THE FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE PORNOGRAPHER

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN FILM

YORK UNIVERSITY

TORONTO, ONTARIO

September 2024

ABSTRACT

THE FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE PORNOGRAPHER is a mockumentary film running (13 minutes and 20 seconds) that blends and bends archival, pornography, re-enactments, and the only existing interview with Audrey Little-breast, “the first Indigenous female pornographer,” as she refuses to be labelled or represented as anything but herself. She is interviewed about her notorious pornography that exploits settler desire of “Imaginary Indians”. The film is a comedy that playfully engages the subjects of Indigenous identity, the politics of recognition, the “playing Indian” phenomenon, and Canada’s hottest piece of tail - The Beaver. We are invited to ponder how deeply historical and contemporary settler-indigenous relations impact our sexuality.

To request access to the film, email: films.whitecrow@gmail.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank my supervisory committee for their insight and dedication in the creation of this film and support paper. To Manfred Becker (Supervisor), I am grateful for your encouragement to stay true to my voice while creating this work. To John Greyson (Reader), your creativity and suggestions were a joy to engage with.

Thank you to all of my friends who'd found delight in the "cuts" and laughed honestly throughout. Thank you to JP and Kristine for the valuable feedback as I worked toward the final drafts of the film. Thank you to my sweet partner Jamie Ayotte for enduring the songs, the porn, the characters, this story on REPEAT on my computer screen for years.

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INTRODUCTION

In the late 1960's, Audrey Little-breast had migrated from the Rez to the city in search of a better life, but was unable to secure a livable wage. She took up posing for stag films and nude modelling gigs as a quick way to pay the bills. In the film, she notes that it had paid better than washing dishes or floors. After stealing her first movie-camera from a pornographer who refused to pay her (women of her skin color brought in less money), she decided to become a pornographer. Audrey didn't become just any pornographer, she became a pioneer of a niche genre of porn - the American Indian genre. During her brief career, she fulfilled the fantasies that settlers and Europeans had about "Imaginary Indians" (Francis, 1992), Indian identity created by settler imagination. In the mockumentary, a documentarian and a porn-scholar insist upon celebrating Audrey as THE FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE PORNOGRAPHER. Audrey, however, resists being celebrated.

Audrey's story is about resistance, though it can seem difficult to imagine how a woman in sex work might be authentically herself, have agency, or even power, given the stigmatization of sex work, especially for an Indigenous woman. It is clear throughout the film that Audrey never lost her fire. She's smart, sassy, playful, a real trickster of sorts, and she resists being labelled anything but herself. For Audrey, the personal is the political, she understands her social situation and context quite well, and the very real outcomes of being a loved or hated Indian in Canada. Her porn was popular because it reflected the colonial power imbalance in ways that satisfied the expectations of the Indian/Settler dynamic in the broader public imagination. She understood this to be the only way for an Indian to make money in the colonized world, by playing into the fictitious Indian identity, and by selling the fantasy. She is not the first, or last Indian in show business to do this, nor will she be the last "first Indian" to be celebrated.

This conundrum of a scenario emerged from a deeper place. It began with reflection on the politics of recognition at play in the socio-political landscape during my lifetime. I knew the outrageous scenario of celebrating a pornographer could be the starting point to explore meaningful topics of Indigenous identity, sexuality, and erotic self-expression. Through my research questions (Who is the first indigenous female pornographer? Where are the Indians in porn? And what is the function of the "imaginary" Indian in porn?), I began weaving a story about Indigenous identity in conflict with governmental policy, community norms, and ourselves, as Indian people.

This essay and film speak about pornography, specifically heteronormative cis-gendered porn, not queer porn, or alternative porn. I write about Indians, Aboriginals, Natives, First Nations, as the first inhabitants of North America (Canada and United States*)* prior to European contact and colonization. These labels have been used politically to denote First Nations people, and I will use these terms interchangeably in this paper. While speaking broadly of Indigenous peoples, I do not include Metis or Inuit in my analysis. These two groups have distinct cultures and identities, and their own set of challenges that are not addressed here. For the purpose of this paper, I use the term "Indigenous" to reference First Nations people only.

While I don't provide analysis in my film about Métis identity, I do mock the confusion that "métis" identity inspires for the general public, but only as it pertains to the "pretendian" phenomenon. The little "m" métis is generally understood to be a racial categorization that refers mixed-race First Nations and non-Indigenous settler ancestry. Distant Indigenous parentage combined with this racialized mixing, is sometimes mis-used and appropriated as big "M" Métis. Capitol "M" Métis, however, refers to the unique cultural identity and Michif language that emerged during the Fur Trade (Red River Valley and beyond) through the intermarriage of

Indigenous people and Europeans. These communities and their descendants became the Métis people. To be formally recognized as big “M” Metis in Canada involves an application and approval process by federally recognized communities.

While policy requirements for Indian identity has allowed legitimate Indigenous people to reclaim their lost nations and heritage, DNA testing and self-identification practices has problematically allowed others to claim Indigenous identity without having actual ties to community, family, or cultural up-bringing and sometimes even sanctions fraudulent claims from settlers with no Indigenous ancestry whatsoever. “Pretendianism” --non-Indigenous people falsely claiming Indigenous identity-- is a phenomenon that affects both First Nations and Metis communities. Famous pretendian examples are Canadian conservationist Grey Owl (1888-1932) who is said to have saved the beavers, “Iron Eyes” Cody (1904-1999) the actor who was well-known as the crying Indian in media, activist and actor Sancheen Littlefeather (1946-2022) who refused an Oscar on behalf of Marlon Brando in 1973, and recently the influential singer and activist Buffy Sainte-Marie (1941-current). My perspective as expressed in the film understands it as a long occurring phenomenon since the beginning of the Imaginary Indian in popular media.

WHY I WROTE THIS SMUT

Behold, a quote:

> The Indian began as a White man's mistake, and became a White man's fantasy. Through the prism of White hopes, fears and prejudices, Indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become "Indians"; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be. (Francis 1992, 21)

THE FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE PORNOGRAPHER is inspired by the historical and contemporary assimilation practices of Canada to terminate the cultural, social, economic, and political distinctiveness of First Nations people. Assimilation practices such as separating families via child abduction into residential schools, enforcing policies that denied language and cultural practices through violence, imprisonment, and death all had dire impacts on Aboriginal people, nationwide and for generations. My own community and family have suffered, and I made this film as a means to channel my rage. The continued pain of intergenerational trauma and injustice is not an easy thing to live through. I have wondered all my life how my people survived. How did my family survive? This film has helped me to order my thoughts around what has been endured and what we continue to endure as First Nations people. I admit, my outlook continues to be bleak. Nonetheless, I wanted hope. I wanted to know if someone had mastered resistance to assimilation strategies, and what advice would they give to a new generation of Indigenous people?

THE POLITICS OF RECOGNITION

My film is not concerned with (particular) historical grievances, such as residential schools or disenfranchisement. It is rather pre-occupied with an invisible force that has achieved “frenemy” status - meaning both friend and enemy, to borrow popular slang. Assimilationist policy has transformed into a near invisible force today, and it stealthily feeds the Indian ego and betrays the Indian every chance it gets. And so, my film is concerned with the undetectable assimilation at play that causes tension within Indian identity among the self and within Indigenous communities, i.e., self-identification and self-policing. My film’s basic premise is that Indigenous identity conflicts with colonial culture, and through this conflict, Indigenous identity is lost to ambiguity and erasure which compromises Indigenous authenticity and freedom.

The erasure of Indian identity and removal of Indian claim to the land has been enforced throughout history by government law and policy, primarily the Indian Act in Canada. In 1982, The Constitution Act, section 35(1), was expanded to include Canada’s eventual ‘recognition ’of existing Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. Glen Coulthard’s book ‘Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition (2014) points to this moment in time as the emergence of “recognition” as the dominant expression of self-determination within the Aboriginal rights movement in Canada. “This constitutional breakthrough provided the catalyst that led to the federal government’s eventual recognition in 1995, of an 'inherent right to self-government’” (Coulthard 2014, 2). Since then, Canada has been forced to reconceptualize its relationship with Indigenous peoples, “whereas before 1969 federal Indian policy was unapologetically assimilationist, now it is couched in the vernacular of 'mutual recognition’” (Coulthard 2014, 3).

Coulthard believes that such a politics of recognition is unlikely to transform the colonial relationship between Indigenous people and the Canadian state.

> "Instead of ushering in an era of peaceful co-existence grounded on the ideal of reciprocity or mutual recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configuration of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous people's demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend". (Coulthard 2014, 3).

I find it useful to consider here how recognition has been enacted by the Canadian government: accommodating political autonomy, supporting cultural distinctiveness, land rights, and monetary retributions. As policy evolves, these changes eventually flow outward to meet ordinary life, the consequences of self-identification requirements for Indigenous people begin to reveal the subtle violence first intended by these archaic policies.

Coulthard's argument includes Franz Fanon's critique of Hegel's master/slave dialectic to challenge the assumption that social-political change can be produced by the politics of recognition efforts. He is relying on the Hegelian concepts that show how recognition can bring about human subjectivity, and identity formed intersubjectively through complex social interactions with other subjects. Coulthard quotes Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor in The Politics of Recognition (1992): "We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others acknowledge in us" (32-33). Coulthard notes that mutual or affirmative recognition will bring forth positive change or growth, while disparaging or unequal recognition has consequences on freedom and self-determination.

Working from Fanon's perspective in *Black Skin White Mask* (1952) to demonstrate how "diversity-affirming" forms of state recognition and accommodation can reproduce non mutual and unfree relations, e.g., victimhood, state dependency, wards of the state, and the exploited, Coulthard prepares to understand the effects of colonialism on Indigenous peoples. Fanon's idea

was another direct challenge of Hegel's master/slave concept, and its limitations in considering race and colonization. Fanon claimed that over time Slave populations (the colonized) tend to develop what he called "psycho-affective" attachments to these master-sanctioned forms of recognition, and that this attachment is essential in maintaining the economic and political structure of Master/Slave (colonizer/colonized) relations themselves.

While my film does not dive deeply into these political and psycho-affective issues, I am nonetheless fascinated by them. The implications of self-identification requirements on First Nations people supports governmental strategies to 'transform' indigenous-settler relations, but the implication of self-identification reveals a sinister truth: a set of impossible and fictitious standards for defining race, a logic employed to wipe out "Indian" claim to the land. Why do we continue to uphold policies that were created for assimilation as a road map to govern indigenous-settler relations? From this central position, I am creating a mockumentary, reflecting on "who" and "how" the settler is recognizing in their efforts to reconcile, and whether or not it's possible for an indigenous person to maintain their authenticity and freedom in the face of this recognition.

WHERE ARE THE INDIANS IN PORNOGRAPHY?

Initially, I chose pornography because the idea of Canada celebrating an Indigenous pornographer made me laugh and I thought it would be hilarious to create a comedy about a seedy pornography world that mirrors settler-colonial relations. It turned out to be the opposite of fun --I was inexperienced in smut and dumbfounded by it. My process is to establish an understanding of the material before screenwriting, and so I dove into the unknown. I quickly

discovered that porn elicits powerful reactionary responses from its intended and unintended audiences, it has lovers and haters, opponents and advocates. It has a reputation for being an undesirable lowly form of media, yet it's a highly consumed commodity in North America. For my purposes, I found pornography overflowing with examples of oppression, exploitation, racism, and prejudices, mirroring colonial ills quite well.

In 2019, I began searching for Indians in pornography and immediately noticed an absence. The "Imaginary Indian" is represented by symbolic imagery in porn - beads, feathers, and war bonnets - and non-native performers play the part. I borrow the term "Imaginary Indian" throughout this essay as coined by Daniel Francis, in his book of the same name (1992), to refer to Indian identity as one created by Western imagination, for its own purposes. There did not seem to be a place for "real" Indians in porn until late 2023, when I noticed the popular keyword search "Native Porn" brought up a handful of amateur porn videos from Manitoba. In 2024, the keyword search reveals a growing amateur collection: *Native Canadian, Native Pussy, Native Rez, Native American, Native Winnipeg, Native Rez Girl, Native Women.*

During the research and writing period for my film between 2019 - 2022, I focused on early pornography: Stag Pornography (1900 - 1960) and the Golden Age of Porn (1969 - 1984). In these pornographic eras, the Imaginary Indian thrives, and the "real" Indian is absent. While porn has adopted the imagery, as well as the stereotypical characteristics and attitudes e.g. brave, stoic, wise, nature-loving, lazy, impoverished, dispossessed, violent, etc., depending on the context, the formation of the Imaginary Indian identity has its roots in the beginning of settler-indigenous relationships in North America. The identity is shaped by the sharp distinction and clash in cultures, native people's "Otherness", and by dominant beliefs and prejudices (Francis 1992, 21).

Among the earliest beliefs of the Imaginary Indian is “the noble savage” —gentle, nature-loving, and primitive. The earliest media to lock in the iconic imagery of the Indian were paintings and writings, later there were travelling variety shows and vaudeville, and eventually, photographs, cinema, and television. An entire chapter by Francis called “The Vanishing Indian” looks at how the belief that Natives are a dead or dying race impacted art, culture, and public policy in Canada (Francis 1992, 31-57). The belief in the Vanishing Indian fueled a generation of artists to create a fiction about the Indian, by Canadian painters Paul Kane (1810-1871), Edmund Montague Morris (1871-1913), and Emily Carr (1871-1945). Their “Indian Projects” sought to capture the dying Indian race and way of life before they passed into oblivion. These projects by non-Indigenous artists were heavily sponsored by the Canadian government.

In the 1900s, the belief of the “Vanishing Indian” was reinforced by wardens for reserves and Indian communities that could enforce law and control over First Nations people: Indian Agents were often locals, mostly farmers, or missionaries sent to convert natives to religion and help to acculturate them into mainstream society. Missionary writing at the time expressed that Indian way of life had dwindled, and that the natives were eager to conform to the new structures of society. These writings fueled the state’s mission for native assimilation. These perspectives were based on observations of the Indians, not by asking Indian nations what *they* wanted.

While contemporary images of the Indian are changing, due to native people’s increasing access to education, technology, media training, mentorship, and funding opportunities, there is still work to be done to dispel the lingering stereotypes. Indigenous journalist Duncan McCue asks in the article “Does an Aboriginal Canadian need to be ‘Drumming, Dancing, Drunk or Dead’ to make the news?” (2014):

“Go to news search engines such as Google News and search 'dead ’and

> 'First Nations,*'(or synonyms such as 'native 'or' Aboriginal')*. I'll bet my grandmother's dreamcatcher your cup overfloweth with news from across the country." (McCue, 2014)

The "Dead Indian" and "Drunk Indian" were prominent beliefs held about a dying race. High mortality rates and substance abuse are now understood as the experiences of survivors of intergenerational trauma resulting from colonialism (e.g., the effects of colonization on mental health, addictions, experiences of domestic violence, sexual violence, and suicide). These contemporary beliefs held about the "survivors" of cultural genocide, that they are *impoverished, victimized, violent, aggressive, drunk, addicted* due to historical impacts of colonialism, join the classic stereotypes aforementioned, the noble savage, blood-thirsty savage, docile Indian princess, and continue to be highlighted throughout popular film and media.

CENSORSHIP AND ERASURE OF "REAL" INDIANS IN PORN

The erasure and censorship of "real" Indigenous peoples in porn are influenced by wide-held beliefs and stereotypes about the Imaginary Indian, i.e. Braves, Chiefs, Indian Princesses, and the belief that Native tribes have died out during colonization. In the essay "NDNGirls and Pocahotties: Native American and First Nations representation in settler colonial pornography and erotica" (2020), James Mackay and Polina Mackay examine popular Indian imagery, and the history of characters and scenarios in hardcore American pornography within the wider context of the treatment of Indigenous women in settler colonial North America (168). Native women have long been presented as innocent, child-like, docile, and compliant in sexual acts, due to settler fantasies and desire for the Indian Princess stereotype (172). This stereotype finds its way into settler sexuality and eroticism practices, such as sexy Halloween costumes, fetish costumes,

festival girl apparel, burlesque, and pornography. The "real" Indian does not register in porn's visual culture because it does not align with historical colonial and contemporary beliefs held about Indian identity.

Mackay and Mackay consider that native people are missing from porn for various reasons, for one, self-identified native porn stars, like Ruby Knox, or Jewel De'nyle (Blackfoot), are often placed by distributors into racial categories of Asian or Hispanic porn. "They spend their career being marketed as 'Latina', in an era when just about all other racial and national characteristics are fetishized" (Mackay 2020, 176). Mackay and Mackay also consider that maybe there was no one available to cast, or that native people don't take on these roles themselves. I add that native performers likely don't "publicly" take on these pornographic roles or claim descent because of intertribal criticism and ostracism they may face by doing so. Many Indian pornography workers may claim descent but not all are accepted as "real" depending on the requirements of their nation/tribe, i.e. blood quantum, marriage and adoption rights, family and community ties. The 1980's Cherokee porn star Janette Littledove had received scrutiny from her nation for self-identification, but she was later authenticated by her ability to speak her native language (Mackay 2020, 175).

Self-identifying Cherokee porn star and pornographer Hyapatia Lee has a different story. In 1993, she made the only high-budget "authentically Indian" porn film called *Snake Dance*, it was marketed as a porno written and directed by an authentic Indian, featuring authentic Indian performers and authentic Indian sex philosophy. I'd hoped to declare her THE FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE PORNOGRAPHER, but we'll never know the "first" due to the anonymity in early porn creation. Unfortunately for Hyapatia Lee, claiming Cherokee descent is a contentious act in itself, as this tribe is frequently impacted by blood quantum and purity

debates. Cherokee citizenship is determined not by blood, but by marriage, and the majority of Cherokee descendants have white ancestors that do not share in traditional Cherokee cultural beliefs or language (Mackay 2020, 175). By this fact alone, they are often not believed to be “real" Indians. Further, the film’s authentic Indian sex teachings known as "Quodoushka teachings” by the medicine man Harley ‘Swiftdeer ’Reagan (1941-2013) were disputed and not to represent Cherokee traditions. He was publicly rejected from the nations he had tried to claim (Little Eagle, 1992).

Mackay and Mackay present a distinct scenario that underscores the suppression of Native bodies in porn by using the example of NDNGirls.com., a porn website (active from 2009) advertising “Casino girls, reservation hotties and welfare chicks (Mackay 2020, 178).” The creator of the website, Shimmy, filmed himself having sex with various First Nations women from the Fort William First Nation reserve near Thunder Bay, ON, in Winnipeg, MB, and on the Navajo Reservation in the United States. They were economically disadvantaged women, and some were struggling with severe mental health and addiction issues. (Mackay 2020, 177). Efforts were taken by Indigenous communities, groups, and journalists to protect the vulnerable women, and he was pressured to shut down his site. (Mackay 2020, 177). What is significant about this scenario is that the image presented by Shimmy radically breaks from the historical “Imaginary Indian” imagery presented in pornography. He chose to showcase native women with phenotypically native features, not non-indigenous women dressed in Indian costumes. The native women’s bodies stray from the typical physical European beauty standards found in porn, such as wide hips, tiny waists, and full breasts, instead he shows native women of all body shapes, and often struggling with substance abuse or mental health issues, i.e., a woman smokes while visibly pregnant (Mackay 2020, 178).

His clips reveal the outcome of a ‘settler elimination logic’ by positioning the native women as modern-day survivors of genocide, the women are shown as impoverished, physically and mentally suffering from the intergenerational effects of colonialism. Porn’s long history of eroticizing signifiers associated with Native Americans is predicated on the logic of absence — Indigenous subjectivity is erased by the colonizing power, and the fictions created in porn of Indigenous people (a race of people that have died out during colonization) have long reflected this logic. Shimmy portrayed his performers as absolute victims, and this image breaks from the previous images of the Indian in porn (179).

INDIAN LOVE: The “Playing Indian” phenomenon

The Imaginary Indian and the “Playing Indian” phenomenon became the main themes of my film. For Audrey Little-breast’s creation era (roughly 1969-1979), the available vintage porn I’d reviewed had shown the Imaginary Indian as a costume to be worn and a role to be played, and it became an erotic symbol informed by settler belief and desire. “Playing Indian” is borrowed from Philip Deloria’s book with that title (1998), where Deloria traces this peculiar act of Whites to “play Indian” throughout the ages. The act of wearing an Indian costume can be a form of escapism for Euro-Americans, representing an identity and ideals of whom they wish to be. However, by doing so, it was illuminating the power and privilege of their non-indigenous identity, and rendering the existence of “real” Indians dissonant (Mackay 2020, 176).

“Elimination logic” is a term used by anthropologist and ethnographer Patrick Wolfe, he believes that primary motives for the elimination of a people in settler colonialism is not racially

motivated, based on religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc. but access to territory (Wolfe 2006, 389).

> "The positive outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism" (Wolfe 2006, 388).

Like Mackay and Mackay, porn scholar Tim Gregory also believes that this eliminationist logic regulates Indigenous sexualities in settler colonies. This logic has created an elimination of the native body in pornography. Gregory's book "Pornography, Indigeneity and Neocolonialism" (2020) refers to pornography as a technology of colonialism. He argues that contemporary pornography is structured by colonial contact with Indigenous sex and sexuality.

> "Pornography affirms colonization by naturalizing settler sexuality across patriarchal image networks. Pornography is a representational system that developed from frontier, colonial sexual violence that enforced a binary between native and non-native sex" (Gregory 2020, 2).

Native people are seen as the "other" in the narrative of colonialism, i.e. existing before colonialism, and impacted First Nations negatively throughout. Now a dying race/culture, their role is limited and guided by the gaze and interpretation of the settler. Gregory's book demonstrates how porn racialization is built on an ordinary judgement of a native/non-native polarity which denies pornographic representation to Indigenous people. "This censorship not only prevents access for indigenous people to identify with, contest, and contribute to their sexual representation, but prevents settler fantasies of "Natives" from being discussed, desired, and critiqued" (Gregory 2020, 2).

I saw the parallels of "Indian Love" (a love for the Imaginary Indian) and the desire to "play Indian" mirrored through contemporary issues like Pretendianism that allows for its

wearers to become or feel what they believe the Indian to be: distinct, rare, special, unique. Pretendianism isn't a new phenomenon to occur, it's an internalized mechanism, an acceptance of the methods of colonial violence. Individuals who've falsely claimed Indigenous identity are said to be motivated by the special status benefits (specific to the tribe) such as hunting and fishing rights, tax exempt (if living on a reserve), treaty annuities, funding and career opportunities. In some cases, they became renowned champions of Indigenous issues regardless of their precarious claims to heritage, for example, ex-professors Carrie Bourassa and Andrea Smith, award-winning writer Joseph Boyden, and filmmaker Michelle Latimer (Lewis, 2023).

I also began reflecting on what "playing Indian" means for Indigenous sexuality. If the erotic is determined by others - settlers, could there be an authentic erotic identity for Indigenous people? Is Indigenous sexuality something that needs to be reclaimed, and how should this task be undertaken? I personally don't believe that the answer needs to be public for the individual, Indigenous sexuality ought to have the choice of privacy. I do, however, see the value of sexuality that is made visible. Visibility can help to protect vulnerable people, such as protecting rights of 2SLGBTQ+ people, sex-workers, and victims of sex-trafficking. The acceptance of these groups is required to improve their quality of life.

There are contemporary Indigenous artists who actively strive to make Indigenous sexuality and eroticism visible through their art, believing that this visibility helps to contradict toxic stereotypes for Indigenous people. For example, Dayna Danger, an Indigiqueer Metis-Saulteaux-Polish visual artist, strives to create worlds where people can exist freely without having to conform to gender and sexual norms. Danger is interested in disrupting the gaze placed on Indigenous peoples (Danger, 2024). With Kinship Masks (2016), a series of photographs of Indigenous people wearing beaded fetish masks, Danger wants to reject the voyeuristic gaze, by

using the mask as protective armor. Another Indigenous artist and filmmaker Theo Jean Cuthand, whose film and installation work focuses on sexuality, race, madness, youth, and love, has been making visibly queer media for the last twenty years (Berlin, 2024). Cuthand is one of the earliest Indigiqueer artists – and even coined the term - to bring Indigenous sexuality to North American film festival screens. Without Cuthand's dedication to creating alternative work about Indigenous queer sexualities, there wouldn't be an Indigiqueer genre in cinema or Media Arts.

SUBVERSION, SURVIVANCE, AND PERFORMATIVITY AS ACTS OF RECLAMATION

> "Kent Monkman's revisioning of the Canadian artistic, social, political and sexual landscape is the most radical rethinking of the way our society functions any artist has accomplished in the 150 years since Confederation."
> (Enright, 2017)

As I dove into exploring the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous sexualities, I sought to understand the ways in which Kent Monkman employs the technique of "subversion" in his artistic work. It occurred to me that my playfulness and fun around the serious debates of pornography, eroticism, and sexuality as they intersect with race and gender needed to be guided by techniques that were effective in conveying the message. I am certainly not afraid of offending anyone, but I wish to be deliberate and precise in the delivery of my ideas.

Kent Monkman is a Cree artist whose multidisciplinary artwork in painting, installation, film, and performance have earned him a prominent place in the contemporary art world. He explores themes of colonization, sexuality, loss, and resilience, often painting his gender-fluid alter-ego Miss Chief Eagle Testickle into the historical landscapes of Canada. I have only known *subversion* as a literary technique that "subverts expectation", as it can be a plot twist that

challenges and changes an audience's perspective. It works within the expectations of the genre, and plays with the medium to transform or create new meanings for the audience. In art, *subversion* deliberately intends for the audience to change their mind, ask questions, or challenge perspectives with regard to institutions or political systems.

Kent Monkman relies on Miss Chief Eagle Testickle to disrupt, re-imagine and re-direct the national narratives. Monkman describes Miss Chief as a Trickster entity, an anti-hero and a "kind of a hot mess" (Enright, 2017). Within Indigenous cultures, the Trickster character exists in stories (oral culture, text, media) as an intelligent and mischievous entity, known for their trickery on others, disrupting and generally disobeying the physical and societal rules, and defying conventional behavior. The trickster is an entity that openly questions, disrupts order, and mocks authority. I interpreted the Trickster from family stories as a contrarian of sorts, who later forges a new path or finds a new way of doing something.

Alberta-born filmmaker Clint Alberta (1970 - 2002) of Dene and European descent "who played with personas and also went by the names Clint Morrill, Clint Tourangeau, and Jules Karatechamp at different points in his life" (Minifie, 2023), presented himself as Clint Star, an erotically charged alter-ego trickster character. His documentary "Deep Inside Clint Star" (1999), shows intimate conversations with his closest Indigenous friends on sex, life, love, abuse, and colonialism. Alberta created a new representation of native sexuality on-screen. Prior to Alberta, artist Lori Blondeau (Cree/Saulteaux/Metis) presented "Cosmosquaw" (1996) and "Lonely Surfer Squaw" (1997). Blondeau created personas for these two works, to challenge mainstream standards of beauty (white beauty icons), and inserted her native body into these images of white pin-up girl culture. The iconic "Lonely Surfer Squaw" series features Blondeau in a beaver-fur bikini posing beside a surfboard in the dead of winter (Budney, 2018).

Trickster-like characters are not a new device in Indigenous storytelling. Trickster stories are as old as creation stories (how the worlds were created). Sometimes, Trickster stories are creation stories themselves. In Kirstin L Squint's essay on Gerald Vizenor's *Trickster Hermeneutics,*

Vizenor describes the Trickster in oral storytelling as

> "[A] sign, a communal signification that cannot be separated or understood in isolation; the signifiers are acoustic images bound to four points of view [author, narrator, characters, and reader], and the signified, or the concept the signifier locates in language and social view, is a narrative event or a translation. The listeners and readers become the trickster, a sign, a semiotic being in discourse; the trickster is a comic heliotrope in narrative voices, not a model or tragic figuration in isolation." (Squint, 107)

Attention is placed on how these stories function in relation to the world and ourselves, as opposed to how anthropologists have come to understand the Trickster as a cultural figure, or icon. Through Trickster stories, we are transformed because we interact. It is through this transformation that Trickster stories provide healing toward individuals and groups by encouraging growth and resilience.

"Survivance." termed by Gerald Vizenor (2008) relates to how an Indigenous person and their culture has come to resist, survive, and thrive the various positions marked out for them by the settler-state through stereotypes, popular culture, and national mythology (The Decolonial Dictionary, 2021). In the introduction to "Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence" (2008) Vizenor writes that "Survivance is an active sense of presence… it's the continuance of stories" (1). "Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, detractions, obtrusions, the unbearable sentiments of tragedy, and the legacy of victimry" (1). This concept helped to guide me through my film's heavy subject matter - the effects of colonialism on Indigenous sexuality and gender, and the Imaginary Indian in pornography - and to focus on what is important in

creating a trickster type work and character: mainly, a disruption can occur in the regular set programming. It helped me to understand that a stand can be taken. Value can be re-assigned. The archival past can be revisited, revised, and re-made. Just like Audrey stealing a movie-camera, and re-appropriating the Indian myth to gain a financial freedom over her life, I found great silliness and presence in asking white friends and colleagues to dress like Indians while I filmed them. There are no rules to how we dance with an unknown history.

MY BACKGROUND

THE FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE PORNOGRAPHER is my first mockumentary. As a multi-disciplinary artist, I love to create sci-fi, fantasy, comedy, and experimental works in film. I've made a few documentaries, but reality doesn't give me the same thrill that fiction does. My background in comedy writing and performance for the stage (stand-up, sketch, theatre), were useful during the writing and editing processes. I employed the basic joke structure for most of my scenes —the set-up, one or two lesser jabs, and then a punchline. Sketch writing proved useful in thinking about how to weave together philosophy, porn theory, and Indigenous culture by creating an anchor joke. An anchor joke is defined by continuous repeats throughout a series of sketches to elevate the humor and create a desired effect on your audience.

None of my previous films prepared me for the challenge of making a mockumentary, except for in knowing how to schedule and organize a film shoot. My early films made with long-time collaborator Rolla Tahir, which she called THE BLUE PERIOD, had a similar moody contemplative vibe —truth be told, I think I was sad. "Lunar Schism" (2017), "Dreams Untold" (2018), and "The Solar Lodge" (2021) all contemplated gender, sexuality, and the impacts of intergenerational trauma on the psyche, and any bigger questions related to Indigenous knowledge transference. I think in some ways these films and my undergrad philosophy studies helped to shape my thoughts on Indigenous sexuality, or at least primed me to think about Indigenous identity and the "pornographic".

Speaking of the "pornographic", in my opinion the filthiest, vilest, indecent, and most fun filmmaker that inspires my practice is none other than John Waters, the Pope of Trash. I watched "Pink Flamingos" (1972) and "Female Trouble" (1974) multiple times while creating Audrey's

pornography, and during the process of color grading my mockumentary. I imagined Audrey's world to reflect the characteristics of his circle of actors and artists, and their willingness to transgress societal norms for their art. I was inspired by the extraordinary characters in Pink Flamingo, and how absurd a scene can become for these characters: a baby is in the crib and is crying to be fed, but the baby happens to be a large middle-aged woman called "Edie," stripped to her underwear and screaming for eggs. Visually, I enjoy the do-it-yourself low-budget look of Waters' early films and their vintage, punk aesthetic and attitude. I continue to incorporate the spirit of this approach into my own work.

FORM

MOCKUMENTARY

Mockumentaries are known to present a work of fiction in the style of a documentary, they often depict events presented as real, and can be farcical or satirical in nature. I chose mockumentary for Audrey's tale because documentaries have been used throughout film's history to convey information about Indigenous peoples and their cultures by settlers to audiences worldwide. Subverting this genre is an act of reclaiming media sovereignty over how stories are told about Indigenous peoples. Through this form, and propelled by humor, it was possible for me to begin a dialogue about Indigenous positionality in transgressive histories, while maintaining a lightness about the subject material.

In preparation for writing the film, I'd viewed several documentaries on pornography to get a sense of structure and storytelling devices, like "Pornland: How the Porn Industry Has Hijacked Our Sexuality" (2014), "Porndemic" (2018), "Hot Girls Wanted" (2015), and "After Porn Ends" (2012). Some documentaries were sensational in highlighting the tragic realities of the sex industry and of sex workers, while others emphasized the freedom of expression granted to pornography. The devices used to shock an audience toward revulsion for porn or commiseration for "poor exploited women" are common techniques in documentaries about pornography. Anti-porn radical Feminist Gail Dines presents her perspective as journalistic and scholarly in "Pornland: How the Porn Industry Has Hijacked Our Sexuality" (2014) and relies on visual cues to strengthen her argument. She stands at a podium to lecture, and her argument is enforced by on-screen text, quotes, facts, maps, and news footage. These visual artefacts hold

power, as they symbolize fact, reason, logic, and a dedication to the process of uncovering truth and knowledge. However, there were no counter-examples to challenge Dine's viewpoint in her film and after a while it comes off as propaganda.

"Candice" (2019) by Sheona McDonald, a biographical documentary on the "Godmother of Feminist Porn," the performer, director, and producer Candida Royalle uses Candida's porn archives, films, and several cinema verité style interviews of Candida as she fights cancer to build a sympathetic narrative of an accomplished, yet exploited woman who is now fighting for her life. Candida shares past traumas that brought her to a career in porn, and illuminates her longing for acceptance. In both documentaries, "Candice" and Pornland," the porn worker is presented as someone who lacks agency, and is generally a victim who's deficiency or trauma has led to a life in porn. I knew that I didn't want my pornographer to be shown in this light, given the colonial history and intergenerational trauma experienced by Indigenous people. I wanted my pornographer to resist the narratives forced upon her, especially the ones meant to disempower her and keep her locked in trauma.

The desire to disrupt the narratives and stereotypes placed on sex workers were further influenced by the article "Performativity on the Margin" (2019). The author Catalin Brylla reflects on Brian Hill's documentary "Pornography: The Musical" (2003) about the British porn industry through the eyes and voices of sex workers. Not your average documentary, the women perform their stories and experiences of the porn industry in song. The result is a collage of subjectivity that allows the women to have distinct voices. Brylla argues that the film's "idiosyncratic style and narrative potentially reconfigure existing social stereotypes about sex workers and schematic expectations about documentaries" (Brylla 2019, 71). This filmmaking approach to the subject matter rebels against traditional documentary forms and templates

“which through other films about sex workers have fossilized into formulaic narrative and social stereotypes” (71).

OTHER INSPIRATION

Vaudeville was a major source of theatrical entertainment for North American audiences from the mid-1890s until the early 1930s (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024). It started as a travelling live entertainment show provided by circus acts, singers, dancers, chorus girls, clowns, and comedians, and later had dedicated theatre space. The Indian became a popular symbol within these variety shows, as the wild, lawless savage, representing both innocence and savagery. Long-time tropes about the Indian were born during this time (Cowboys and Indians, The Exotic Indian princess, The War Chief, The Indian brave) and were played up by Indigenous and non-indigenous performers.

Molly Spotted-Elk, a Penobscot Indian woman dancer, actress, and writer (1903-1977), became a huge influence for my character Audrey. Molly dreamed of going to university and becoming an Anthropologist as well as a professional dancer, and to fund these dreams performed traditional Indian dances for tourists. She later became a performer for Vaudeville, cabarets, and speakeasies, in addition to being a nude model. She was renown as Molly Spotted Elk —The Indian Princess —half naked and wearing a headdress, instead of the serious dancer that she’d hoped to be. Her Indian Princess act took her to national and international stages. However, she expressed her frustration in her journal writings (McBride, 1995) about the racist expectations of her dance routines. Whereas Molly wanted to be taken seriously, my character Audrey Little-breast found power in exploiting the situation for her own benefit.

Stag and Peephole pornography informed how I would film Audrey's early porno work to feature in the film. Growing out of variety acts and burlesque, nudity and obscenity found a new home with the birth of cinema. Early pornographies (1900 - 1960) were known as blue films, stags, and peephole films. They featured women committing the ordinary act of undressing, sometimes in a seductive or flirtatious way, later evolving to include sexual acts, and hardcore sex scenes. Stag silent films, produced secretly by anonymous and amateur artists, were screened to male audiences in a discreet location or brothel. Audrey's first pornography is a stag film, featuring an Indian Princess, played by long-time collaborator Pow Wow Pussy.

FILM REFERENCES

In preparation for writing the film, I watched "The Dirk Diggler Story" (1988) by Paul Thomas Anderson, a short mockumentary film about a well-endowed male porn star who became addicted to drugs that resulted in his eventual downfall. The film is the precursor to "Boogie Nights" (1997), starring Mark Wahlberg and Burt Reynolds. I wanted to get a sense of how the subject matter was approached as a mockumentary. The story unfolds through a series of interviews with Dirk's colleagues, and B-roll footage of Dirk at work on low-budget porno sets, with the pace set by an unknown narrator. Through the footage, we get a sense of how low-budget pornography was filmed in California during the 1979-1981 time period of the film, and the culture and attitudes of those involved. I kept this insight in mind as I began to screen-write, alongside my viewings of stag pornography (see Appendix B: Stag Titles) which helped to shape the elements I would use for the film: Audrey's stag reel, a story setting, its time-period, Canadian politics, society's attitudes regarding pornography, the porn industry, etc.

PRODUCTION NOTES

THE WRITING PROCESS

My experience of "being Indian" is much different than what my mother and grandparents endured. They experienced direct racism and oppression in various violent ways - ways that I cannot even imagine, because I was spared that reality by the pardon of my later birth. I was born the year the United Nations working group redrafted *The Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People* (1984), a document that "emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their development in keeping with their own needs and aspirations" (Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People, accessed August 2024). This document helped to create the employment I would have throughout my life, as an outreach worker and educator, for improving the quality of life for Indigenous people. Instead of being hated, we were suddenly celebrated, and employed. My world has been one of navigating the "pride" of being native, while resisting assimilation into contemporary Canadian culture.

Early in the writing process, I worked to understand my issue with the politics of recognition in Canadian culture, and establish the meaning of "resistance" for myself. My rage was fueled by the celebrations of the "Firsts:" the first Indian doctor, first Indian nurse, first Indian judge, first Indian police officer, etc. I felt they were farcical celebrations, as if we are applauded for integrating and assimilating into settler-society. It still feels like a mockery to me. I wanted answer that mockery with my own mockery, in return. The challenge of setting up the scenario was in navigating my own feelings of failure at resisting assimilation, and determining

that Audrey would speak my thoughts. Audrey became the conduit for my emotions and desires, and also my role model.

I was told at a young age by my mother to forget my native language, that it wouldn't help me to live a good life, and so I actively changed my vernacular. From that moment on, society treated me differently, and I was awarded opportunity and money. I can read and write, something my grandparents never learned. Instead, they resisted. True resistance! I can create imaginary worlds and weave stories and images like sorcery, but they had true sorcery of the elements, they had true dominion over the raw material of "real life". Survival. The meaning of living with death at your door, a brush with extinction, the privilege of feeling nature colliding and crushing against you. I wanted to include those acts of survival in my own story somehow. And I wondered how old things, like practices of hunting and trapping, could become new things in this world. I sit at my desk typing, click-click, breathing stale air, with elevator music in the backdrop easing my anxiety. A humorous parallel to what every day living can mean throughout different ages, I wanted very much to preserve that absurdity in my film as well.

THE SCRIPT

I learned how to skin a beaver by watching my grandmother's hands. She would place a garbage bag on the floor by the wood stove before gutting the animal on it. She had one bucket for intestines and one bucket for organs, to be prepared later in different ways. I didn't hold the knife, of course, I was too small, but I got to help in the way a toddler tries to help. I remember the warmth of the organs heating the space, and the dark murky scent of death. Dead beavers have a particular dank smell, kind of like a swamp.

My favorite part of beaver preparation was observing the removal of fur from the body, it was delicate work made for her hands. She used a flattened stick instrument to scrape against the beavers' thick layers of fat. A beaver in the winter meant good eating, with the fat of the beaver to warm you in minus 40 Celsius weather. It will heat your body for hours - a true prize in the northwestern Ontario winters. I didn't know that beaver skinning was considered "women's work" once upon a time ago, or that Indigenous women from my area were renown during the Fur Trade for their meticulously prepared pelts. My grandmother made a living by skinning beavers and foxes, tanning hides, and making leather crafts. Selling fur and leather was a dwindling practice when I was a child, but my grandparents continued to do so for extra money. They hunted and trapped animals, and when they were blessed with a good-looking fur, they took the time and care to prepare it.

I sat for days writing the scholarly notes for what I wanted to say about pornography, porn studies, the imaginary Indian, post-colonial thought, the politics of recognition, etc. I needed one beautiful idea to connect them all. Then it hit me: you cannot speak about Canadian sex or Canada in general without talking about …. beavers. THE BEAVER became the allegory of my film. The thread-through. The more I thought about the beaver's history and meaning for both sides —indigenous and settler — I felt the story shifting into place. This didn't happen magically of course.

AUDREY LITTLE-BREAST

AUDREY LITTLE-BREAST is every native woman I've ever loved and admired. She is my Auntie, and my Grandmother. The women in my family challenged everyone and everything,

they took a stand against injustices, expressed themselves freely and openly, and they would argue, curse, scream and defend their opinions until their death. My aunties were titans, tiny angry titans. I wanted Audrey Little-breast to be a titan, too.

I wrote several versions of the script as a more academic study of Indigenous people in pornography. I thought the script was good to go, and cast an incredible actress, Monique Mojica, as my pornographer. Our conversations helped to re-shape the interview section with Audrey Little-breast. I am forever grateful for Monique's insight and expertise in collaboration on dialogue. Through our conversations, Monique helped me to realize historical connections to sex, sexuality, and indigenous/settler relations - insights that were less theoretical and more human and grounded in indigenous culture and worldview.

When we talked about the character's dialogue, Monique said: "I don't think Audrey would speak an academic language, I think she's from a different time and has a different attitude. She wouldn't say 'Settlers,' she would say 'The White Man.' She wouldn't say 'having sex' or 'intercourse,' she would say 'making love' or 'love-making'." Monique shared with me stories she had heard about the use of Beavers for erotic practices. The animal was used by Ojibwa men to "freshen up". The beaver's balls, castor - the oily reddish-brown substance secreted by anal glands - holds a special perfume. When you put it on your body, it releases pheromones that can help to attract a sexual mate. Other parts of the beaver were used to oil men's hair and scalp, and to even moisturize the lips and body, all in preparation for some Indian love-making. No surprise that those special parts are how the beaver itself attracts a mate, and the part of the beaver that is most prized by expensive perfumeries in Europe. Ah, the parallels! There you have it - the beaver's famous balls inspired my tale, as well! Beaver pelts and the fur trade explosion are where the two Indigenous and Settler worlds

collided in colonial history. For the love of fashion and luxury, the beaver became the most wanted animal in North America, almost to extinction. And this lust for Beaver changed the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Settlers forever.

PRODUCTION

Most of my film footage was created during COVID-19 lockdown from 2020 to 2022, and the restrictions in place for filming, and the fear of catching COVID and dying impacted the visual elements of the film. Monique requested specific working conditions for her participation. It was to be a closed set with only necessary crew, and all cast and crew had to be tested for COVID-19 and remain masked. Originally, I wanted the interview to be an intimate sit-down with a person in their house, and maybe we could walk through the rooms together viewing photographs from their past. Unfortunately going into someone's home wasn't an option during the height of lockdown, so instead we filmed at one of the York U studios. We recreated a space for Monique's kitchen table, modelling her home after my Aunties' homes, with various pan-Indigenous paraphernalia and pictures of angels on the wall. Then we sat Monique down for an impromptu interview while she worked on her craft, and that was that.

Monique Mojica as Audrey Little-breast in THE FIRST INDIGENOUS FEMALE PORNOGRAPHER, 2020

RE-CREATED ARCHIVAL & FOUND FOOTAGE

At first, I believed that found footage would be the easiest to obtain because the internet is full of images and videos, and I had already made several practice videos using found footage. However, finding images and videos to create the character's world was challenging, as archives containing images and video of First Nations people on reserve and of Treaty Land from 1900-2000s are nearly non-existent in national and local archives in Toronto. My main source became the National Film Board of Canada. They have worked with many First Nations artists/filmmakers throughout the years and continue to maintain their archives, and strengthen relationships with Indigenous artists for collaboration.

It was easiest to re-create archival for Audrey's pornography work once I had an idea of the era that she was making films in. Using stag pornography and vintage porn clips as reference (see Appendix A: Filmography), I was able to re-create basic stag/burlesque influenced pornography.

"Indian Love Burlesque", Prelinger Archives, accessed November 16, 2020

"Indian Love" was my favourite clip of vintage erotic dance, and the phrase became the mantra for Audrey's pornography. "Indian Love" is a black and white reel of a white woman dancing provocatively in a tribal inspired bikini. She dons a headband and feather, and her dance imitates a tribal dance that mimics animals and birds. What I like about this clip is that the woman knows that she is not native and that she's playing Indian. She's compelled by her love for Indians to play Indian for money and fame. I modelled the character of Pow Wow Pussy's contributions to

Audrey's pornographic vision after this nameless woman. "Pow Wow Pussy" is Audrey's porn star and long-time collaborator who loves to play Indian. In my film, she strips out of a buckskin dress, inappropriately titled: Indian Princess Finds a Job, juxtaposed with Beavers that are parachuted from airplanes to repopulate a dying Beaver Population over North America.

"Indian Love Burlesque", Prelinger Archives, accessed November 16, 2020.

"Indian Princess finds a job" by Audrey Little-breast, 1970.

In retrospect, I may have started my project in a backward fashion. For two years, I watched way too much porn that forever soured my view of sexuality and human nature, with no reward - I didn't find any useful 'shots.' In retrospect, focusing on the archival research first and then crafting a story around the most promising clips would have made my life easier. But I had no idea what I was doing, and the process was so challenging, frustrating, and expensive, I'll likely never work with archival materials again. Archival research requires great deal of patience and love to explore. That is not me. However, if you're a masochist, here are my hot tips for working with archival footage all by your lonesome:

1. Don't.
2. But if you have to, establish your boundaries — know what image quality you're after, and be firm in your timeline for researching it (i.e., if it doesn't't exist, move on!)
3. When looking for BIPOC visual archives, be prepared to discover almost nothing. Best to reach out to local archival organizations and initiatives that prioritize alternative histories.
4. Be prepared to spend your rent money on copyright.
5. Be prepared to sell a kidney to pay for a Visual Researcher when you've had enough do-it-yourself adventuring.
6. If you're a student set on using all footage in existence from the internet, no matter what, don't ask permission or pay for it —just do it. Don't quote me though, I have no argument to justify this advice, I'm just giving you permission to use it, if you need it.

THE FILMMAKER AS SUBJECT

Originally, I didn't want to have the filmmaker (myself) on-screen in any significant way. I'd planned for the interviewer to be a white male (maybe British) to mock the authority provided by this common narration choice in historical nature or social science documentaries. But as the work progressed, and the more I reflected upon the self-policing of identity that occurs in First Nation's communities, I thought it would be interesting to have that labelling of identity occur by the voice of a First Nations' woman filmmaker. This would change the focus of the film from being about how Imaginary Indians exist in porn to how Imaginary Indian identity manifests in our own communities, while raising a subjective question around the Indian's place in the erotic world moving forward.

I'd asked myself if it was possible for Indigenous people to be in porn in an authentic way, and I didn't like the answer that Indigenous porn would become just an extension or fetish of mainstream culture that will perpetually render us as the "other," and support the Master's telling of history. I also realized that we didn't have to prove anything about ourselves in porn, in erotica, or regarding our own sexuality. The need to prove ourselves is something that we desperately need to decolonize. And so, my filmmaker asks the final question in the mockumentary of Audrey: "Do you think there's a way for Indigenous People to reclaim their on-screen erotic or sexuality identity?" Audrey smiles in her trickster-like way, as she holds up an iconic beaver pelt bra, made by her hands with the fur prepared by our ancestors. The filmmaker chooses to continue to subvert the discourse by engaging in an erotic dance style.

Alongside working on this film, I'd began training in erotic dance, specifically Pole Dance, and later in Burlesque. These two communities were among the first to open their doors

after COVID-19 lockdown, and I was eager to train again in an athletically demanding sport. Wondering how I would conclude the film in a fun way, and perhaps take a stance on the subject myself, I decided to pole dance into the end credits. I'm not sure how this closing will be received - when you're training and learning erotic dance, it isn't about sex or sexuality, it's about the strength and endurance of your body, and your dedication —like any sport—but this isn't what most people see. Luckily, I've learned that Pole Dancing isn't about the validation from others, but about the journey of loving your body and finding out what you're capable of. I thought this would be a beautiful way to end my film.

ETHICAL ISSUES

VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

While working on this project, I posted my thoughts and updates on social media. One day, I'd received a direct question from an angry advocate in my inbox which read: "Why would you make something like this, especially when our Indigenous women and girls are so vulnerable? We continue to endure violence in our daily lives, making fun of these experiences is insensitive. You're causing harm." I did not keep that message, so I am working from memory here. But I knew this would become a common question for the topic I have chosen. Indigenous women and girls are disproportionately affected by violence in Canada and worldwide, due to various factors such as low socio-economic status, systemic racism, family violence, poverty, and associated mental and physical health conditions. Many studies by First Nations, Metis, and Inuit organizations in Canada show that Indigenous women and girls are at high risk for sexual exploitation and human trafficking (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2023). Why should one draw attention to sex work as being anything but violent and exploitative for Indigenous women?

It's a good question. The impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples is complex and different for every family and person. I have family members who've been lost and stolen, beaten or murdered. These are women I grew up with from childhood. While we learned the same things, and came from the same place, our lives turned out radically different. Real harm comes from believing that every native woman's reality is similar, and assuming that there's no value in exploring the diverse stories and realities of native women, especially tales that deviate

from victimhood. Over-generalizing extreme experiences can also diminish the strength, beauty, and uniqueness of native women's realities. Audrey learned how to survive in an urban world by selling sex, the only option that made sense to her at the time, the one that gave her financial freedom, autonomy, and a sense of community.

I acknowledge that there are more tragic stories than stories of resilience when it comes to Indigenous women in sex-work, but that may have more to do with devaluing sex-work, and the refusal to implement protective strategies for women who do this type of work. The stigmatization of sex-work can render a person powerless. Sex-workers can be seen as deficient in some way, disadvantaged, un-well, tainted, undesirable, addicted or impoverished, and incapable of living a meaningful life. I wanted to show Audrey as the antithesis, as a fully-developed human being, maintaining her authenticity, her agency, and her identity. While many of us are indeed vulnerable just by being "native", there are many women who've grown into their power and became the backbone of their communities through their struggles. There are survivors of incredible strength in our communities. Forgetting that there are multiple realities would be a disservice to the resilience and work of our ancestors.

CONCLUSION

While making The First Indigenous Female Pornographer, choosing Indigenous identity and pornography as a topic seemed shocking at first. But I soon realized that it depends on who is ready and willing to recognize the complexity of the topic. The film does not place moral judgement on pornography. I am writing from the mindset that the pornography industry and sex work is real work, and that this underworld - that is rarely addressed and existing in a wild, wild

West - holds fascinating truths about our human condition, and may have far-reaching implications on indigenous sexual identity. I suspended my judgement and looked at the images, knowing there must exist a heroine, or an undefeated warrior, in a world where others' see only filth. And if she didn't exist, then she will be created as such.

Audrey is an exception to the grim reality of social outcasts. I didn't want to approach her life and work by looking at how she's been made vulnerable through the impacts of colonialism, or to portray her as lacking agency in her choices, or as a victim of violence. Her intelligence and perseverance shines through, and she gifts us wisdom in her sly trickster way, about the ways we may begin to reclaim the parts of ourselves that were lost.

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