a definition penned by Chakasim (2021), from The Indigenous Foundation, that states the Indian Princess stereotype "portrays her as desirable, beautiful, and untouchable, by, mostly, White men. She is usually submissive, helps the settlers out, and falls in love with a White man" (Chakasim, 2021, para 10). Anderson (2000) suggests the Indian Princess stereotype rewards the good Indigenous woman for being the settler's little helper, with the title of princess. Princess status is supposed to be a recognition of achievement, but in actuality it is demeaning, and patronizing. Chakasim's definition, applied to Lily Falconer's character in *The Last*

Good Day, reveals Lily possesses some of the traits in line with the Indian Princess stereotype; however, I assert sufficient evidence also exists to support the argument that the author, Bowen, did not depict Lily as an Indian Princess.

Chakasim's definition of the Indian Princess intimates she be portrayed as desirable, and beautiful. There are at least three scenes that discuss Lily as a desirable, and beautiful woman. In one scene, protagonist Joanne Kilbourn describes Lily as "enigmatic, angry, and erotic" (Bowen, 2004, p. 103) in addition to a woman with a great body. Certainly, the description of Lily as erotic with a physique pleasing to the eye, fits into the Indian Princess stereotype. Another scene, in which Lawyer's Bay area residents are gossiping outside the general store, reveals that Lily takes after her mother, who was known as a local beauty. One gossiper speculates that: "If Lily Falconer had stayed closer to her husband and kid, there might not have been a suicide over there at Lawyer's Bay. That Lily is like her mother – a fatal attraction. She can't help the way men buzz around her, like bees around a flower" (Bowen, 2004, p. 111). In this scene, the gossip suggests that Lily's beauty, and desirability, are the cause of Chris Altieri's suicide. There is no evidence that Chris and Lily were anything more than friends and colleagues, but the gossip mill initiates the idea of an affair that ended between Chris and Lily, causing Chris to take his own life. The third scene that provides evidence of Lily as a desirable, and beautiful woman, is the scene that describes the wooden carving on the gazebo. The description of the carving, created in the likeness of Lily Falconer, suggests that she is indeed beautiful, and desirable, with "…legs long and graceful, her breasts full, her face gentle…" (Bowen, 2004, p. 28). Conventional wisdom has it that the three scenes

discussed; Joanne's description, the gossip at the general store, and the wooden carving, indicates that the Lily Falconer character aligns with the desirable, and beautiful traits in Chakasim's Indian Princess definition.

The section of Chakasim's definition of Indian Princess which states she helps settlers, describes Lily Falconer, as the office manager of the law firm, Falconer, Shreve, Altieri, and Wainberg. There are multiple scenes that provide evidence of Lily contributing to the success of the firm. For example, following the death, and funeral, of Chris Altieri, the remaining survivors of the firm, spouses, and Joanne, venture out on the lake to spread Chris's ashes. When the task is complete, Lily states she is heading into the office, on a Sunday, to put Chris's client files in order, and to begin the search for a replacement for Chris. Lily is in her element when organizing, and helping, the members of the firm, and their clients, recover from the loss of Chris Altieri. Another example, is a scene in which Joanne, and lawyer Delia Wainberg, are discussing the law firm, and Lily's role in it. Delia admits that Lily is just as responsible for the success of the firm as any of the lawyers (Bowen, 2004). Delia also comments on Lily's intelligence, and her ability to handle the everyday tasks required to keep a business operating smoothly. According to Delia: "Lily is one smart cookie. More significantly, she's able to see the big picture…There's not much glory in taking care of the day-to-day business of the firm. Most of us deal with office stuff on a need-to-know basis, but Lily's always understood what had to be done" (Bowen, 2004, p. 170). The final example of Lily Falconer as settlers' helper unfolds at the end of the novel, in a scene between Lily and Joanne, when Lily confesses to murdering Clare Mackey. Lily explains, that from the first

moment she saw the members of the Winner's Circle she was smitten, and knew she had to be a part of something so fabulous. She claims: "That's why I deserved to be part of it…I didn't just marry into the Winner's Circle. I earned my place. As much as any of them, I made Falconer Shreve a success" (Bowen, 2004, p. 224). Lily admits to Joanne that she killed Clare Mackey to protect the Winner's Circle. Lily's willingness to go to such extreme lengths to protect the non-Indigenous members of the Winner's Circle, and her efforts to ensure the law firm's success, confirms Lily as settlers' helper.

The final part of the definition of Indian Princess inspired by Anderson (2000), entitles the woman to a reward for good behaviour. The Indian Princess is granted her wish to marry the white man, and become part of the non-Indigenous world (Anderson, 2000). Lily secures her position in the upper-class, non-Indigenous community, and she does so through the office manager position in the most prestigious law firm in Regina, and through her marriage to Blake, one of the lawyers in the firm. She becomes a valued member of the Winner's Circle (Bowen, 2004), which by its very name suggests that she has won, and rewarded for being a good Indigenous woman.

There is evidence that Lily Falconer does fit the Indian Princess stereotype, but there is also evidence that she does not. Lily fails at upholding the good Indian Princess stereotype portrayed in the typical fantasy, and employs realistic characteristics, complete with vices and poor decision-making skills.

An example that suggests Lily does not fit into the Indian Princess stereotype is her relationship, and marriage, to Blake Falconer. Chakasim, (2021) posits that the Indian

Princess falls in love with a non-Indigenous man. Lily in *The Last Good Day,* marries non-Indigenous lawyer, Blake Falconer. Whether Lily actually loves Blake is questionable, as I found no evidence to indicate Lily married Blake for love. Blake admits he loved Lily from the moment he saw her, but that she never returned the love (Bowen, 2004). I think Lily wanted to escape her childhood trauma, and life on the reserve, and she saw the marriage to Blake as a means of doing so. Unfortunately for Lily, her approach to dealing with unresolved trauma is unsuccessful, as indicated by the many times she runs away from her family. Even Lily's eleven-year-old daughter, Gracie, is aware that Lily is unhappy. In one scene, Gracie confides in her two friends, that she suspects her parents are going to divorce (Bowen, 2004). Unlike the fantasy, in which the Indian Princess lives happily-ever-after with her white husband, Lily is extremely unhappy, and the marriage to Blake does not materialize in the manner Lily had hoped.

Another illustration that indicates Lily is not Indian Princess material is her "not good" behaviour. In my mind, the Indian Princess does not lose her temper at children, hold a fellow human at gunpoint, or commit murder. Lily does all three in *The Last Good Day*, indicating behaviour unbefitting a good Indian Princess.

Lily Falconer demonstrates anger at her daughter Gracie, and Gracie's two friends. The girls are building a series of inuksuit at Lawyer's Bay, seemingly a good project for three pre-teen girls, as it keeps them busy. The three girls complete the first inukshuk near the beach, beside the gazebo, and invite Joanne to view a huge cottonwood tree on the other side of the bay through the inukshuk's site hole. As Joanne compliments the girls on their effort, Lily drives up, jumps out of her vehicle, and starts

yelling at the girls for taking stones from underneath and around the gazebo to build the inukshuk. Joanne explains to Lily that the girls have not touched the gazebo stones, but actually purchased the rocks from a nearby quarry. Lily rips down the inukshuk, and continues to hold, in her hands, one of the flat stones from the base of the inukshuk. For a moment, Joanne fears that Lily might throw the stone at someone. After some tense moments, Lily puts down the rock, returns to her car, and speeds away. Gracie calmly starts to rebuild the inukshuk (Bowen, 2004). Clearly this is not the first time Gracie has witnessed an outburst from her mother. Lily is obviously angry, her outburst is uncalled for, and her anger misguided; all traits that do not fit the Indian Princess stereotype.

Another example of behaviour unfit for an Indian Princess occurs in a scene between Lily and Joanne, near the end of the story. Joanne is in the gazebo, and starts to connect the pieces regarding the missing Clare Mackey. Lily arrives, and appears to be oblivious to the rain pelting down on her, and the impending thunderstorm. “She had made no effort to protect herself against the weather. Her bluejeans [sic] and the soft leather bag slung over her shoulder were dark with rain, her white shirt clung to her breasts, and her beautiful hair hung lank against her shoulders” (Bowen, 2004, p. 222). Lily strikes Joanne across the jaw, pulls a gun out of her bag, and points it directly at Joanne. It is during this scene that Lily admits to murdering Clare Mackey, and arranging for the gazebo to be built over the pile of stones that encases Clare’s body. The scene is the climax of the novel, and the reader witnesses the unravelling of Lily’s world through Joanne’s eyes. Lily is not living the Indian Princess happily-ever-after scenario, but a shadow existence precariously balanced on pillars of trauma, lies, and murder.

Chakasim's (2021) definition of Indian Princess also indicates that the Indigenous woman often submits to non-Indigenous authority. I found no evidence to suggest Lily Falconer is submissive in either her work, or home life. As the office manager of the law firm, Falconer, Shreve, Altieri, and Wainberg, Lily oversees all business operations (Bowen, 2004); a position that requires her to be in control, and lead a team of well-educated lawyers, and office staff. At home, she does as she pleases, including leaving her family when she chooses (Bowen, 2004). It is unlikely that a submissive Lily would have worked for the novel. As the antagonist, Lily needs to be a worthy adversary for the protagonist Joanne Kilbourn. A submissive Lily Falconer simply would not have worked effectively in the storyline.

Lily Falconer definitely possesses a few traits that identify her as the Indian Princess, but I think her character is far more complex than a mere stereotype. Joanne Kilbourn describes Lily as "compelling" (Bowen, 2004, p. 122). I agree with Joanne's assessment, and add that Lily is also driven, intelligent, loyal, and broken; none of which are in the Indian Princess stereotype definition.

Lily Falconer as the Squaw Stereotype

To determine if Lily Falconer depicts the squaw stereotype, a working definition is required. Anderson (2000) asserts the term squaw was constructed by non-Indigenous settlers to justify appropriating land, and resources, and sexually exploiting Indigenous women. The word squaw is a slur referring to an Indigenous woman or girl. To call an Indigenous woman a squaw suggests she is "dirty, lazy, slovenly" (Anderson, 2000, p.

103) and easy; and that she is a lessor human than the non-Indigenous settlers. In this section, I will be discussing scenes from *The Last Good Day* that offer evidence that Lily Falconer possesses traits in line with the squaw stereotype, and evidence that suggests she is not depicted as the squaw stereotype.

Does author Bowen depict Lily Falconer as the squaw stereotype? The first squaw trait I will examine is easy or promiscuous. I found no evidence to suggest Lily is promiscuous, or stepping outside of her marriage. There are multiple scenes in which characters discuss Lily's frequent absences from the family, but I get the sense she is running away from something, not running to someone. I believe Lily's frequent absences imply that she believes she does not deserve a healthy and happy family life, and has nothing to do with promiscuity.

There are characters in *The Last Good Day* who speculate that Lily is having affairs with police detective Alex Kequahtooway, and lawyer Chris Altieri. For example, Detective Robert Hallam, a co-worker of Alex's, and a friend to Joanne Kilbourn, speculates that Alex is having an affair with the married Lily Falconer. Detective Hallam is aware that Joanne and Alex were a couple until a short while ago when Alex suddenly ended the relationship (Bowen, 2004). The detective mentions to Joanne that it must be hard for her to be in the same room with the woman to which Alex is having an affair. The reader learns from a reliable character that Alex and Lily are not having a romantic affair, but rather have an intense relationship deepened by shared experiences. "It's not a man-woman thing. They're like one person, one blood" (Bowen, 2004, p. 193). The other rumour circulating is that Lily is having an affair with lawyer Chris Altieri (Bowen,

2004). In this particular round of gossip circulating among the locals at Lawyer's Bay, Lily is blamed for Chris's suicide. Rumour has it, that he was devastated when Lily ended the affair, and thus, Chris took his own life (Bowen, 2004). This rumour is also unfounded. The reader later learns that Chris was in love with Clare Mackey, the woman who was murdered. The rumours of Lily's affairs clearly indicate that the characters expect her to be a promiscuous squaw, and even without any evidence, are willing to speculate, and spread gossip.

Lily Falconer is not depicted as the easy or promiscuous Indigenous woman imbedded in the squaw stereotype, but she is depicted as a character who has experienced racism and sexism. The reader knows that Lily has been called names and teased, especially following the murder suicide that occurred in her home when she was nine. I feel confident in assuming that squaw or a similar slur was directed at Lily at some point in life. The reader learns that Gloria, Lily's mother, was called squaw, whore and other similar words with young Lily present (Bowen, 2004). Lily's exposure to her mother being called squaw and referred to as promiscuous, as well as Lily's own experience being stereotyped as a promiscuous Indigenous woman could be a cause for her self-destructive behaviour (Anderson, 2000). Bowen has written the character of Lily not as an easy or promiscuous squaw, but as an Indigenous woman who has experienced racism and sexism.

Lily Falconer does not fit the lazy squaw stereotype. I found no evidence to suggest that Lily is lazy, but rather the opposite. There are numerous scenes in *The Last Good Day* in which Lily is commended for her work as office manager at the law firm,

Falconer, Shreve, Altieri, and Wainberg. Lily is proud of her work and says so in the final scene between Joanne and Lily when she confesses to murdering Clare Mackey.

> "I didn't just marry into the Winner's Circle. I earned my place. As much as any of them, I made Falconer Shreve a success. I knew if we wanted to get platinum-card clients we needed prestigious offices. I found that heritage building where we are now, and I made all the decisions about the renovations. I've hired every administrative assistant and sat in on the interviews for all the juniors we've hired. I know when someone is Falconer Shreve material. I've made sure the bills are paid and the clients are handled with care – we entertain the ones who matter twice a year, Christmas and Canada Day. That party you were at was my idea. It was my idea for us all to build summer houses out here...we'd just camp on the beach, but I knew if we were going to be a top law firm, we had to have houses, big expensive houses that said Falconer Shreve was a presence in the community" (Bowen, 2004, p. 224-225).

Bowen has written Lily Falconer as a complex Indigenous female. There are aspects of her character that suggests she fits into the Indian Princess stereotype, and there are facets to her that suggest she does not fit the definition. I propose that like real humans she possesses multiple characteristics that guide her actions and her words. Maybe that was a deliberate move by Bowen. Lily does not fit into either Indian Princess or squaw simply because she is too realistic a character for such simple categories. The more I delve into the character Lily Falconer the more I cannot label her. Other characters in *The Last Good Day* try to stereotype Lily but it shows more about their character, than hers.

Stereotyping of Kala Stonechild

In this section of chapter five, I will discuss Indigenous female character, Kala Stonechild in Brenda Chapman's *Cold Mourning*, focusing on two specific stereotypes; Indian Princess, and squaw.

Kala Stonechild as the Indian Princess Stereotype

As in the analysis of Lily Falconer in *The Last Good Day* discussed previously, I will use Chakasim's definition of the Indian Princess stereotype in the discussion of Kala Stonechild. Chakasim (2021) defines the Indian Princess stereotype as an Indigenous woman who is "desirable, beautiful, and untouchable, by, mostly, White men. She is usually submissive, helps the settlers out, and falls in love with a White man" (para. 10). I am not convinced Kala is an example of the Indian Princess stereotype. Having said that, I will provide some examples of scenes that might be construed as evidence suggesting Kala is viewed by other characters as possessing attributes in line with the Indian Princess stereotype.

Chakasim (2021) proposes that the Indian Princess is desirable and beautiful. There are two scenes in *Cold Mourning* in which male, non-Indigenous characters respond to Kala's beauty and desirability. The first scene involves Rouleau and his supervisor, Inspector Vermette. He and Rouleau are in a meeting when Vermette asks Rouleau how the "Native woman" (Chapman, 2014, p. 67) is doing. Vermette continues by saying: "I hear she's easy on the eyes. See she gets some media training. We may as well make use of her appearance" (Chapman, 2014, p. 67). In this scene, the reader sees Vermette, a non-Indigenous man, in a position of authority, delivering a racist and sexist comment. His notion of Kala as the Indian Princess stereotype is imbedded in his thinking. Rouleau replies to Vermette stating that Kala will be asked if she is interested in the training. Rouleau's reply suggests he is a more evolved character, with a liberal attitude towards Kala as an Indigenous woman (Chapman, 2014). Vermette further

expresses his misogynistic, and racially motivated view with the following comment: "She doesn't need to be asked. Either she does as she's told or we send her back to the reserve where she can spend her days locking up drunk relatives" (Chapman, 2014, p. 67). Vermette is not a major character in *Cold Mourning*. I suggest he is a secondary character whose job in the novel is to move plot by providing police procedural direction for Rouleau and the rest of the team. However, Vermette also provides an opportunity for the reader to see how the colonizer way of thinking is harmful, and just plain wrong. Vermette hears that Kala is pleasing to the eye, and elects to exploit her good looks, and brown colouring, as a spokesperson for the police. Vermette is supporting the Indian Princess stereotype.

Another storyline that promotes Kala's desirability are the scenes that show the sexual tension between her and Hunter Underwood. I am not sure if I would classify the Kala and Hunter relationship as supporting the Indian Princess stereotype, or simply two people attracted to one another. Hunter Underwood is the son of murder victim Tom Underwood. As a suspect in his father's murder, a relationship between Hunter and Kala is a conflict of interest. Kala is highly professional, and would simply not allow a relationship with Hunter to affect her ability to perform her duties. However, there are a couple of scenes in which the reader senses that there is definitely an attraction between the two. For example, Hunter expresses an interest in speaking with Kala, so they meet up at a pub for lunch. The two, exchange information about Tom's murder with Kala leading an informal interview, and observes how Hunter responds to her comments about Tom's will in which he leaves Hunter a million dollars. While waiting for

their food, Hunter directs the conversation to an invitation to dinner when the case is over. Kala is quite clear that the outcome of the case may affect how he feels about her, nonetheless, she does not completely reject the idea of the two seeing each other socially. Kala and Hunter do not get together in the novel, but part congenially. My dilemma around Hunter's interest in Kala is that I don't see Hunter as viewing Kala as the Indian Princess stereotype. Nor do I see Kala opting for her reward for being a good Indigenous woman as a relationship with the very wealthy Hunter Underwood. I cannot find any evidence suggesting Hunter's interest in Kala is Indian Princess stereotype-related, and therefore deem the sexual tension between the two, simply an attraction between two adults.

Chakasim's (2021) definition of the Indian Princess stereotype suggests that Kala is "untouchable, by, mostly, White men" (para. 10). One example of a scene in which Kala clearly is not interested in a relationship occurs early in the novel when Kala is introduced to her new partner, Clarence Whelan. She notices immediately that he is wearing a wedding ring and her thoughts indicate her relief: "No complications. That's all she wanted in a partner. Not suggestive looks or subtle innuendos. No avoiding late-night drinks and pretending his hand on her leg wasn't an invitation" (Chapman, 2014, p. 34). As the reader, I have the advantage of knowing Kala's thoughts in this scene, and I am inclined to believe that she has had problems in the past with men making unwanted advances towards her. This example with Whelan may suggest Kala is "untouchable", but it also might simply suggest that Kala is not interested, and does not want her work life to get messy due to a workplace affair.

The suggestion by Chakasim (2021) that the Indian Princess helps settlers does apply to Kala as evidenced through her career choice, and her desire to support her new supervisor, Jacques Rouleau. She has chosen to be in the helping profession, and as a police officer, her job is to serve, protect, and uphold the non-Indigenous legal system; settler's helper is in the job description. Kala also wants to do a good job for her team, more specifically her supervisor Rouleau. One example of Kala as settler's helper is a scene in which she works an assault case on her own time. Kala and Whelan respond to an assault in progress call within minutes of Kala arriving at her new job with the Ottawa Police special Crime Unit. Previous to the call, three other female victims were assaulted in apartment building hallways. The perpetrator would grab the victim from behind, grope her, and push her into the wall, before running away. The level of violence was escalating with each assault, and it was only a matter of time before a woman was seriously injured. Kala spent hours pouring over the reports, and maps, looking for the next possible assault location. The motivation for her efforts was protecting the women, but as her thoughts suggest, she also wanted to please Rouleau: "It would be a nice Christmas present for Rouleau if she broke the case" (Chapman, 2014, p. 207). Another example of Kala's desire to serve as settler's helper is in a scene between Kala and her partner Whelan. They are discussing the yet unsolved murder of Tom Underwood and Kala states she wants to solve the murder so Rouleau would get credit (Chapman, 2014). She is thinking that she does not want the recognition for herself, but wants Rouleau, as team leader, to receive credit for solving the murder. It is evident in Kala's thoughts, and actions, that she wants to succeed in her career, help others, and support Rouleau.

The evidence suggesting Kala Stonechild is depicted as the Indian Princess stereotype In *Cold Mourning* is circumstantial, at best. The author, Chapman, has created Kala Stonechild as a strong, independent Indigenous woman with commitment and trust issues. She is depicted as a loner, who misses her dog, and the isolation associated with policing in a northern community. I interpret the protagonist Kala as a realistic Indigenous woman and reject the idea she is a stereotypical Indian Princess for the following reasons.

Kala as settler's helper does describe her career choice and personality, however she does not help in order to interject herself into the non-Indigenous community. She is not looking for a sense of belonging, but rather to help right a wrong. For example, Kala spends her own time hunting down the man responsible for the assaults on women in apartment hallways. After a few evenings of wondering between apartment buildings, she finds a man about to assault a woman in a parking lot, Kala chases him down, tackles him, ties him up with her belt, and calls 911 for help (Chapman, 2014). The result of her efforts gives her some recognition and acceptance with her colleagues, but I do not believe that was her objective. Fearing the attacks were escalating, Kala did not want to see another woman injured, or worse. Her interest in solving the assault case stems from her desire to right a wrong, and help others, and not an attempt at acquiring a sense of belonging into the non-Indigenous community.

Chakasim's (2021) definition of Indian Princess states "she is usually submissive" (para. 10). Kala Stonechild is not submissive. There are multiple times Rouleau instructs Kala to go home, or get some rest, or relax, and she elects to reject Rouleau's orders and

continue to work after everyone else on the team leaves. One specific example of Kala's strong will is a scene early in the novel. It is late afternoon on her first day with the Ottawa Police's special crime unit. She and Rouleau are the only two remaining in the office when a missing person call is patched through to Rouleau. The two respond to the call, and while on route Rouleau informs Kala that she is not expected into the office until tomorrow afternoon. He wants her to take some time to sleep, and settle into her new surroundings. Kala insists that additional time is not necessary, and responds to Rouleau's act of kindness through physically distancing herself from him; which is tricky to do in the front seats of a vehicle. "She angled her body away from him, and Rouleau felt the distance she'd put between them, even in such a confined space" (Chapman, 2014, p. 45).

Another example of Kala's non-submissive, more willful character is again between her and Rouleau. In this scene, Kala has just single-handedly captured Richard Kennedy, the suspect in the assaulting women in apartment hallways case. Kala's co-workers are praising her efforts and even misogynist, Inspector Vermette, shook her hand and complimented her on her fine police work. Rouleau, is not so impressed. He asks to see Kala in his office at which time he clearly states he does not want her going rogue again. Kala is taken back by his words and for a moment a glimpse of her wilfulness surfaces. "Her eyes were bottomless black flint, and for the briefest of moments, defiant. He stared her down until she slowly dropped her head in a nod" (Chapman, 2014, p. 282). Kala is well aware of the hierarchy within the policing system, but there is a stubborn part of her that wants to rebel. She does not say or do anything

outwardly that edges toward rebellion, but there is no question that she is capable of defiance. I also think a part of her is hurt, because one of the reason's she wanted to catch the assailant is to ensure Rouleau gets credit for the arrest. Kala is not in a career that supports or encourages non-submissive behaviour, and that trait is a weakness for her as a police officer, however, her actions make for a spicy read.

Another part of the definition of Indian Princess that does not apply to Kala is the idea of her falling in love with the white man, marrying, and living happily ever after. One of the reason's Kala left her job with the Ontario Provencial Police (OPP), in northern Ontario, is due to a relationship issue with a man already in a supposedly committed relationship (Chapman, 2014). Without sounding too much like a romance novel, the reader learns of a love triangle. Kala, and a man named Jordan, were in a relationship. Jordan was married, but separated from his wife, Miriam, when he and Kala got together. Prior to Kala leaving northern Ontario, she learns that Miriam is pregnant with Jordan's baby. Kala decides to take the job offer in Ottawa, leaving Jordan the opportunity to do the right thing, and be a husband to Miriam, and a father to the new baby. So, Kala does not get the love, or the marriage associated with the Indian Princess fantasy in *Cold Mourning*, the first of seven novels in the Stonechild and Rouleau series.

<u>Kala Stonechild as the Squaw Stereotype</u>

This section looks at evidence suggesting Kala Stonechild is depicted as the squaw stereotype in Chapman's *Cold Mourning*. As in the discussion of Lily Falconer in *The Last Good Day*, I am looking for scenes that refer to Kala as "dirty, lazy, slovenly"

(Anderson, 2000, p. 103) or easy, as they are words that are associated with the squaw stereotype (Anderson, 2000).

The novel begins with an event in Kala's childhood that clearly demonstrates a non-Indigenous male character, viewing Indigenous women and girls, as the squaw stereotype. She and her best friend Rose are picked up by a man, taken to an isolated wooded area, where Rose, the eldest of the two, is sexually assaulted. The two girls escape, and Kala hides while Rose looks for help. The man finds Kala, and a struggle ensues. Rose strikes the man with a rock and kills him. They hide the body, relocate his vehicle, and never tell anyone of the events of that day (Chapman, 2014). The non-Indigenous man admitted to the two girls that he believes the only thing "Injun girls were good for" (Chapman, 2014, p. 9) is sex. This man took two children into the woods, with the intention of raping, and perhaps murdering them. There is no question that the man in this scene, viewed Kala and Rose as the squaw stereotype, initiated by non-Indigenous male colonizers so long ago.

The slur squaw is often associated with lazy, slovenly, and drunk. Kala has had problems with alcohol abuse. For example, the reader learns that Kala had a drinking problem before she committed to a career in policing. In one scene she and her co-worker, Philip Grayson, are meeting in a pub to discuss the murder case. As she enters the bar "She read the draft selection written on a chalkboard hanging above the beer taps. The names brought back memories of too many bars and the lost years before she signed up to be a cop" (Chapman, 2014, p. 123). In every scene of the novel where others are drinking alcohol, Kala requests a non-alcoholic beverage.

There is no evidence of Kala being lazy, slovenly, or dirty; all words associated with the squaw stereotype. In fact, I believe Kala is quite the opposite of lazy; she may be a workaholic. For example, on Kala's second day of work, the annual police Christmas party takes place. It is 2am, and Kala is leaving the party after working all day. She is exhausted, but hears her name called by Rouleau, who is running up behind her with his phone to his ear. Rouleau states a body had been found in the trunk of missing, Tom Underwood's car. Kala, exhausted two minutes earlier is ready to go and the two leave for a long night of processing the scene. Perhaps Kala is an adrenaline junkie, or perhaps, she simply loves her work. Either way, Kala, for the second day in a row, clocks an excess of fourteen hours of work (Chapman, 2014). Another example of Kala not being lazy, but rather a workaholic was mentioned earlier in this section. Kala hunts, and captures Richard Kennedy, the man accused of assaulting women in apartment hallways, on her own time. Kala spends an afternoon, and evening, reading all the reports on the assaults, builds a geographical profile, and proceeds to wander the area, watching for the next assault. Her efforts pay off, she catches Kennedy attacking a woman, restrains him, and calls 911. All on her own time. I would argue that Kala does not fit the squaw profile of a lazy individual, but I do support the evidence she is a workaholic.

I failed to retrieve any scenes that suggest Kala is either slovenly or dirty, words associated with the squaw stereotype (Anderson, 2000). The closest to slovenly Kala gets is the fact she is not interested in clothes. At the police Christmas party, she arrives in black jeans, and a silver blouse. Rouleau is actually upset with himself for not informing Kala that the event is a semi-formal, and Kala is underdressed. Kala calmly informs

Rouleau that the ensemble is the fanciest clothes she owns, and even if she did know the event required semi-formal dress, she would have worn the same jeans and blouse she is wearing in this moment (Chapman, 2014). I interpret her lack of interest in her appearance as an indication she is comfortable in her own skin, and well-grounded in who she is. Kala has no interest in clothes, but that does not mean she is slovenly, or dirty.

Kala is neither an Indian Princess or a squaw stereotype. She is an Indigenous woman, who is a police detective in the Nation's capital. She was hired for the position by Jacques Rouleau, a highly evolved non-Indigenous man who sees Kala as a competent police detective, who happens to be Indigenous, and a woman. The author, Chapman, is clear in the story she is telling in *Cold Mourning*. Kala is not stereotyped as an Indigenous female who happens to be a police detective, but rather a police detective trying to solve a murder, and by-the-way, she is an Indigenous woman.

Conclusion

This section examined the books, *The Last Good Day* and *Cold Mourning*, for evidence that characters Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild were depicted as stereotypical Indian Princesses or squaw. A few scenes suggested that traits associated with the two stereotypes were present, but overall, I would argue that Lily Falconer and Kala Stonechild are not depicted as stereotypical Indian Princess or squaw characters.

Lily and Kala are solid Indigenous female characters, who possess the flaws, and strengths, shaped from life's experiences, as all real humans do. Their relatability, and

believability, speaks to their creators, authors Gail Bowen and Brenda Chapman. Both Bowen and Chapman have years of work experience that immersed them in Indigenous communities and educated them in Indigenous issues. Both of these authors have taken what they learned from their Indigenous neighbours, and applied that knowledge to the Lily and Kala characters replacing the stereotypical Indigenous women in previous works of fiction.

Along with the more authentic Indigenous female characters, Bowen and Chapman have created storylines that allow for Indigenous characters to contribute to the plot and story without capitalizing solely on culture and heritage. Lily is the antagonist in *The Last Good Day*. She is an accomplished business woman. Kala is the protagonist in *Cold Mourning*. She is also an efficient police detective. Their roles as career women are the focal points to the storyline contributing to both plot and story. The fact they are Indigenous women is part of the storyline, not the whole storyline. I think that distinction is important to acknowledge.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This thesis examined the depiction of Indigenous women in crime fiction. Two novels from the crime fiction genre, featuring Indigenous female lead characters, written by non-Indigenous authors, were examined for evidence of the Indian Princess and squaw stereotypes. The books selected were *The Last Good Day* (2004) by Gail Bowen, and *Cold Mourning* (2014) by Brenda Chapman. The analysis revealed the presence of some traits associated with the Indian Princess and squaw stereotype, but those traits also could be attributed to life experiences of Indigenous women due to colonization. Therefore, the evidence indicates the two female Indigenous characters, Lily and Kala, were not depicted as either the Indian Princess or squaw stereotypes, but rather realistic Indigenous women.

Lily and Kala were not depicted as stereotypical Indigenous female characters; however, the authors did create character backstories reflecting detrimental life experiences resulting from colonization. As children, one or both Lily and Kala experienced violence, intergenerational trauma, the foster care system, racism, and sexism. The backstories provide realistic storylines that add to the story, or the emotion of the novels, without being excessive or trite. Fictious characters like Lily and Kala provide an opportunity for reader education regarding the effects of colonization, on Indigenous women, through the medium of crime fiction. Bowen and Chapman had years of previous experience working with, and for, Indigenous peoples. The authors

learned how to create authentic Indigenous female characters from interactions with the Indigenous community. I believe they got it right. More novels like *The Last Good Day* and *Cold Mourning,* that depict genuine Indigenous female characters rather than stereotypical caricatures need to be in circulation as Indigenous people are underrepresented in crime fiction.

There are limitations to my research. The lack of sources that fit my research criteria like *The Last Good Day* and *Cold Mourning* is a study limitation. Sourcing books from the contemporary crime fiction genre, written by non-Indigenous authors, that featured an Indigenous woman as a lead character was incredibly difficult because there are so few. I also wanted the books to be written by Canadian authors telling Canadian stories. Ultimately, I was able to locate two novels that worked for the study, but I would have preferred the opportunity to utilize a random selection process for the novels in the study. Instead, I simply used what I had available to me. Another limitation of the study is my own subjectivity. I determined the definition of Indian Princess and squaw stereotypes used, and I selected the scenes from the books to use as evidence. Even though I attempted to remain objective through the process, I may have been bias in the interpretation of the Indian Princess and squaw definitions. I also might have disregarded scenes because I did not interpret them as evidence. The lack of a stronger Indigenous presence in this research is also a research limitation. The analysis of Lily and Kala as Indigenous characters could have benefited from input from Indigenous readers, literature scholars, and Indigenous authors. Perhaps even a comparison of the Lily and Kala with crime fiction characters created by Canadian Indigenous authors would have

made an interesting and thought-provoking study. Going forward, such a study could be dynamic options for future research. The lack of a strong Indigenous presence, my own subjectivity, and lack of suitable resources are three limitations of my study.

The lack of sources is a study limitation, but it also drew my attention to an industry issue. During the research process, I was surprised by the lack of Indigenous female representation in the crime fiction genre. The two novels in my study suggest it is possible for crime fiction novels to include Indigenous women as lead characters without appropriating Indigenous stories. The characters are primary to the story because of their careers and their actions, not because of their Indigeneity. Their Indigenous backstories are part of a story line, not the main story line. Lily and Kala's backstories also draw reader attention to the impact colonization has had on Indigenous women. Incorporating more Indigenous female characters into Canadian crime fiction is a step towards reconciliation. Afterall, can Canadian crime fiction be truly called Canadian without an authentic Indigenous presence?

What happens next? How should Indigenous people be depicted in fiction written by non-Indigenous authors? I have suspected for some time that the non-Indigenous literary world is fearful. Writers, editors, and publishers, do not want to make a mistake and say or write the wrong thing, and therefore say or write nothing. Younging states: “A lot of people would like to talk about Indigenous issues honestly but don't want to cause offence” (Younging, 2018, p. 51). Taylor (2020) believes that non-Indigenous authors might be electing to avoid including Indigenous characters in their stories because of the potential problems those characters might elicit. There is a

difference between appropriating Indigenous stories and incorporating Indigenous characters into a story, and Taylor argues that doing so with respect is a worthwhile undertaking. Chakasim (2022), who has a similar view as Taylor, has written tips on how to write Indigenous characters into literature. The tips can be found on The Indigenous Foundation website.

Tips on writing Indigenous characters into literature has inspired several avenues for future research. For example, a deep dive into tips and best practices for the respectful and accurate depiction of Indigenous characters in literature is both timely and necessary. Incorporating a diverse Indigenous voice by including Indigenous writers, publishers, editors, and scholars into the project is essential for a well-rounded end-result. This could be a user guide, and incredibly useful resource, for all sections of the literary industry.

Another avenue of future research that has stemmed from this Master's thesis is further exploration into the Indigenous voice in crime fiction. This general idea could spark research in many directions. For example, one could explore Indigenous characters in crime fiction from other parts of the world such as the Scandinavian countries, Australia, South America, United States and Africa. Another example is an exploration of the Indigenous voice, either as the writer or characters, in crime sub-genres. Crime fiction encompasses several sub-genres and genre hybrids (such as crime-fantasy, or crime-science fiction). How does the Indigenous voice fit into crime fiction sub-genres or genre hybrids?

My personal favorite idea for future research that has emerged from this thesis is a comparative analysis of Indigenous women writers of crime fiction from Canada and other parts of the world to determine how culture and traditional storytelling are incorporated into their stories. A thorough analysis in this area would add a great deal to the current body of research.

Going forward, I would like to see two things happen. First, I would be so pleased if my study inspired further research into the importance of eliminating stereotyping of Indigenous people in all literature. Stereotyping of Indigenous people is a product of colonization. It is time for the extinction of the Indian Princess, squaw, and all the other stereotypes created by the colonizers. Second, I would like to see more Indigenous characters in fiction, and for those characters to reflect realistic Indigenous people and lead genuine story lines. Eliminating stereotypes and increasing the presence of Indigenous characters in fiction can be achieved through education, and industry players willing to be more inclusive.

A lot can be learned about a culture from their stories. According to Keeshig-Tobias (1990), stories are more than simple yarns, stories delve into the most intimate part of a people. Keeshig-Tobias (1990) says: “Stories, you see, are not just entertainment. Stories are power. They reflect the deepest, the most intimate perceptions, relationships and attitudes of a people. Stories show how a people, a culture, thinks” (para. 5). Historically the perceptions, relationships, and attitudes in fiction reflected his-story, and clearly showed negativity towards Indigenous women.

There exists an opportunity for new stories to be written reflecting her-story, acknowledging the past, but not repeating it.

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