Rhizomic Rap: Representation, Identity and Hip-Hop on *Moccasin Flats*

Brendan Burrows, B.A.

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Department of Communication
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
University of Ottawa

Abstract

With the rise of First Nations owned and created television content at the turn of the century, came a demand to see an accurate representation of Aboriginality that could look at Aboriginals as both here and modern.   From 2003-2006, the first Aboriginal made and produced television series entitled *Moccasin Flats*, I argue, used modern day hip-hop discourse to both engage and dissect a host of complex issues facing modern day urban Aboriginal society. This research project mobilizes multiple methodologies; including: 1.) Eco's code and sign function semiotic analysis, which operates to identify various hip-hop codes in the text; 2.)Hall's method of articulation to look at how meaning is fixed in the discourse surrounding the show; and finally 3) Deleuze's rhizomic approach to identity to see how the shows main characters are constructed in a way to highlight the paradoxical and undercut certain flirtations with essentialization. This three-tiered methodological process paints a picture of a new complex use of discourse to accentuate different facets of aboriginality that had previously been the sole product of dominant hegemonic institutions which relied on racist stereotypes. By dissecting how identity is formed on *Moccasin Flats*, I will show how aboriginal filmmakers construct a self-reflexive space where the character is perpetually in the process of 'becoming' and identity is always a site of negotiation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The rhizomic world of *Moccasin Flats*

   This project looks at the power that hip-hop has on youth. I will look specifically at, how

representations of young aboriginal males, through hip-hop cultural structure, have become

synonymous with aboriginal self-expression of identity. Indeed, one can see that rap videos made

by aboriginal artists attempt to represent a particular kind of aboriginal youth identity. Using the

Deleuzian framework of the "rhizomic formation of identity" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 5-25)

this study will attempt to examine multiple facets of young aboriginal articulations of identity.

The project is qualitative because it attempts to examine the nature of a particular kind of

representation of a particular group of people (native youth) using an interpretive framework.

   The project focuses on *Moccasin Flats*, a television series that represents many social issues

aboriginal youth face in everyday life. The first season of *Moccasin Flats* focuses on how the

main character (Dillon Redsky) struggles to resist the confinements brought upon him by his

environment. The representation of these confinements brought upon Redsky and the pressure he

faces from his peers are an essential aspect of how he articulates his identity. *Mocassin Flats*

incorporates elements of hip-hop culture as part of the character's complex identity formation.

For example, Redsky's character is made of multiple layers; he is a part-time rapper and dancer.

At the same time, he is also someone struggling to achieve higher education and be a role model

for his younger brother. According to the show's producer, *Moccasin Flats* is a real place that

attempts to represent real problems that plague aboriginal youth. Many of the actors and

actresses have been faced with similar problems in their community and the program is made by

people of aboriginal ethnicity. (Milliken and Podemski, 2002).

For this research, I will examine the 'contours' in which hip-hop culture is used as articulating a contradictory site of struggle. These are embodied as an aspect in the issue of identity formation in the show's representations of the protagonist (Dillon Redsky) and the antagonist (Jonathan Bearclaw). The object of my research is the representation of identity on the show *Moccasin Flats*, specifically the ways in which the incorporation of elements of hip-hop culture serves to formulate the contours of this particular kind of representation.

The problem in this research I will study is two fold: first, I would like to understand how hip-hop has been used in representations of aboriginal youth to articulate a more 'authentic' and 'rugged' form of existence. Second, I am interested in the ways in which these representations serve to elude such fixations on 'authenticity' in showing that the identity persists in spite of attempts to suspend it in representation as something that is inherently authentic. Indeed, the purpose of my research is to be able to show how hip-hop can act as a paradoxical force, meaning that it can accentuate simultaneous aspects of positive and negative facets of character, in both the construction and performative practice of identity for aboriginal youth. This ultimately leads to a more nuanced, more accepted form of representation.

The questions that guide this research are following:

1. To what extent does hip-hop culture on the television show *Moccasin Flats* serve or help us understand the representation of a specific formation of aboriginal identity?

2. How does this representation come to be seen as an 'authentic' form of aboriginal youth's expression of identity formation and how does it resist, elude or even hijack such processes?

Applicable Theory: Deleuze meets Hall

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have elaborated on the theoretical concept and metaphor of 'rhizome' in the first chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). For Deleuze and Guattari, "the multiple must be made, not by always adding a higher a dimension, but rather in the simplest of ways, by dint of sobriety, with the number of dimensions one already has available….Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted" (6). One of the ideas of this metaphor is that the rhizome comes to constitute the multiplicity of identity where no one facet over-determines another, an approach in which all things co-exist simultaneously. The 'higher dimension' referred to by Deleuze &Guattari is indicative of a lack of stacking multiple layers of identity on top of each other. Identity is not a vertical structure with top-down or bottom-up level, but rather is a rhizome where parts are 'added' or subtracted to the multiplicity. Any point, juncture or window onto the rhizome can be interlinked to any other. This can constitute different contradictions (8-9) that would not be able to be articulated in traditional identity analysis. Another key aspect is that a rhizome can be broken down with multiples, but it "will start up again up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines." (9). A character may have a personality crisis (his rhizome may break) but he will ultimately start up a new one with old 'lines' or new ones. This is referred to as either a process of de-territorialization (11) or re-territorialization. Where one aspect of identity operates in a 'line of flight' away from a facet of identity in an effort to de-territorialize only to re-territorialize on another facet of the rhizome. Thus a 'line of flight' takes place; one that sees the individual always in a perpetual process of 'Becoming' (238), in which the identity is always literally becoming something else. However the Plane of Consistency brings these multiplicities of identity together: "Far from reducing the multiplicities' number of dimensions to two, the plane

of consistency cuts across them all, intersects them in order to bring into coexistence any number of multiplicities, with any number of dimensions." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 251).

Operationalizing this highly metaphoric structure onto a television show's representation will help us map and make apparent the various interwoven aspects of the personality and identity formation of the character. Rather than making an over-determining or Marxian diagnosis as to the state of aboriginal youth identity being a direct product of power relations; in applying the Rhizomic framework to *Mocassin Flats,* all facets of identity formation should be seen as interwoven. With this we can see how the characters 'paint the world in their colour, pink on pink; this is its becoming-world, carried out in such a way that it becomes imperceptible itself…" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 11). The 'becoming world' is in fact the perpetual process of identity construction, in which an identity can never be seen as fixed and is always literally 'becoming ' something; the old on the new and the new on the old. The representation in *Moccasin Flats* (the abbreviation MF will be used henceforth in the text) can be seen as both an analysis of this perpetual process but also each clip (scene, analysis) serves to act as what de B'béri (2006) refers to as a moment of conjuncture;

> This is what I call a conjunctural analysis of black cinema, which mobilizes this process as the condition for the discovering of the crystallization of specific virtualized memory and actualized practices of expression. Here, crystallization is not the equivalent of hybridity but rather a discursive terrain for exposing ideological expression. (de B'béri, 2006, 161)

The 'moment of conjuncture' that takes place is that moment in time that allows us to look at the representation as if the process of 'becoming is frozen', if only for a split second. However this moment of conjuncture is deceptive because becoming still exists despite the block of time that we need to take in order to analyze it. "The crystal is not a 'frozen moment' (159) but rather a

space in which 'figurations of mediation or hybridity would become possible' (159).Thus the reality of the characters is in every way seen through the lens of their rhizomic construction of themselves – a self-representation of which hip-hop culture becomes the connecting articulation. In otherwords, the conjunctive image is where discourse is realized in a shared moment of affect. The representation always seeks to be in this perpetual state of becoming, thus attempts to fix it in a moment of analysis as if to say "This is what an aboriginal youth is" can be said to be, elusive at best, if not a complete failure.

Stuart Hall's theory and method of articulation will help me methodologically and theoretically (Daryl Slack, 1996). Indeed, the notion of 'articulation can be understood theoretically as a way of characterizing a social formation without falling into the traps of reductionism and essentialism'. (112). It is key to interrogate the contradictions in the rhizomic construction of identity because it analyzes the ideological linkage between multiple arbitrary formations (or performative aspects) that are not necessarily linked nor fixed in an essentializing process of ideological suppositions. Hall gives an example of what can be considered an articulation:

> The Rastafarians were, Marx would say, as a group in themselves, the poor. But they
> don't constitute a unified political force because they are poor. In fact, the dominant
> ideology makes sense of them, not as 'the poor' but as the feckless, the layabouts, the
> underclass. They only constitute a political force, that is, they become a historical
> force in so far as they are constituted as new political subjects. (144)

 A tension emerges involving ideological articulation that on one hand links the Rastafarians to being poor (one condition) and to another (layabouts) both arbitrarily connected and fixed by ideology which circulates through representation (Hall, 1980). The tension therefore is over the

representation and claims to authenticity itself, any representation can be de-articulated or re-articulated to mean something else depending on who has the ideological power of articulation. Hall's 'Encoding/Decoding' (1980, 128-138) describes three possible viewing positions: the hegemonic, where the viewer accepts the articulation as is or the negotiated-where the articulation is only partially accepted. But you also have another articulation that takes the counter-hegemonic position (Daryl Slack, 1980, 145) of articulating the Rastafarians (poor) as the politically active. It is with these tensions over articulations that I believe the representations show, in which depending on your ideological reality both articulations come to be seen as authentic. I will explore the various contradictory positions and articulations that hip-hop makes as connecting different junctures in the rhizomic construction of identity. In this way hip-hop can be seen as a 'redundancy' operating in the Deleuzo-Guattarian 'line of flight,' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 86). This line of flight is anathema to any sort of fixed identity as it is constantly deterritorializing and re-territorializing identity. Once identity seems to offer a coherent picture as well as offering the viewer/analyst a 'moment of conjuncture' the perpetual line of flight deterritorializes the identity. Thus the identity of the subject is never fixed. This operates in the same way for fixing any notions of an 'authentic' representation; anytime you think you have one there is a 'line of flight' away from such a representation. This will subsequently challenge both the notion of what can be seen as an 'authentic' representation', as well as showing *how* a particular representation can be seen as authentic.

Significance

The significance of this study is that I hope to break new ground and marry the concept of the rhizome, being a multi-faceted paradoxical form of identity construction, then to map the interplay with a popular discourse on to a marginalized and historically misrepresented (Friar

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and Friar, 1972) group. It is my intention that this study be relative to how people who are ascribed positions of marginality may articulate different discourses in the structuration of identity. This will in turn hopefully create opportunities for social workers to better understand and reach out to youth that share an appreciation of hip-hop. Hopefully this creates a way of engagement and intervention using hip-hop as a focal point, in a way that constructs representations that are associated with popular discourses. If this study accomplishes nothing else I would like it to help dispose myths and stereotypes of hip-hop as a primarily negative characteristic of marginalized youth and look at it as an adoption of a discourse in the articulation of identity-one which can empower. However the main goal of the research as stated above is to see how one specific representation of native youth can come to be seen as authentic and how it can be deconstructed in favour of a more holistic model of identity. This will have further implications on the cultural understanding of representation formation versus seemingly 'inauthentic' types of representation.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

On notions of Authenticity and Aboriginal Identity

Authenticity is an elusive term that denies definition, which is probably because it does not really exist. 'Authenticity', Potter (2010,3), states is a ceaseless quest for the essential core of life or a real or eternal self. Authenticity does not exist outside of the quest, or the performance of truth claims that substantiate that ceaseless search. The question of what can be considered an'authentic identity' has constantly plagued the representations that are constructed by and for the Canadian Aboriginal community (See 'Reel Injun' 2010). There is no doubt that this is one of the themes manifestly dealt with on the show *Moccasin Flats,* in the main character's struggle to construct and perform an identity for himself. The adoption of the hip-hop ethos by and large inserts the theme of what can be considered an 'authentically' traditional kind of Aboriginality versus questions of new forms of Aboriginality (ie. The incorporation of hip-hop culture). As Ramsay states in her 2010 chapter on *Moccasin Flats*, there are intergenerational concerns over the articulation of hip-hop in Aboriginal culture; "Such conflict is particularly acute for young people, as they struggle with various tensions, such as those created between wanting to preserve the local cultural traditions and community values of their Elders and the resonance that globalized youth culture inevitably has for them…" (Ramsay, 2010, 111). Indeed, Guilar and Charman, (2009, 189) perhaps idealistically, note that in tight-knit aboriginal communities there are strong obligations to the group but also a chance for individuality to flourish. Authenticity is constructed from a perpetual dialogue where each member of the tribe can speak their mind (2009, 189); however, when dealing with representation, there can only be a reflection of these ideas, which is itself a construction. The aim of this research study is how authenticity is

bypassed in the dynamic construction of the character, which is constantly drawing a line of flight away from particular constructions of authenticity. In short how do the creators of the show construct the characters to frame particular notions of stereotypes while (throughout the narrative of the program) deconstruct these very same stereotypes. This is not tantamount to reducing anything that questions notions of 'authenticity' as something static and durable but rather shows that there can never be anything that is truly 'authentic'. Following Madsen (2010,17), this may be accomplished in what Vizenor (17) refers to as a kind of post-indianism where the reaction is that the character plays with traditional stereotypes in order to show their arbitrary nature. However I would like to argue that MF goes one step further by engaging hip-hop and aboriginality as a stereotype that was in the process of formation, and eventually deconstructing it, creating a new representation of aboriginality in the process.

Andrew Potter (2010) mobilizes the Rousseauian take on authenticity as something where the true nature of the 'inner self' is something that is invented, blurring the line of what can be considered fiction versus what can be considered non-fiction. (138) He concludes that what is considered to be authentic is a form of status competition (267) and that it is the adoption of a particular ethos that enables one to compete in the social world. It is no wonder why the quest to find an 'authentic' self through various incarnations of popular culture is ubiquitous in modern day aboriginal discourse. (Madsen, 2010). Hip-hop is a cultural discourse and appropriation of an 'ethos' that is both malleable to personal impulses as well as being highly regimented in its codes and behaviors. In the case of the youth on *Moccasin Flats*, questions of authenticity are usually bypassed in the fact that aboriginal youth have a high position in the status rankings because in many cases they are represented as being both marginalized and urban, which is the generalized claim of legitimation made by traditional hip-hop signifiers.

The concept of enframing[1] what the viewer sees to accommodate pre-existing value systems and expectations, with reference to Heidegger (1977), says that we can only come to know 'the real' of the representation through looking at it through pre-established reference systems, this is what he refers to as enframing. The revealing of the authentic 'aboriginal' representation as a kind of concealment (Heidegger, 1977, 24) comes into play; to Heidegger, "An authentic way of existing is one that requires individuals to take responsibility for their attitudes and actions. They individualize themselves as distinct from yielding the authority for their lives to others" (Scott, 2010, 63). By showing how this articulation is subsequently constructed, we can then start to understand how the notion of authenticity is itself a construction and a product of the 'enframing' process itself; hence a subsequent yielding to a kind of hegemonic authority . Therefore, the representation itself becomes a site of struggle that testifies to a whole new set of meaning making systems (Hall, 1985, 112). Indeed, rather than seeing the representation as wholly negative, it becomes one that is articulated in a multiplicity of ways, which negotiates and vacillates between the stereotypical and what I will call the 'dynamic'.

What differentiates questions of authenticity in the case of the contextual reality represented in MF is that rather than taking a position that contrast two diametrically opposed settings – hip-hop versus tradition - the program instead relies on how the reality of the youths is inter-subjectively constructed and bound by the characters beliefs and attitudes (Ferrera, 2009, 30). Thus, the perception of authenticity emanates from the fact that, much like the punk sub-culture examined by Lewin (2009, 79), the characters on the show form their identities using hip-hop as a commonality in order to validate deep-seated emotions and tensions that need to be enunciated.

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[1]   Heidegger describes the notion of enframing as a process of unconcealing that also conceals from a standing-reserve. A standing reserve is the prime essence of a technological drive, which also is the function of the work of art, which this research project concerns itself. (Heidegger, 33, 1977).

The articulation of authenticity is constructed based partially because the characters are dealt with as holistic beings rather than reeking of previous historical representations of aboriginals that served ulterior motives.

Semiotics, Hip-hop and Performance

Before I breakdown how hip-hop is mapped onto a construction of identity, it is important that a complete criteria of what can be signified as hip-hop signs be identified. First, I would like to note that some iconic signs[2] that are seen on *Moccasin Flats* produce variable sign functions. Liszka defines the iconic sign as such, "If the presentative characteristics of the sign are *similar* to the object and it thereby establishes its correlation with that object primarily by that means, the sign is called an icon" (Liszka, 1996, 37). In this way all the signs that one sees on television programs are primarily iconic signs, as they all take on the qualitative characteristics of something that exists in the external world. Within these icons there might also be indexical[3] or symbolic[4] signs, for example an iconic character rides in a low-rider, this could be an index of gangsterism and could elicit a hip-hop code. However by virtue of the image-medium all the codes that are constructed are first and foremost icons, in that they all bear a resemblance to an object that exists external to the program, ie. Human beings, low-riders etc… To add to this argument, the adoption of the neo-realist genre is one that is indebted to its signs taking a particular likeness to the external world. The utilization of semiotics and the identification of various different iconic signs provide an opportunity to understand the different codes

[2] "An icon (CP 2.247, 2.76) (also called a likeness [CP 1.558] or more strictly a hypoicon) correlates with its object because the sign's qualities are similar to an object's characteristics. (Liszka, 1996, 37). For the purposes of this research project I am referring to all the signs as iconic, even though they may also contain indexical and symbolic signs within the iconic images. For a complete criteria of signs according to Peirce please see JJ. Lizska. (1996).

[3] " A sign may represent its object not only by means of similarity but also by contiguity with its object. In that it is called an index (CP 2.24) (Liszka, 38) An example would be smoke being an indicator of fire.

[4] To paraphrase Liszka (39) a symbol takes its quality of an object primarily through convention, for example a 'stop' sign.

represented in the program. This understanding of signs is based on what Umberto Eco (1976) has theorized as a 'production of sign meaning', that help 'to produce a signal so that it may be correlated to a content to produce a sign-function' (191). Therefore, what I aim to look at is not the dichotomy between the hip-hop signifieds/signifiers, but more so how different signs come to be identified with different sign functions. What is generally admitted to be hip-hop oriented 'attitude, behaviours, and dress code' could be based on what can be considered the perceptual style or type tied up in a conventional understanding of hip-hop as a distinct style. This requires a familiarization that Eco qualifies to be a kind of semiotic competence, that helps understand, "…when the sender knows the possible effect of the displayed stimulus, one is obliged to consider his knowledge as a sort of semiotic competence, for to him a given stimulus corresponds to a given foreseeable reaction that he expressly aims to elicit." (241).

It is important that a distinction be made between semiology (ie. Saussure) and Semiotics (ie. Peirce). While semiology focuses on the conventional, sociological, and psychological links between signified/signifier; Semiotics is grounded in logic and is more of a science. Thus signs (in the case of this project icon) may bear a relation to an object in "real-life" which can only be understood by some interpretant which Liszka quotes Peirce "there is no exception to…the law that every thought-sign is translated or interpretant into a subsequent one…" (CP.5.284 see Liszka, 1996, 25). Therefore the interpretant is some translation of the object as it appears in the mind, referencing yet another sign. However Eco proposes a different conceptualization of the sign that borrows from both disciplines; his main assertion is that icons need not have an object that they bear a likeness too. The only thing that exists is an objective set of interpretive rules; Eco talks about a connotative semiotics when the content of one plane becomes the expression of a further semiotics (1976, 55). In the case of the program content it (ex low-rider) becomes an

expression of (hip-hop) which in turn becomes an expression of an original representation of aboriginality. Eco (1976, 58) states that 'anytime there is a possibility of lying, there is a sign function' or "intensional expression". Transformation of content to expression, or a reification of systems of signification (a referencing of hip-hop content) that prompt objective, logical icons of hip-hop (as enunciated through the characters).

The key to this analysis is to elicit the dominant codes at work in the construction of hip-hop as a part of the discourse incorporated in the show MF as a derivative from a larger hip-hop discourse. While codes establish a correlation between an expression and content plane; sign functions establish a correlation between abstract elements of the two planes[5] (Eco, 1976, 49) Following Daniel Chandler (2002), codes are what classify signs into meaningful systems that connect content to expression. For Eco (1976), a code operates in a broader cultural context that relies on the familiarity of the users of the specific medium (148). Hip-hop provides an ideal synthesis of what can be considered an amalgamation of various types of 'Social Codes' because it provides provide a map or system of signification for various contents to expressive sign vehicles, in short a complex web of codes that subsequently maps out a complex discourse of what is hip-hop. It is as, as Eco (1976, 57) states, that a single sign vehicle can carry many different contents, (ie. a low-rider) as a text that has a multi-levelled discourse (ie. hip-hop) as its content.

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[5] A distinction must be made between codes and functions: while codes generate the perceptual 'types' that contribute to discourse, sign functions, through the correlation of abstract elements of both content and expression, may build new tokens out of the 'oppositional dynamics' or from the 'range of possibilities.'. (Eco, 1976, 49).

Dimitriadis (2001), in his book *Performing Identity/Performing Culture: Hip-hop as text, Pedagogy and Practice*, examines the linkages between inner-city kids and their immersion into the hip-hop lifestyle. As de Certeau (1984) notes, "people pick up these popular resources and perform and re-perform them to make sense out of their worlds in multiple contexts, making places for themselves out of the spaces made available in dominant culture." (As cited in Dimitriadis, 2001, 96) This means that hip-hop narratives are becoming more and more the raw materials that young people use to deal with everyday life. (Dimitriadis, 2001, 120). Through what de B'béri (2006) refers to as cultural and discursive *recyclage* we can see a self-imposed articulation being made between hip-hop texts and youth. For example, in looking at the ideological connection between certain popular hip-hop figures (Biggie or Tupac) and the performance of identity for inner city youths, it is possible to see the youth incorporating texts of this cultural practice into their everyday lives. Important to note in Dimitriadis is that: "These young people have been bequeathed a symbolic universe that they use to deal with a material reality not of their own choosing. Their uses of these texts underpinned their efforts to maintain and sustain constructions many critics assume gone or missing from the lives of poor blacks." (Dimitriadis, 2001, 122) This idea lays the foundation for the 'articulative' role hip-hop plays for aboriginal youth in *Moccasin Flats*. They can incorporate a discourse that seeks to empower their day-to-day lives while simultaneously constructing the meaning out of various signifiers made available to them.

Other authors have dealt with the performativity of hip-hop and its role in identity formation. Derek Conrad Murray's article "*Hip-hop vs. High Art: Notes on Race as a Spectacle*" (2004) where he states that hip- hop is "constructed in dialectical opposition to whiteness, the blackness the art of hip hop enacts occupies the tenuous position of conjuring both fear and fantasy in the

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white imagination." (8). This shows that youth that adopt the performative nature of hip-hop are doing so in a way that validates their identity formation in opposition to what is commonly considered 'white'. Thus, I would like to suggest that the performance of hip-hop could be considered a crucial (and can easily be construed as an authentic) aspect of inner city youth identity formation in opposition to white hegemonic power structures. Murray's analysis of Nikki Lee's photographic art provides a similar argument. He discovers how both 'normativity' and 'subversion' can be achieved through what he refers to as drag. (Murray, 2004,15). This shows how the performance of hip-hop could act simultaneously as a force that is both normative and subversive – in short, paradoxical. Saddick's article "*Rap's Unruly Body: The Postmodern Performance of Black Male Identity on the American Stage*?" (2003) suggests why such representations of rappers or people that emanate hip-hop signifiers are appealing. He notes: "One of the central reasons that hip-hop artists, music, and culture as a whole have been criticized as 'dangerous' lies in the power of the performing body to subvert traditional, hence safe, modes of representation in America, even as it embraces the commodity capitalism of the American Dream" (112). Therefore my intention is to show how the hip-hop performance on *Moccasin Flats* represents a tenuous form of subversion that is considered dangerous and opposite to what has been essentialized as the dominant essentialized construction of Aboriginal identity.

A similar articulation of identity that is linked to locality that is present in *Moccasin Flats* is also analyzed in Forman's article entitled "*'Represent:' Race, Space and Place in Rap Music*" (2000). The thesis gleaned from this article is that "Hip-hop's distinct practices introduced new forms of expression that were contextually linked to conditions in a city comprised of an amalgamation of neighborhoods and boroughs with their own highly particularized social norms

and cultural nuances." (Forman, 67). Lashua's article on the study of inner-city Aboriginal youth builds on this by showing that students in the program use music to transform the places they live and produce meaning out of otherwise dire circumstances. The youth (including adults) construct a soundscape that presents a distinction between the objectivity of place and the subjectivity of space. This soundscape comprises vague borders which can be transcended through hip-hop as both the soundtrack to the city and a subjective tool to deal with daily life. (Lashua, 2006, 398). The re-constitution of the social space through the subject is also an example of how hip-hop is used as a strident form of opposition to various forms of cultural oppression (Martinex, 1997, 279). As Mitchell (2001) reminds us, hip-hop accentuates oppositional cultures from across the globe that can be utilized in various ways. Depending on the perceiver, these oppositional cultures can be viewed as hegemonic or counter-hegemonic. The performance of hip-hop sets the way for the examination of how a particular identity formation can be constructed. Here, I see an articulation of hip-hop pop culture that is based on a particular locality, lifestyle and everyday life experience being represented in MF.

The Vicissitudes of Native Representation

Native representation or rather (mis)representation has been in the fantasies of many a Hollywood filmmaker since the inception of film. Angela Aleiss (2005) has documented the history of the Hollywood studio system's historical and perpetual construction of the 'Native' in her book *Making the White Man's Indian*. She states that representations of Aboriginal peoples vacillated from the negative to the positive and back again over the last century. (Aleiss, 2005). Whether negative or positive, comical or straight, or menacing or docile, these constructions of

Aboriginal people played up to white people's hidden prejudices as if to not only expose but also to construct the differences between them and whites. (Aleiss, 52). However Aboriginal resistance to both the racist studio system as well as the content of films led to Jim Thorpe (of Pro-Football fame), in the fifties, starting the Indian Actors Association, which fought to get equal pay and demanded that 'actual Indians' play Indian roles. (Aleiss, 63). This group was a far cry from having native produced, written and directed films as the studios still produced racist and socially damaging films. Many of the Hollywood films were more concerned with serving as a vessel for particular ideologies than actually dealing with characters on a complex level. Even films which showed some levels of sympathy towards the Aboriginal experience such as *Broken Arrow* (1955) were in fact just shrouded attempts to advance an assimilationist agenda by the studio system. For Aleiss, "Hollywood Indians could now stand alongside the movie's white heroes, provided they compromised their heritage." (2005, 83). The systematic imposition of white fears onto the constructed representation of the Aboriginal was first dissected in Ralph and Natasha Friar's 1972 work, *The Only Good Indian*, in which they state: "The Native American actor was a participant in a paradox because he did his 'Indian' thing, knowing full well most often the strange character he was told to portray had no relationship to himself as a Native American." (247).

Indeed, it has been stated that no other American minority has served to construct the same/other dichotomy on which the American dream is built upon than the celluloid character of the 'Indian'. (Fielder, 34). Prats' assertion that the character of the Native and the process of its conquering and assimilation into the proto-typical American hero serves to reinforce the hegemonic power of the white American. (Prats, 2002). This is accomplished through a number of ways;

Representation presupposes appropriation: the figure itself of the Other already substantiates the dominance of the Same. Yet representation, precisely because it presumes arrogation, can exhibit its own inverse; it implicates the Same-the supposed unalterable-in a process, as an unintended and disconcerting metamorphosis: the Same becomes itself appropriated by its own invention, by its own creation of Otherness, of Indianess – of savagery, then. (Prats, 2002, 174)

In other words, the American identity is constituted by the assimilation of its own otherness; this Otherness consolidates the dominance of what can be considered Sameness (the white American male). The Aboriginal 'other' is subsequently devoured in the construction of the white North American hero (i.e. Davy Crockett). If the white supremacist ideologies (see West, 1993, 15) perpetuated in many American and Canadian films had not relegated representations of the Indian to some presupposed otherness, then they would not have been able to assert their dominance and control over the representation of the Indian. To paraphrase Cornel West,

The modern [Aboriginal]problematic of invisibility and namelessness can be understood
 As the condition of relative lack of [Aboriginal] power to represent themselves to
 themselves and others as complex human beings, and thereby to contest the
 bombardment of negative, degrading stereotypes put forward by white-supremacist
 ideologies. (West, 1993, 15)

That is why we see so many American celluloid heroes going 'Native', only to reject it at the end (Prats, 2002, 178). In dominating and taming the complexity of the `Other, the producers of these 'classic films' assert the power of the Same which is their own construction in the first place. So this perpetual construction of 'Native' on film has historically and psychologically been in every way constitutive of the American identity and his will to power. This power to become 'other' is

also the power to resist the 'other'. The Indian substantiates the fact that the White American

Male has an ahistorical and therefore mythological power that gives him entitlement to the

continent and everyone in it (Prats, 2002, 247). This coincides with Shanley (2001) when she

states, "that pretending to be Indian or believing it is possible to "know" what it means to be

"Indian" is within the purview of most Americans" (29). Therefore up until recently the

arrogance of the existent Hollywood meaning –makers has simply felt a wholesale right and legit

authentic motive in representing Aboriginals on screen in whatever way that served their

purposes at the time. Native writers find themselves in a double-bind that situates them facing

institutions that seek to represent them ideologically but never sympathetically. (Shanley, 2001,

32).

Canadian films have, with exception of a few recent examples (Gittings, 2002. Also Kunuk,

2001)have been indistinguishable from their American counterparts in representing aboriginal

peoples. As Gittings (2002) and Marshall (2001) show, there are familiar patterns of using native

characters as a vessel to assert the identity of the white characters. Quebecois films have often

situated natives as narcissistic projections of Quebec's own anxieties, be it national, racial, or

sexual. This contributes to robbing the Aboriginal of any sort of authoritative voice (Marshall,

2001, 256). One of the most popular Canadian films of the last twenty years, *Black Robe* (1982),

perpetuated the idea that, "in the colonial cosmology of the white invader-settler, (the

Aboriginal) had to be protected not only from certain aspects of 'civilization' such as liquor but

also from their own 'heathen' cultural practices through the project of assimilation…" (Gittings,

2002, 197). The construction of Aboriginal difference in low art mediums such as films

contributed to a discourse that justified the eventual takeover of native lands such as Oka, but

also contributed to any aggressive reaction by native as that of a savage (Gittings, 2002, 197).

Emberley (1993) characterizes this process as representative of 'internal colonialism', because it has been used to express the process of domination in which Aboriginal Canadians, specifically, became pushed to the fringes of society, tantamount to a denial of their existence except as 'self-serving symbols in the Canadian-history enterprise.' (18)

Movie studios' resources and economic structure also predicated a lack of voice in Aboriginal representation. O' Connor (1998) takes an institutional approach to the construction of the "white man's Indian". The expectations of moviegoers may have triggered a conventionalized form of representing the Indian. In other words, the materials that were the most readily available may have caused a homogenized form of representation that would have otherwise been more diversified had other resources been available. (33). Such an approach does not take into account the different social stigmas and stereotypical articulations that were developed as a result of the actual narratives in the films. One of the stereotypes that exists to this very day is that of the ignoble 'drunken Indian'. It may be said that this stereotype has been the most detrimental to contemporary aboriginal identity. "Alcohol, as a polysemic cultural artifact, plays a profound role in the production, colonization, and subjection of Native people, both materially and symbolically" (Duran, 1996, 115). White hegemonic conceptualizations of alcohol and alcohol related problems contribute to their particular reproduction of the Indian subject, which is denied any agency. (Duran, 1996, 125). Thus, we have the systematic, paternalistic diagnosis of Aboriginal problems by colonial governments and academic institutions. Alcohol abuse is a problem, but when represented by outside interests that do not have aboriginal health in mind, but rather seek to mock and diagnose the Aboriginal as a social pariah than it creates a detrimental politics for understanding the Aboriginal subject. There is a subsequent need among Aboriginal populations to directly address the damage done to them by representations and

discourses for which they reflect. Despite the fact that the 'white man's Indian' could have been a product of production concerns as O' Connor states (1998), it does not change the legacy of tyranny that these images have imposed on Aboriginal self-identity.

Indeed it has been well-documented that these 'mythic representations' not only affect how others view natives and how natives view themselves but they also influence judiciary proceedings as well. As Jones (1996) states, 'In 1976 The Wampanogs of Mashpee were told they didn't exist' by the courts of Virginia (122). This exposes the idea that representation of aboriginal peoples has a profound effect on lived experience. Another such stereotype, 'The Disappearing Indian', -- the representation of Aboriginals as an endangered species (Francis, 2007, 18)- went on to shape Canadian government policy towards how aboriginal peoples were dealt with by the Canadian government. As Francis outlines in his book,

 Assimilation continued to be a cornerstone of Canadian Indian policy for many years.

 As recently as 1969, it was the explicit objective of the Trudeau government's

 infamousWhite Paper, which proposed an end to Indian status, the abolition of the

 Department ofIndian Affairs and the repeal of the Indian Act. Indians were overnight to

 become citizens like any others." (Francis, 1997, 217).

The notion of the 'Disappearing Indian' and its representation in Canadian culture went on to inform government assimilatory policy. Such policies sought to eliminate any trace of distinctiveness between natives and non-natives. The history of historical representations informing government policy is the legacy that the creators of MF felt a need to intervene in. The tension stemming from the policy of earlier Canadian governments frames much of implicit concerns dealt with on *Moccasin Flats*. The retention of culture and the ability to articulate a sense of self is of crucial importance to Aboriginal communities because of past injustices. The

fact that up until recently the fixations and delusions of white people and politicians have problematized the question of what is truly an 'authentic' aboriginal representation and conflated it with a constructed reality beyond the reach of aboriginal communities. This question is central to the show as well as in modern day academic debates (Madsen 2010). Thus, aboriginal filmmakers may feel (Milliken and Podemski, personal communication, 2011) that they have a responsibility to strive to make a relevant representation not to the viewing public as much as to their aboriginal audience.

Modern day representations of Aboriginal people focus on the idea of sovereignty and grassroots action of responsibility and resistance in challenging the construction of the 'Pretend Natives' seen in the past (Bataille and Sillet, 1980). Bordewich (1996), in his first account of the state of native culture around the country at the turn of the last century, testifies to the fact that there are many grassroots movements in native communities that have them taking responsibility for themselves and their communities (269). Although many tribes are still vastly affected by debilitating social diseases of which alcohol seems to be tantamount (240-269), there have been efforts both ideal and practical by activists from within the community to raise the conditions of Aboriginal health and vitality. The main idea from Bordewich (1996) is that natives across the country are making headway into self-sufficiency, cultural regeneration, and sovereignty. (20) What Bordewich infers about aboriginal representation is that although in the past it has been dictated by outside interests, natives are making headway in defining themselves and how they are represented on their own terms. This means that they are also dealing with their problems on their own terms (one of the themes of the show MF). Taking into account the fact that *Moccasin Flats* is a show that is made by Aboriginals and for Aboriginals makes a substantial claim on it as being a legit venue to address issues that plague some of their communities. The fact that MF

creators use all the tropes of realism as well as acting talent from the area suggests that the program is attempting to deal with problems that plague aboriginal communities on a legitimate level. The question of authenticity and reflexivity by the viewers on the representations means that it is to be taken perhaps more seriously than the fictive stereotypes of the past. Indeed the gradual elimination of these stereotypes as described by Price (1980) is reflective of the viewing public's overall growing sophistication in understanding and dealing with these stereotypes. The Aboriginal is viewed in a different light rather than just shades of black and white. (83). As Schikel (1980) claims, aboriginals are seen as human beings that are culpable for their actions (121).

A positive output has been seen of late in the types of movies that have been produced by Aboriginal filmmakers, and actors. A panel discussion at the 1996 Native Americas Film Exposition in Santa Fe, New Mexico, made the finding of Native writers to write good scripts about the American Indian experience a paramount objective (Kilpatrick, 1999, 179). Although big studios have yet to finance an Aboriginal production, there are various venues to garner financial assistance, such as Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival (Kilpatrick, 1999, 229), and in Canada the National Film Board as well as Telefilm Canada. Film festivals offer an opportunity to both: a)showcase their work to the broader community and b) garner financial support for further productions; the idea that they assert their right to represent themselves however which way they want.

Following Knopf (2008), it may be admitted that central to what is considered to be an authentic representation of aboriginal people is the idea that films that are made by Aboriginal

people themselves 'decolonize the lens of power' from which the Aboriginal subject is represented. (Knopf, 2008). She writes:

> "The decolonization of the media chiefly involves raising Indigenous voices and creating self controlled media in the process of asserting Indigenous history, ethnography, and sociology. In this way, Indigenous filmmakers strive to work against assimilation through Western media discourse and against the appropriation of Indigenous discourse." (18)

In other words Aboriginals are re-appropriating the discourses that are constructed by and for them. For example, with the advent of APTN (*Aboriginal Peoples Television Network*), there are dimensions of power and self-control that have been re-asserted by Aboriginals as producers of meaning.

APTN is a network that serves to cater to the Aboriginal people of Canada, by providing them with culturally relevant programming. The station also provides a venue for Aboriginal producers, writers and directors to showcase their work. Following Roth (2010) as a channel, APTN serves as a prototype of which other marginalized groups can follow. Over the years, native communities have situated themselves on a nationwide mediascape in order to "heal the historical communication ruptures within their societies and between their communities and other Canadians" (Roth, 2010, 30). APTN continuously shows episodes from the three seasons of *Moccasin Flats* on their channel as well as the initial 20-minute short film and a final ninety-minute film entitled *Moccasin Flats: Redemption*. However, *Moccasin Flats* also initially aired on the Canadian cable channel 'Showcase'. In a recent study done of APTN's audience, Bredin found that the young viewer looked for "pop-culturesque content on the channel. An employee of the company found that youth wanted programs similar to those available on mainstream television, but they wanted them to cater to their own unique culture" (Bredin, 2010, 78).

Moccasin Flats can be said to attempt to fill these desires in that it borrows elements from mainstream black urban movies like *Menace 2 Society* and bridges them with modern aboriginal issues (Ramsay, 2010, 113). However, Knopf (2010) retorts that some Aboriginal viewers criticize the program for upholding stereotypes and presenting only a negative side of Aboriginal life (93). She goes on to state how the popular commercials for Lakota natural medicines, perpetuate existing damaging stereotypes:

When APTN uncritically carriers the commercial, it risks endorsing the

commercialization and appropriation of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and symbols

that are so vehemently contested when they appear in other areas of popular culture, such as

sports mascots and Hollywood westerns. The network also undermines its potential to

create media free of the stereotypes and clichés of Aboriginal people that are still

rampant in Western discourses. (Knopf, 2010, 90)

By this extent, the question once again is raised of whether programs produced by and for Aboriginal communities can possibly re-circulate existing stereotypes and perhaps produce new ones. More than this, this poses the question of what is or is not considered authentic and who is in a position to decipher such statements. Following Hall (1980) and perhaps extending on his notion of 'negotiated' and 'oppositional' viewer positions it is, one may argue, how the characters are dynamically and paradoxically constructed, that involves the intervention of the filmmakers in re-articulating stereotypes.

The adoption of hip-hop in representations of Aboriginal youth on *Moccasin Flats* contradicts traditional essentialized conceptions of Aboriginality. Yet still hip-hop has been re-articulated (Daryl Slack, 1996) as something authentically 'Native' in the identities of the characters. As soon as a representation is seen as 'authentic', there is a 'line of flight' away from that so the

show flies in the face of essentializing notions of native identity: 'rugged', incorporating 'hip-hop', hearkening back to 'tradition', or otherwise. This particular attempt to represent a quasi-authentic Indian provides an articulative motivation into the character's performance of his identity. Indeed, the ceaseless race towards authenticity reflects the fact that there are already fractious rifts over the implications of such a concept within aboriginal communities (Lindholm, 2008, 129; O'Regan, 1999, 168). These divisions seek to lay claim to what can be said to be authentic and what can be said to be an assimilatory tool of hegemonic forces that would seek to rob them of what can be said to be essentially 'Indian'. Nevertheless, this image of Native youth as embodying the hip- hop ethos (Potter, 2010, 204) has become widespread and is now commonly known and accepted (*Renegade Press.com*, *Rez Tunes*) as an authentic representation of aboriginal youth.

On Strategic Resistance

Native's self-constructed representation in film and television can be summed up as being a form of resistance against hegemonic forces. These forces, such as the Hollywood studio system, would seek to appropriate Aboriginal voices and use them to help satiate their own profit driven agenda—this being the case with Disney hit *Pocahontas* (1994).[6] (Columpar (2010) situates films like *Rabbit Proof Fence and Black and White*[7], as part of a genre that supports counter-hegemonic positions without otherwise reducing them to the status quo. She approaches these texts, by examining "their capacity to articulate an Aboriginal subjectivity, bearing in mind that such an exercise requires producing both a speaking, as opposed to a spoken, subject and a

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[6] Neil Diamond's 'Reel Injun'(2010) states how former former AIM (American Indian Movement) subversive Russell Means, made money lending his voice to the stereotype perpetuating Disney hit.
[7] These two films are Australian and deal with specific Aboriginal subjectivities. They are included in here to contextualize *Mocassin Flats* in a global milieu of films that support counter hegemonic positions, exemplifying a global shift in filmmaking practices in which they aboriginal subject is given a representational voice in film.

spectator capable of seriously listening" (Columpar, 2010, 78). De B'béri (2006) has conceptualized this process as *marronage* in which the slave uses the existing signifying system to 'talk-back' to the slave master thus giving voice to the voiceless and hijacking the narratives of the slave master (64). In this way it is important to see such decolonizing texts (Knopf, 2007) as actively speaking both to and for their audiences. Indeed, one of my arguments is that *Moccasin Flats* does perpetuate negative stereotypes as previously cited, however that it speaks to those stereotypes and engages them on a critical level.

It is how a film chooses to self-reflexively engage with itself, that dictates what kind of articulations will be made into the state of the wider culture implicated. Aboriginal films that choose to enframe a particular representation of reality do so in a way that ultimately critiques the issues that they are trying to address. Shohat and Stam (1994), state that films that represent marginalized cultures in a realistic mode, even when they do not claim to represent specific historical incidents, still implicitly, make factual claims (179).

Taking this view into account, a program like *Moccasin Flats* makes not only a substantial claim on those it seeks to represent (adolescent Aboriginal), but also articulates particular commentaries on the specific historical circumstances, including the legacy of racist representations, that Aboriginal Canadian people have gone through. Any negative representation of a marginalized group is burdened by acting in a universal manner and is seen as part of the perpetual backsliding of the whole (Shohat and Stam, 1994, 183). Any outright reaction for trying intentionally to make positive images of Aboriginal peoples ultimately falls in the same traps of essentialism. Bird suggests that modern day images of Indians are not outwardly negative in the fact that they are no longer considered to be obscenely racist, however

they are still very narrow and objectifying (Bird, 2003, 89). In her study on Indian participant's attempts to write a rough script for a television show, she discovered that when working with whites, they spoke about how native representation bore the legacy of damaging stereotypes. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for conventional filmmakers to provide the kind of stories that speak to Aboriginal identity (Bird, 2003, 91).

Shohat and Stam (1994) use the concept of 'voice' as a kind of resistance. 'Voice' asserts a metaphor of seepage through and around the ideological boundaries put up by cinema and the power relations that it traditionally represents (214). They go on to state that, "A voice, we might add, is not exactly congruent with a discourse, for while discourse is institutional, transpersonal, unauthored, voice is personalized, having authorial accent and intonation, and constitutes a specific interplay of discourses (whether individual or communal)." (215). It is not whether or not the television program represents a different ideology, or view of reality (in this case a ghettoized, hip-hop view of the slums of Regina), but rather if the show gives the viewers an opportunity to vicariously reflect that ideological view of reality through the characters.

It has been stated previously (Aleiss 2005, Friar and Friar, 1972) that what it means to be Aboriginal (at least from a White normative perspective) has been actually constructed through narratives over the past two hundred years and so have the perceptions and characteristics that constitute it. Following Martinello's application of Edward Said's Orientalism, I would like to suggest that this social process has omitted real knowledge of what it means to be Aboriginal (1999, 172). Sollors states that "Ethnic groups are typically imagined as if they were natural, real, eternal, stable, and static units. They seem to be always already in existence. As a subject of study, each group yields an essential continuum of certain myths and traits, or of human capital."

(1989, xiv) Thus the search for a real and eternal self can also be constitutive of the search for

an authentic identity in representation, where the self is given a static mirror reflection of

themselves on screen to construct their identity and contextualize their reality. The characters on

the show demonstrate an immersion in hip-hop culture that ingratiates particular characters into a

representative reality of hip-hop signifiers. The creators of *Moccasin Flats* desired to reflect a

world as close to the lived experiences of the actors on the show (Podemski and Milliken, 2011).

Thus, when the reality of the show is contextualized using hip-hop signifiers, it can be said that

is trying to provide a 'voice': to speak to, through, and for Aboriginal youth in that particular

section of Regina. The fact that hip-hop culture is also a 'Global Culture' (Mitchell, 2001) makes

it appealing for viewers outside the aboriginal community, in a way that echoes themes and

concerns that may (or may not) be alien to them. What could be labeled as a perpetuation of a

new stereotype (the gangsta aboriginal youth) is also a way for the public to engage and dissect

that very same essentialized representation. The fact that this particular identity formation is

represented as both a literal and metaphorical performance opens up new terrain into the question

of how a discourse from popular culture (i.e. hip-hop) can be articulated in a way that naturalizes

representations and makes them appear 'authentic'.

On Articulation

   The notion of articulation is widely known for its theoretical and methodological implications

on a qualitative research object. Articulation could be mobilized as a one way linear model - that

one idea, subject, or stereotype can be ideologically linked to another in order to represent that

said group of people. As Jennifer Daryl Slack (2003) notes, "Politically, articulation is a way of

foregrounding the structure and play of power that entail in relations of dominance and subordination. Strategically, articulation provides a mechanism for shaping intervention within a particular social formation, conjuncture or context." (112). The intervention that takes place is one that sees an articulation made by and for aboriginal people (Milliken, 2002). This intervention for and by, paradoxically, acts in a way that may both diminish and ameliorate the stereotype of young Aboriginal characters on MF as being somewhat if not wholly entrenched in hip-hop signifiers. Through the articulations that link hip-hop to Aboriginal youth we can observe and dissect how a said representation of aboriginal youth comes to be seen as authentic. Indeed, the notion of authenticity, itself is part of a meta-discourse, which produces representations. By the very nature of discourse formation any articulation must take into account the plethora of discourses that have informed the meaning of what it is to re-present Aboriginal peoples.

Another applicable and interesting look at the notion of articulation is Timothy Brown's (2005) article *Subcultures, Pop Music and Politics: Skinheads and "Nazi Rock" inEnglandand Germany,*, which examines the articulation of the neo-nazi skinhead movements to the music and class distinctions that inspired it. It is interesting to see how real social conditions (poverty, anger, despair) can subsequently be articulated by style to something that was originally anathema to it (the punk movement), this creates a new form of identity in due course. This gives a substantial contribution to the field and relevancy of this study, because it shows how real conditions can be articulated to a style (art form, way of life) that may differ from it slightly or altogether. This articulation, when enacted in the identity performance of the individual, can serve to create a new window on the world that might have been articulated using some other paradigm.

From all of these examples, we can see how the theory of articulation allows for two previously opposite movements or identities to become linked together; this new connection, in return can produce something that would previously be distinguishable from the said original identity (i.e., punk/nazism). However, central to this process, and its success as an articulation, is how 'authenticity' is created from the linkage of two 'things' that do not belong together necessarily, hearken back to Potter's idea of authenticity being something that is invented— something new from the old .

Rhizomic Analysis[8]

By using Gilles Deleuze's conception of the Rhizome as a theoretical touchstone, it is possible to understand just what the creators of MF are doing by utilizing hip-hop in the construction of both the narrative and the characters of the show, that is they are using it to accentuate and 'dress' a very complex reality. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) tell us that "A rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles." (7) A rhizome is thus defined by points of deterritorializations and lines of flight, connecting and departing from different symbolic systems or regimes of signs and connecting them to different pre-personal affective states. Each facet of a rhizome is made up of a multiplicity of affective intensities and articulations of character. "Multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities" (9). This theoretical tool is ideal for interrogating just how and why the characters

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[8] This is a continuation of the theory section in the first chapter. This elaborates on how the concept of the Rhizome has been applied in the past.

use hip-hop to enunciate different aspects of identity. By solely using semiotics and Hall's method of articulation we can only examine the pragmatic and political ways that hip-hop is superimposed on to a particular segment of the Aboriginal population. However, by utilizing the rhizome, a picture is painted that hyphenates different pre-personal states together using the articulation of hip-hop as a performative mechanism that is constitutive of different affective intensities. Ultimately the rhizome shows the transparency of fixtures of authenticity and the artifice of such claims.

The idea of emotion being an intersubjective facet that can serve as a locus for identity construction is one advanced by Kuppers, (2009, 227). In this sense the emotion of pain can be seen as being not one solitary aspect of identity but something that can affect every single aspect of an identity formation in an a parallel manner. Pain can be experienced physically, emotionally, and mentally. From this theoretical deployment, one can see through this experience of pain, operating as a device to not only examine one facet of 'pain' but also the many different intersubjective appreciations that the word has in constructing identity. Pain is experienced on one subjective level and is also ascribed to the individual externally. Thus you have different conceptions of pain interacting on different strata of multiplicites of which the identity is built on. As Massumi states,

> affect or intensity in the present is akin to what is called a critical point, or a bifurcation point, or singular point, in chaos theory and the theory of dissipative structures. This is the turning point at which a physical system paradoxically embodies multiple and normally mutually exclusive potentials only one of which is selected. (Massumi, 2002, 32)

Underlying affect as a hidden potential of other multiplicities that are also prepersonal, is crucial to or significant for the practices of identity represented in *Moccasin Flats* because the characters

are constructed in a way where affect is tied up with their social circumstances.

Morgan (2008, 445), in his interview with Patrick Chamoiseau sees the rhizome as a way to situate the individual into the modern world. Chamoiseau, in return, states that with the onset of modernity onto specific cultures, the focus moves away from collectivity in regards to making decisions and instead the shift and stress is focused on the individual in identity construction. Thus the idea of the rhizome becomes a central metaphor in the way subjects 'paint' relevant portions of their life in certain colours, the avenue is subsequently open to construct representations of youth as an interweaving rhizome rather than just a Marxian product of power relations in their environment. My intention is to look at the characters on *Moccasin Flats* to assess the ways in which they are *rhizomically* constructed with various multiples of affect and intensities. This is in every way bound, but not limited to, their social conditions and how they use hip-hop signifiers to enunciate various contradictory aspects of their identity.

Most abundant sources of research that have mobilized rhizomic analysis deal with works of art and literature -- for example, M. Abel's article "Deleuze Meets Kerouac On the Road" (2002), uses Deleuze to respond to Kerouac's spontaneous prose as constituting a literary machine that produces affects, not a signifying, representational system that requires an interpretative search for hidden meanings. (Abel, 2002, 229) This search for affects that literature produces, rather than relying on some sort of hidden meaning, shows how the affects that texts produce in readers can have a bearing on the ways they construct their identities, that being the biases and dispositions they adopt. This is significant insofar that identity through the rhizomic articulations itself is based on a notion of extreme and intensities that move beyond simple connections to social circumstances and territorial locations. This means that the circumstances

themselves engage the subject in emotionally intense ways, that in turn reflects how they construct their identities. On MF, the geographic area becomes a signifier of poverty and despair—kids fight in the street, drive-bys and gang violence are normative. The characters seem to articulate their identities based on the emotional intensities generated by their social circumstances, and their use of hip-hop to helps them generate new level of identity.

This literature review has sought to highlight specific aspects of where the issues framing the thesis have come from. The notion of Authenticity, itself an elusive subject, is best defined not as something static and real as much as a continuing quest for a real and eternal self, this quest is enunciated in a perpetual dialogue among concerned parties. Hip-hop being a malleable and lived discourse has provided a way to generate codes or sign functions out of texts that appeal to youth. These texts have a substantial claim to authenticity itself; that being 'real' is a vital part of hip-hop discourse. The history of Aboriginal representation, has widely been framed by outside interests (ie. The Hollywood studio system) dictating the terms of who and how makes relevant portrayals of Indigenous peoples in North America. Thus the quest for authenticity in Aboriginal representation is a current and major priority for those parties who resist being represented on terms not constitutive turn their own interests. Indeed the history of Aboriginal representation tells more about white fears and anxieties than anything else. It is necessary to give voice to an original representation that is articulated by Aboriginal peoples themselves; thus to articulate two previously alien concepts such as hip-hop and Aboriginal youth together is subsequently a kind of proactive intervention into the history of Native representations. In order to see what is really going in beneath the surface level of the representation one needs to look at the characters in terms of multiplicities that undercut traditional essentialized notions of aboriginality.

Chapter 3: On Methodology

To perform this research, I will mobilize multiple qualitative methods of analysis. The project is qualitative because it applies an interpretive, theoretical framework to a representation of native youth on MF. For this research, I will use (1) semiotics analysis to identify what are prominent hip-hop signifiers; (2) articulation to show how the hip-hop signifiers get ideologically fixed to a said identity; and (3) to see how these articulations work together to construct a rhizomic model of identity. This seeks to illustrate the contradictory aspects that go into the identity formation of the character and ultimately how this can (or cannot) come to be seen as a completely authentic representation of aboriginal youth by the viewing public. However, the very fact that I am using rhizomic analysis will attempt to show how these identities are not fixed entities and how they are paradoxically elusive to any fixation of authenticity. The data analysis section of the research will also incorporate a qualitative interview (open-ended questions, opinions etc.) with the show's writers and producers Jennifer Podemski and Laura Milliken, which will provide further insights into the rationale for the articulations made. I will ultimately amalgamate them together to get a complete picture of how it comes to be seen as representative of modern day aboriginal youth .

Data Collection

The episodes of the television show under analysis are the initial 6 episodes of the first season (30 minutes each). Each section of the analysis will include one episode divided into four parts: a) a brief synopsis of the episode, b) semiotic analysis, c) articulations made, and finally d) the rhizomic analysis, that will be an amalgamation of all episodes. The show's two main characters

Dillon Redsky (played by Justin Toto) and Jonathan Bearclaw (played by Landon Montour) are the central objects of examination. Although other characters of the show will not be under direct analysis, they will serve to understand the analysis of the two main characters. I will write my notes of examination down in my field journal.

The interview with Podemski and Milliken will be filmed as the second part of the data collection. This will occur once the initial analysis of the show has been completed. The observations and inferences from the field data will be recorded in my field journal.

Semiotic Interpretation

For this research I will primarily be using Chandler's classification (2002, 148) of social codes. However these types of social codes may also include elements of ideological and textual persuasion; ie. a hip-hop text in the show or an ideological attitude. Social codes are considered to be verbal language; bodily codes (including facial expressions), commodity codes (material possesions); and behavioural codes (rituals, roleplaying.) Textual codes may include genre, rhetorical and stylistic codes. And interpretive codes are often linked to the ideologies surrounding them, in particular Hall's notion of hegemonic, negotiated or oppositional readings of texts (149-150). What this research will attempt to reveal is indeed how sign functions are conventionalized to be indicative of a construction of a particular kind of discourse based on these codes. Following the theoretical assertion " that usually a single sign-vehicle conveys many intertwined contents and therefore what is commonly called a 'message' is in fact a text whose content is a multileveled discourse." (Eco, 1976,57) Discourses are enunciated through various intertwined semiotic codes, in this case iconic codes, that function by keeping in mind a desired semiotic competence or a codified chain of interpretants.

Thus, relying on the semiotics of hip-hop, I would like to be able to construct a criteria for sign identification and function from the practices of representation in MF.

Social Codes

The criteria for the social codes that will be observed in the study are as follows;

1. Attitudes most associated with hip-hop

These signifiers are both verbal as well as indicated by the dialogue in the delivery of the script. These attitudes are outlined in three categories 1) existential attitudes, 2) attitudes towards material 3) attitudes towards other people . These attitudes are read from an area where the grouping together of their actions is already linked to a particular perceptual style, which, following Eco (1976, 274), represents what might be assimilated to the hip-hop idiolect.

The knowledge of the 'style' or 'type' that is hip-hop serves to 'fill in the gaps', thus any connotation is rendered a denotation because the style has already created a perceptual schema of what to expect of that particular signifier of attitude. To paraphrase Eco, the content becomes part of the expression form (266). "Thus a single sign-vehicle, insofar as several codes make it become the functive of several sign-functions (although connotatively linked), can become the expression of several contents, and produce a complex discourse…" (57).[9] Therefore the 'type' or 'style' is always in a state of flux dictated by the content or syntagmatic chain of signifiers. For instance, if a character says '*fuck the world*', this would be classified as AE (Existential Attitude), which denotation is expressly indicative of a connotation that is already preconceived

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[9] As Eco elaborates "Within the framework of a theory of codes, it is unnecessary to resort to the notion of extension, nor to that of possible worlds; the codes, insofar as they are accepted by a society, set up a 'cultural' world which is neither actual nor possible in the ontological sense; its existence is linked to a cultural order, which is the way in which a society thinks, speaks and , while speaking, explains the 'purport' of its thought through other thoughts." (61, 1976).

by the 'type' or style of the expression. The fact that the expression is always actively adding to our perception of what that code is makes the perceptual style in question (hip-hop style) a perpetually growing entity, constantly generating new sign functions out of old ones.

This is a model of a signifying system in which the signifier = type = perceptual schema is grounded in the idea that "Hip-hop is a package of texts grounded in a distinct musical style but also including images (from music videos), fashion (Fubu, Phat Farm), elements of personal style (shaved head), and location (urban, specifically inner-city)" (Brummet, 37). In other words, it is an 'intermedial'[10] discourse that incorporates different media forms.

The three observed attitudes are:

i)Existential Attitudes e.g., "Fuck the world"

ii)Material Attitudes e.g., "Gotta get my money."

iii)Attitudes towards Other People e.g., "You my boy"

These codes may be constitutive features of the dialogue in a syntagmatic chain of textual interplay. However they may also be implied in the overall narrative of the show. You cannot have a behaviour or textual reference that does not contain one of the three attitudes as part of it. However, on the contrary, you can have an attitude without a behaviour or textual reference. The attitudes signified will get at the underlying cultural meaning of how such a representation would gain merit based in the environment that the show produces and reflects. In addition, the same attitudes will serve to act as performative markers that the characters represented in MF seem to use as tools to deal with everyday life.

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[10] Dick Hebdige (de B'beri, 2006, 47) elaborates on intermediality of as a complex interplay of different media that intersect to create a broad discourse that spans different cultural forms and means of expression. De B'beri (2006, 171)takes this concept further when he observes the "tension of different discourses in analyzing trans-local and trans-geographic phenomena under which certain affective dispositions become discernible.

2.) Behavioural Gestures

The gestures and actions that a character enacts on the show could be considered as a subdivision of a kind of social code. Following Chandler (2002, 147), what makes a person distinct in a said specific culture is 'over determined' by specific social codes. We communicate our social identities through everything we do, including the way we talk and our environments. The way we use and incorporate codes acts as a key marker of social identity (148). In different actions and gestures that the characters portray, they also bridge the attitudes they identify with into concrete instances of their identity. How that is articulated as being both(a.) a sign of someone entrenched in the hip-hop aesthetic, and (b) an expression of aboriginal identity, is key to understanding how the attitudes and behaviours that are adopted by the characters form to make a 'becoming' culture. This becoming culture is a statement to the perpetual fluctuation of gradual changes of identity both within the characters and the environment of the show itself. The part that becomes fixed, in otherwords our ability to decipher what we see on screen in an essentializing process, is what is referred to by De B'béri (2006, 161) as a moment of conjuncture,

> This is what I call a conjunctural analysis of black cinema, which mobilizes this process as the conditions for the discovering of the crystallization of specific virtualized memory and actualized practices of expression.

There is a virtual moment where both becoming cultures stop becoming, at the time which we can discursively frame what we are seeing on the screen. This moment is where expressions of aboriginality become tangible and therefore essentialized. However despite the fixation on such a moment, the multiplicity of cultures is still at play; still perpetually 'becoming' something else.

Following Awad El Karim M Ibrahim (2002), who uses hip-hop in his study as a way to describe a way of dressing, walking, and talking; (351) hip-hop displays itself as both a form of both codes that are a whole way of living that is both highly generalizable as well as being variably specific. Ibrahim takes an approach that is entrenched in theoretical notions of 'hybridity' when he states that African youths access Black cultural identities and Black linguistic practices through Black popular culture such as rap videos, TV programs and films. This provides a cultural surrogate due to the lack of having other African youths to identify with. (359) Indeed, I aim to trouble this assertion by universalizing it by looking at the ways that the representations on MF mobilizes how hip-hop culture bridges the gap between the multiplicities of 'becoming cultures' and the ways in which they constantly generate new codes out of varying sign-functions in what can be considered a "raw-content continuum" (Eco, 254). For example for Eco,

raw content-continuum (is) perceptually organized by the painter in the first instance now gradually becomes a new cultural arrangement of the world. A sign-function emerges from the exploratory labor of code-making, and so establishes itself that the painting generates habits, acquired expectations, and mannerisms. Expressive visual units become sufficiently fixed to be available for further combinations, stylizations come into being.

(Eco, 1974, 254)

So the sign-function, (i.e., hand gesture) generates new possible combinations of signs and symbols from the 'raw-content' continuum. However in this case the raw-content continuum is not 'raw' because it is referencing codes that are already established. Thus a discourse authenticity emerges from new codes referencing old ones- a perpetually self-fulfilling prophecy; new codes that reference existing codes in the continuum are actions of substantiating legitimate codes of conduct from both within the world of MF and indeed make implications on ways of

authentically acting in the real world. Thus a character that displays certain visual hip-hop signifiers (i.e. bandanna) generates a functioning that can interpret all future behaviours which are elaborated in that code (i.e., pimp slapping a prostitute). That is not say that all characters that wear a bandanna will later slap a prostitute, rather it says that the bandanna helps to produce a code that could lead future interpretation behaviour (slapping a prostitute) within the 'raw-content' continuum. The behavioural signifiers will be coded as such:

1.) Behavioural Physical Action (eg. hitting, gang violence,)

2.) Behavioural Social (playing basketball, smoking weed, pimping, hip-hop dancing)

3.) Behavioural Gesture (hand-signaling e.g. gang gestures)

4.) Behavioural Verbal Signifiers ("Yo").

The above outlined behaviours will serve to show how the narrative reality of the show is constructed and how these signifiers serve to construct an underlying cultural representation of the character's life in *Moccasin Flats*. Eco's outline of the three different kinds of signs will guide how the bridge is made between the sign and the reality that the narrative represents. This Eco's process is tri-fold: (1.)-shaping the expression continuum; (2.) correlating that shaped continuum with its possible content, and (3.) connecting these signs to factual events, things or states of the world. (Eco, 1976, 256-258). The behaviours identified in the show are subsequently connected to the narrative reality of the show, thus what could appear to seem inauthentic becomes 'natural'.

Textual Codes

Textual codes on *Moccasin Flats* can be represented in a two-fold way: (1) the characters themselves as texts, and the (2) common concrete hip-hop signifiers. Dimitriadis (2000)' study

of inner-city kids inhabiting the texts of their favourite rappers is key here; it shows that the people who incorporate hip-hop texts not only perform identity but they come to literally inhabit the texts themselves. However, for the purposes of this research endeavour, the textual codes apparent insofar as the characters themselves in MF will be observed using the methodological criteria of articulation and rhizome.

For the purposes of coding for this section, I will rely on the fact that the geographic area known as Moccasin Flats operates as a text in and of itself. As Forman (2000) asserts, "It can be observed that space and race figure prominently as organizing concepts implicate in the delineation of a vast range of fictional or actually existing social practices which are represented in narrative or lyrical form" (6). Thus, the fictional geography is imbued with codes of hip-hop inter-textually, and become a form of cultural capital that is a hip-hop signifier itself. The landscape, the houses, and the background characters through the same continuum that creates the sign-function talked about previously transforms the landscape into something that is in everyway both something new to hip-hop codes (Aboriginal population) as well as something completely familiar with existing hip-hop stereotypes and archetypes (the ghetto).

The question of what to classify as something that is inherently a hip-hop textual code becomes a little bit ambiguous. For example, can something that is traditionally Aboriginal, i.e. a First Nation headdress, be re-interpreted as something that is conducive to a hip-hop textual code? If this is possible, hip-hop must first be freed from an essentializing process and accepted as a recycled pop cultural form. Likewise, Aboriginal artefacts could be duly recycled so they construct a new form of hip-hop. However, as Anthony Kwame Harrison (2009) states, by "recognizing and accepting the fact that authenticity in music is constructed from specific social and political powers does not diminish the fact that the aura and power of the authentic is

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extremely appealing and pervasively real." (85). Therefore ,what is interpreted as a 'real' symbol of both a hip-hop artifact and an aboriginal artifact can extinguish any trace of inauthenticity by situating it in the political context of the show. Mitchell (2001, 6) asserts that the legitimation process in hip-hop discourse is heavily reliant on a struggle against dominant hegemonic institutions. In the reality of the show's narrative and by mobilizing certain dominant codes of hip-hop, a meta-semiotic juncture is created that would allow the fact that the Aboriginal is a historically marginalized people struggling against dominant Canadian hegemonic institutions to instill a claim of legitimacy to hip-hop discourse.

 The 3 criteria for the textual codes are as follows:

i) Textual Geographic (i.e. the urban environment of Moccasin Flats);

ii) Textual traditional hip-hop artifact (i.e. Rap Music, posters, clothing); and

iii) Textual aboriginal artifact reinterpreted (recycled) as something related to hip-hop.

These, of course, can exist independently or as part of a syntagmatic chain verbal and visual signifiers associated with the Social Codes (i.e. attitudes and behaviours).

    These are the semiotic codes that will be looked at when viewing the episodes under examination in this research. From these, a discourse of what is hip-hop on *Moccasin Flats* will emerge that we can then assess how the articulation can be encoded to naturalize the said representation. The arbitrary linkage between hip-hop and aboriginal youth will function to assess both the genealogy of the representation as well as how it is naturalized into the narrative of the show.

Method of Articulation

Once the key codes and the meaning they may produce in the context of the show MF have been identified, we can then attempt to dissect the articulations that link these codes. Indeed, through the articulations that link hip-hop to aboriginal youth we can observe and dissect how a said representation of aboriginal youth comes to be seen as a claim of authenticity. As demonstrated in the Literature Review, the notion of authenticity. is part of a meta-discourse, which produces representations. By the very nature of discourse formation any articulation should take into account the plethora of discourses that have informed the meaning of what is said (or admitted) to re-present Aboriginal peoples. The semiotic codes construct a discourse that infuses the area of *Moccasin Flats* with meaning.

Discourse is what constitutes the constructed reality that the characters on the program dwell in and indeed the specificity that informs the reality that the creators seek to represent. As Foucault (1970) elaborates on, this discourse resembles itself, and is not external to man but constitutes man's reality; "As long as representation goes without question as the general element of thought, the theory of discourse serves at the same time, and in one and the same movement, as the foundation of all possible grammar and as a theory of knowledge" (Foucault, 337). Thus articulations are made from discourse and likewise go on to inform discourse. When two arbitrary things (ie. Hip-hop + Aboriginal youth) are articulated together what else is formed if not a discourse informed by a particular ideological vision. It is my contention that these articulations that are made can be constructed as to beg the question of their own dissection.

It is also stated that a third-subject can be used in order to act as foil for dismantling the articulations of others. In Janice Peak's (2001, 8) overview of Hall's description of the theory of

articulation, this 'third' position guides us to see how subjects can identify and dismantle certain granted ideological articulations. The third party that will deconstruct the articulations in this dissertation is that of the researcher. Indeed, by using a method of articulation to interrogate the said representations in MF, we can see how (a) these identities conform to stereotypes and actively construct them and/or (b) how these identities operate in a line of flight away from essentialized, articulative processes. Indeed, the fact that this tension is presented within the actual narrative of the television program situates the program reflexively as a sight where the debate over this paradoxical double articulation of hip-hop and aboriginal youth can be open.

Following Ramsay's recent article on *'The Flats'* (2010), the characters on the show represent the paradoxical force of hip-hop, testifying to both its hegemonic dominating power as well as how a disenfranchised group can use it to invest themselves with meaning. This research project attempts to dissect the why and the how of this statement by examining the ideological connection made through the double articulation of hip-hop onto aboriginal youth (117).

Thus, the process of how one group encodes and circulates meaning, with the advent of alternative media start-ups has democratized the encoding processes formerly dominated by traditional institutions (Roth, 2010). Subsequently, what can be considered the hegemonic consensus has broadened to include formerly disenfranchised groups. However, nothing can become popular that does not accommodate in some way the mass tastes of the wider audience (non-aboriginal viewers). Hence, situating *Moccasin Flats* in a culture that can be easily understood and related to by the masses is unquestionably an act that serves hegemonic purposes (Hall, 1985 141). However, as Knopf (2008, 6) suggests, the indigenous filmmaker uses strategies to return the gaze that otherwise would be appropriated by the dominant power.This is accomplished by filmmakers who use traditional colonial tools of power (film technology) and

incorporate them to create self-empowering images that engage dominant colonialist images. (Knopf, 2008, 7). De B'béri (2009) refers to the concept of *marronage* as a process of seduction when he illustrates how certain African filmmakers use certain colonial tools and financial resources to make films that hijack the colonial enterprise. The seductive powers of the colonial subject under the notion that they are an unstable entity is just a game, and the truth lies behind simple dichotomies of essentialism/trans-nationalism (821) *Marronage* demonstrates how a commonly held modern stereotype, like the hip-hop entrenched gangsta youth, can be mobilized by the Aboriginal filmmaker to mean far more than just a rudimentary inscribed stereotype (De B'béri 2009, 821).

The methodology employed by this research project is one that looks at the nature of the articulation formed and how it reflexively interacts with the main characters on the television program. The question of whether or not an articulation is formed that serves the purpose of representating Aboriginal youth will be addressed. And secondly, examining how this representation can come to be seen by both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal people alike as authentic.

Rhizomic Analysis

 Each episode will be analyzed in light of the two previous sections (Semiotics and Articulation) and then, the results of those inquiries will be further dissected using Deleuzo-Guattarian theory.

The articulations that are made in the preceding section will then be examined rhizomically. Different articulations will lead to get to the core of the affects and intensities that each character's social circumstances have in performing and constructing their identity. For example, an articulation of a young, troubled man (and the pressures of growing up in a poor, marginalized

community) as being prone to being a pimp (hip-hop signifier) could then be articulated as an important part of his identity, which in turn, has an affect with all other aspects of his identity. This in turn will be reflective of the emotional intensity and motivation that is a part of his social circumstances and connected to his environment. Subsequently, the multiple layers that formulate the identity of the character become constitutive to his worldview but as well as to the ways in which the world views him. The 'Line of Flight' away from this fixture of identity is a way in which other layers of his identity become enunciated. Methodologically, once you have a character that can be seen as articulating himself authentically from the discourse of hip-hop, you then should have a representation that people believe to be authentic. However, this notion of authenticity will reference the perpetual 'becoming' of the subject, subsequently eluding any permanent articulation of identity. The identities under analysis in the thesis may therefore show whether or not they flirt with ideal moments of conjuncture or crystallization (De B'béri, 159, 2006) only to contradict those very moments in favour of a perpetual process of 'becoming'. Thus how characters either succeed or fail to elude any fixation on identity graphically show the impossibility and indeed the self-defeating nature of trying to come up with an 'authentic' representation. We will then be able to see whether or not identity persists despite the interpellation of stereotypes and the confinements and re-alignments of articulations.

Interview

   The interview with Jennifer Podemski and Laura Milliken conducted in order to bring to light how the creators of the show view the relevancy and importance of the characters. The interview will be engaged throughout the data analysis section of this paper, in light of the theoretical finding. This will be compared to where they drew their inspiration and sources from in constructing the world that is represented on the show. The interview will consist of 6 questions

that can be viewed in the Appendix. One of the claims of the show is that it is based on a real-life area in Regina, Saskatchewan and indeed it uses real 'aboriginal' actors. This hearkens back to what was discussed in the Literature Review where what comes to be seen as an 'authentic' aboriginal representation is one that not only involves aboriginals making films for aboriginals (Knopf, 2008), but also that demonstrates a shift away from aboriginal representations either being trapped by stereotypes or as being a direct reaction to those stereotypes.

Chapter 4: *Moccasin Flats* Analysis

Episode 1-"Unearthed"

We are first introduced to the gritty urban landscape of North Central Regina known as Moccasin Flats in a montage of images. There are a number of youth, part of a gang, beating a young boy, and two teen prostitutes (clad in short skirts and heavily caked with makeup) approaching vehicles. One of the prostitutes hands her baby to another while she gets in a truck driven by a white driver. Opening credits role with a blend of traditional aboriginal music mixed to a hip-hop beat with images from the Moccasin Flats' community.

As the show continues, the protagonist Dillon Redsky plays with a basketball while walking down the street. We are then introduced to Redsky's friend Mathew Merasty, who does a hip-hop dance to a group of people beating a traditional aboriginal drum. They are attending the initial construction for an Aboriginal Cultural Center in the community. A skeleton is dug up by one of the machines, which elicits a shock from the onlookers. We then return to the two prostitutes, who we learn are named Candy and Sarah. Candy says that there is a community volunteer (Laura) who is passing out condoms. Sarah replies; "I wish I had one of these a half hour ago." Candy and Sarah then save a girl (Danna) from getting beat up, in hopes that they get a "finder's fee" from their pimp Jonathan (Bearclaw).

The narrative jumps to Redsky, who, in a conversation with Merasty, reveals that he has been accepted to go play basketball at the University of British Columbia. Redsky complains that other people in the community think he is selling out, but Merasty retorts:"they would do the same." Later in the episode, Redsky's grandfather, (Joe), makes him promise that "no matter what, you will get out of here."

In other parallel scenes, on a street in MF, Candy and Sarah are trying to indoctrinate Danna into the sex trade by getting her high. Danna reveals that she suffers from unwanted sexual harassment from her step-father, a white drunk. The three track the man down and Candy puts a knife to his throat making him promise that he will leave Danna alone. Later we see how Bearclaw tries to indoctrinate Redsky's little brother, Nathan, to get into his gang 'The Red Soldiers.' In another scene, a police officer by the name of Amanda Strongeagle takes an interest in the case of the dug up skeleton, despite the apathy of her fellow officers.

Episode 1- Semiotic Analysis and Articulation

At the onset of the show, a combination of hip-hop codes are presented. We see neighbourhood teens attacking one another. The physical acts of violence represented in the scene frame a textual geographic that sets up the background of the show as one of random violence with teens that sport various traditional hip-hop cultural units (bandannas, gang colours, shots of rottweilers). The two semiotic codes work together to signify and make reference to the urban gangster genre stated by Ramsay (2010, 107) in her chapter on MF.   The articulation established in this episode is one that links the Moccasin Flats community (standing in for an urban aboriginal community) to hip-hop culture; thus situating it in the urban genre that generally includes such spaces as South Central LA, Cabrene Green, Brooklyn, or Baltimore. Indeed, the genre is synonymously a standing reserve of discursive units that prompt the enframing of each subsequent scene. The filmmakers consciously use the constructed hip-hop codes in an attempt to represent a community in which both the actors in the show and the characters they portray are situated in. The previously distinct area of Moccasin Flats is linked to

a class of communities commonly represented in urban drama and action films. As series co-creator Jennifer Podemski elaborates on:

Well I think there is always a fine line between representing reality and creating intriguing

drama when you're a drama writer and a drama producer. So we took an environment and

we worked with youth in that environment to create a show that was accurate to what their

perspectives were in the community and we dramatized it. It was not a documentary series

so it wasn't like we were writing what we were seeing verbatim in the community; the

show would have been a lot more devastating if we were to do that. We took a very light

approach to a very harsh situation and harsh reality and tried to balance the portrayals of

good and evil by telling a good story. (Burrows, 2011)

What is built through, utilizing a neo-realist approach in order to discursively frame a

conjuncture of authenticity, is the process in which the filmmakers implanted the ideologies of

the actual youth of the community (which was also, by and large, the cast) into the

conceptualization of the program. Therefore, any re-articulation of 'aboriginality' in the

intervention by the filmmakers is grounded in the voice of the aboriginal community that is

represented. The accomplished claim to authenticity is based on a two-fold assumption

implicated in the literature review: (1) that Aborginal communities should be responsible for

establishing their own representative voice, based on their own ideological presumptions as to

the relevant state of their own voices; and (2) that aboriginal producers are capable of defining

what will be considered as authentic. This intervention into the 'real' of Moccasin Flats, brings

attention to the artifice that underlies authentic claims; that it is a discursively constructed,

consensual agreement between participating parties. What is legitimate is the voice of the youth

of the MF community, and their agreement to let this program stand in for their story. Therefore the representation becomes a conjunctural place for the affective real-lived experiences of the reality of Moccasin Flats.

Ideologically, the use of the images of normative violence and child poverty are connected with urban despair and decay. That is already part of a much larger discourse of Aboriginal communities beyond the scope of this research. The decision to set the program in the summer time also makes sense, as visually it parallels the summer heat atmosphere of almost all urban gangster films, although this may have more to do with production concerns (i.e. it being easier to produce a show in the summer rather than the winter). Following Ramsay's research (2010, 107) that MF follows the stylistic tropes of the genre in order to accentuate the problems of a community, I will take this assertion one step farther; by referencing a discourse that situates a certain geographic space into a specific style of genre, subsequently naturalizing it, is an ideological decision by the filmmakers and is a kind of articulation. The verisimilitude of the representation helps to give a certain aura of authenticity to a wider audience that may be unfamiliar to urban Aboriginal communities. For example, the program was picked-up by the Canadian television network Showcase, where it aired to much fanfare after the widely received program *Trailer Park Boys*, politically foregrounding it to a broader wide audience. For many youth, including this researcher, situating it in this timeslot provided a discursive window into the world of Aboriginal youth that I previously did not have access too. Hall (1980, 136) states that before a message can have an 'effect' it must be meaningfully encoded and that by using certain naturalized hip-hop codes in the narrative of the program it prompts this researcher to accept what they are seeing on a negotiated level. This includes i.) reading the text as hip-hop oriented and hence making it conducive to my world view at the time and because of this ii.)

gaining a window into a world I was a.) ignorant of and b.) did not understand. The articulations made a testament to the fact that a series of oppositional viewings (in this case the history of native film) can merge together to create a new dominant position at its core, which is in many ways still subversive. In this case the dominant position of the filmmakers intends the viewer (in this case the white viewer) to look beneath the hip-hop codes to some as yet undefined quality underneath.

The opening credits, which feature a combination of traditional aboriginal music over a hip-hop beat, signify a becoming of a multiplicity of cultures. Essentialized forms of blackness into essentialized forms of aboriginality. Hip-hop is naturalized over essentialized notions of aboriginal culture and vice versa. When we are first introduced to Redsky, he is playing basketball, indicating a social behavior, entrenched in hip-hop discourse and sporting an oversized polo shirt with baggy jeans. At the same time teens drive-by in a car sporting a 'gangster glare' (behavioural gesture) and listening to rap music in a low-rider, which is indicative of an attitude towards other people (gangster intimidation) as well as a social behaviour. This amalgamation of cultural units sets the codes that, in the constructed world of *Moccasin Flats,* hip-hop sign vehicles serve a definite function in the character's lifestyles and behaviours, framing how future actions will be interpreted. The hip-hop aesthetic is duly appropriated and recycled into the narrative construction. The very fact that this representation *re-presents* serves to perpetually frame a discourse out of the recycled cultural units of hip-hop discourse in the Moccasin Flats community.

The articulation of hip-hop onto MF, foregrounding the political intentions of the filmmakers, plays on the discursively constructed imaginations of the youth in the community it seeks to represent. Thus the articulation is a form of strategic resistance, an intervention that is also an

invention of an aboriginality that has not been muddled with by white hands. It references itself and not as much the previous external constructions of aboriginal youth. Redsky's friend, Mathew Merasty, represents an amalgamation of both Traditional Hip-hop and Traditional Aboriginal codes by enacting a fusion of traditional native dance to aboriginal hip-hop music. Indeed, we learn more of this character in the coming episodes: he writes hip-hop music and desires to perform in an upcoming dance competition. Dillon Redsky and Mathew Merasty , as Ramsay (2010, 119) points out, demonstrate an existential attitude in a skepticism and even distrust of the hegemonic/white authority at the community ceremony: "Politician takes an hour to dig a hole". Once again, on its own, without previous hip-hop signifiers to help frame the tone of the scene, this statement would not at all be related to hip-hop. However, the line works with others on the program to express a common attitude that is part of the discourse of hip-hop and accentuates the wariness of racially marginalized people to white authority.

At 03:40 the show's antagonist, Jonathan Bearclaw, pulls up in a low rider. This is the first sign that we see that hip-hop may be used as a negative force within the community of MF. Bearclaw is dressed in baggy pants, bandanna, and 'bling-bling'. As Ramsay asserts, "hip-hop represents a fluid discourse that can be meaningfully used and adapted to different and new purposes" (2010, 117). A duality between the uses of hip-hop emerges, that it is articulated as a cultural artifact that can be used for many different types of behaviours. We can see an articulation of hip-hop discourse as being both negative and positive. Laura Milliken elaborates on this dichotomous use of hip-hop;

> I think that some people just fashion it or use it in whatever way it suits them and for us
> designing the soundtrack for Jonathan it had to be part of his character. So we would
> always characterize that music as 'gangsta rap' on the soundtrack to go with certain

scenes. We needed positive songs on the soundtrack to go with certain uplifting scenes. It

is a conscious decision but I think, in the greater world, there has been movements of

different kinds of rap music that I think has done it a disservice and at the same time made it

highly marketable and you can look at either character and wonder which form of hip-hop

might be more appealing to the masses. (Burrows, 2011)

Once Bearclaw leaves, Strongeagle asks Redsky involving Bearclaw "Not trying to *click* your

little brother into his gang is he." The dialogue that is employed establishes the function that hip-

hop terms such as 'click', common in South Central LA street culture, are effectively used to

describe gang activity, therefore setting up a dichotomous use of both facets of hip-hop style to

accentuate both sides of the discourse mobilized.

In the next scene, we are introduced to Bearclaw's pad. Rap music is playing while cocaine

and money are being cut up. Guns are shown. Bearclaw is wearing a doo-rag; the attitude being

that guns and drugs are normative in the show's culture. This works together with social

behaviours that stress the actual tangible incorporation of that particular attitude to construct the

environment and legitimate the characters within it, hearkening back to questions of entitlement

and authenticity. The performance of hip-hop discourse being a legitimation structure that is

invented and recycled into the day-to-day activities of aboriginal culture. Within the discursive

incorporation of hip-hop, certain 'negative' iconic codes are used to articulate a negative

narrative world around 'anti-social *gangsta rap'*.

Bearclaw's prostitutes, Candy and Sarah, call each other "Wild Cherry Sistaz". Over the

course of the season, Bearclaw's misogynist attitude towards women is presented and

incorporated into his social behaviour of pimping women and believing he owns them. That in

turn formulates a code portraying a material attitude towards women. Without the intertextual

dynamic at work in the program, this behavior might serve a different function that we might only speculate. However, one thing becomes clear on the program: a discourse of hip-hop being a dichotomous reflection of both the legitimate/illegitimate culture of conduct in this poor, marginalized community emerges. The show's iconic characters serve to form a social convention as to the code of conduct in the narrative of the show. The agency of the characters is subsequently framed by the creative exercises of the filmmakers out of the perpetual recycling of hip-hop discourse into the actions and agency of the characters.

Jonathan's gang is identified as the Red Soldiers. This, once again, exemplifies hip-hop lexicon being firmly entrenched in the local culture in that it identifies their derogatory racial stereotype 'red', with the traditional hip-hop moniker of being a soldier. You have the activation of racial derogatory slang being used to echo a stereotype that revels in its ubiquity, 'red' being akin to the African American use of the term 'nigga' common in hip-hop discourse. Finding culturally relative coefficient of hip-hop codes is one tactic of recyclage that can serve to legitimate authenticity in value judgments made by the viewer of *Moccasin Flats*. It is with this tactic that the researcher occupies the third-position of dismantling the two articulations by illustrating how certain recycled discursive forms have parameters and borders that were not crossable. This means that the term 'red' is supplemented for the term 'nigga' because, at this particular moment in the show, 'nigga' would have been going too far. However, later, the term 'nigga' is used, however the legitimation of the term is question.

After a corpse is dug up at the community picnic, Merasty says "Hell of a life, basketball, bbqs, corpses." This existential attitude contributes to form a Textual Geographic that implicates the flats as that of a place where good times and violence co-exist (Ramsay, 2010), a view that is often indicative of 'hood' symbolism. This is also reflected when Redsky expresses a desire to

leave the Flats: "Anybody that does get out, they tear down". To which Mathew responds "You be the trail blazer bro." This is a common narrative archetype of the black 'gangsta film' (*Boyz In tha Hood*, *Menace 2 Society*, *Fresh*), in which one member wants to find a way out of the 'hood while still being loyal to those that he leaves behind (Ramsay, 118). Redsky's grandfather reflects this existential attitude when he says "No matter what happens you'll get out of here." The attitude is reflective of a common rebellious attitude exemplified in hip-hop discourse, but also connoting further attitudes expressed by shared racial marginalization.

The subversive hijacking and intervention into the naturalized articulation of Hip-hop + Aboriginal youth comes into play because, although flirting with an established Hollywood genre, the producers are using common narrative tropes and signifiers so that we may gain access to a community that may otherwise exist in silence. This is elaborated by Ramsay (2010, 110) when she says that Moccasin Flats as it existed circa 2002, like many urban aboriginal landscapes, had previously been underrepresented in the media. Aboriginals were represented as living on reservations, like in the popular series *North of 60*, that aired on CBC in the nineties. What can initially be seen as an 'homage' to the urban gangster genre (Ramsay, 2010, 110) is actually a way of recycling similar codes and re-utilizing it in a context that has not been seen before. This can be seen as a process of which De B'béri (2009) explains as being *marronage*: the slave seduces the master to accomplish his needs and wishes, and then abandons him once those wishes are fulfilled (820). Thus, by situating *Moccasin Flats* in an acceptable 'urban genre', ideological meaning is produced for that specific area and leads to frame a new genre to represent urban aboriginal landscapes; a flirtation with the mainstream that works using traditional modes of representation to articulate the area in a new and unique light.   Indeed much like the *marroon,* once a seduction has occurred in generating interest in the show, the producers

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abandon the commercially appealing gangsta genre in order to go deeper into the world of young urban aboriginals.[11]The illusion of having an authentic representation of an urban landscape that many Aboriginals call home is subsequently created by extrapolating certain signifiers from the area (hip-hop codes and conventions) and engaging in the complex issues that exist in the spaces in between those signifiers. Whether negative or positive, this is also imbued with the ideological pretensions of the filmmakers. However, once a familiarized format for reading the show has been established, there are many dynamic elements that come into play such as the community action of the social worker Laura and the building of the cultural community center. What is seemingly wrapped in a commercially appealing, package of *gangsterism* leads to the fact that there are many positive forces at work in this particular urban aboriginal community. The creativity expressed by the filmmakers sees the perpetual reframing of the constitutive features of the discourse to recycle a new genre out of the old.

When we return to the prostitutes, Candy says to her new recruit "Welcome to the trick pad", a verbal code that elicits the mapping out of certain geographic areas formulated through hip-hop discourse. It could be easy to imagine the paradigmatic options available to label a place where prostitutes service johns, however the writers of the show chose to use the words 'trick' and 'pad'. Once again this serves the function of setting up prostitution as something that is within the discourse of hip-hop culture but in no way dictated by hip-hop culture. The 'trick pad' is constructed as a distinct and notorious part of the geographic landscape. When the two women smoke weed, a social behavior commonly associated with hip-hop culture, they set up an initial starting point that articulates drug-use as a depredating force in the community. Many different characters of many different colours smoke weed on television, however it is how the sign-

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[11] In later seasons of the show the hip-hop aesthetic, while still duly appropriated, is more of a background and does not take precedence as we become more familiar with the characters and issues.

vehicle functions as a codewith others on the program and beyond it that contribute to the type of atmosphere that emerges from the narrative. This is also the case later in the show, when the prostitutes and Bearclaw are doing heroin and listening to rap music. At the outset of this scene, Bearclaw tells them "What the fuck are you bitches doing here, get your asses back out on the street." This is an example of an attitude that also further integrates misogyny and pimping, as well as the exploitation of women, in the constructed reality of the program as enunciated in the antagonist. The problems in the community are thus framed around hip-hop codes but a deep understanding of them takes the viewer beyond the original semiotic implications into a broader cultural competency of the characters and area. The ideology being that the area of MF is fraught with social problems, however it is the framing of the particular agency of the subject within that community that enunciates these problems: hip-hop being a performative mechanism that elucidates the different problems that discursively frame the community.

 Episode 2 – "Suspicious Love"

   In the intro to the second episode, juxtaposed to the gritty images of the first episode, we are introduced to a lighter side of the 'Flats complete with children playing and riding bikes. We see Redsky and Merasty working at their summer job as landscapers for their own company. After prodding from Redsky, Merasty admits that he is writing "dope lyrics" for a song and dance competition. While throwing some trash out, Redsky finds Sarah's body dumped and badly beaten in a back alley. Later, we learn that Redsky has been in love with Sarah for quite some time, but that she has not reciprocated his feelings out of loyalty to her pimp Jonathan Bearclaw. While visiting Sarah in the hospital, Merasty warns Redsky that she is "bad news."

In the next scene, Jonathan is in his house, lying in bed with Danna, to whom he feeds drugs, and promises to buy her nice "gear" and "bling-bling". Jonathan then orders Candy out to prostitute herself and get some "bills" for him. Later, we hear Redsky's grandfather and Merasty's grandmother reflecting on how booze and drugs are "taking kids' spirits away".

After forcibly ejecting the recovering Sarah from the hospital, Jonathan brings her home, commanding her by saying "I'm the only one you fuck for free." Soon after which, Jonathan is visited by a bunch of older gangsters wearing business suits, who demand that he pays them the money he owes them. Before the men leave they give him "two more weeks or else they kill him and his goddamn bitches."

Constable Strongeagle continues investigating the nameless skeleton, and thanks to some evidence found at the scene, presumes the body is that of one Reginald Thundercloud. Clues lead to the fact that Thundercloud was dating Dillon Redsky's mother, Rita, who used to be an alcoholic. After meeting with a contact from the hospital, it appears to Strongeagle that the skeleton may have been hit with an object to the head. Meanwhile, Laura, the community worker, inquires to Strongeagle about 'The Cowboy Hat John' who presumably is responsible for the attack on Sarah and some of the other prostitutes in the area.

Before the end of the episode, while Jonathan is in his house chopping cocaine, he gets a call from his sick son's mother who says that the boy (Ethan) must be taken to a hospital in the States. The mother also says that she will need five thousand dollars for the medical attention the boy will need.

Episode 2: Semiotic Interpretations and Articulations

The episode begins with a montage of the city streets and hip-hop music playing in the background, once again setting up a textual geographic code; in other words situating the area of Moccasin Flats as a hip-hop text in and of itself, also as a soundtrack to the community.

In the first scene, Mathew Merasty is mowing a lawn, listening to Aboriginal hip-hop music. This combination of hip-hop codes interestingly enough helps to build up the fact that there are many ways in which hip-hop engages with the community and characters of Moccasin Flats, some that can be seen as an uncontentious 'recycling' of a ubiquitous cultural tool (Ramsay, 2011, 117). This function is further developed when Mathew is writing down lyrics for a rhyme and dance competition. Mathew displays his dance moves, which connote both a traditional style of Aboriginal dance with common hip-hop moves (e.g. referencing the C-Walk or 'crip walk' of South Central LA). Redsky then jokes with Merasty giving him the moniker 'Lil Pow Wow', a play of words referencing famous American rapper, Lil' Bow Wow.

In the next scene, Bearclaw is laying in bed with his new whore, during which he promises to bring her "shopping" and buy her "bling-bling." In this sample of dialogue, a parallel between Bearclaw's attitude towards material with his attitude towards other people emerges: firstly, by Bearclaw's attitude that he can impress or even own a women by buying her material things, and secondly, an attitude that warrants frivolous material possessions like fancy jewellery- a common trope of certain types of hip-hop discourse. Both the codes intertwine to suggest that this particular subject views women as materials, subsequently framing the interpretation of the character as one that validates himself on ownership of people and material possessions. This is echoed in his further treatment of his 'hos'; later Bearclaw forcibly pulls the injured Sarah out of the hospital and puts her back to work on the street. At 11:02, Bearclaw firmly illustrates this

combination of attitudes of misogyny and materiality by slapping Sarah and saying things in the dialogue including: "You don't say no to me bitch", as well as "I'm the only one you fuck for free." However, soon after we find out that Bearclaw is just one small cog in a larger culture of violence when he is visited by some suited men that he owes money to: they also exemplify a similar misogynist attitude and validate Bearclaw's ownership by stating, "Fuck with us again and I'll kill you and your bitches. Talk to us in two weeks dawg".

In this episode, MF brings forth two new articulations of Aboriginal youth. The first we can see in the characters of Dillon Redsky and Mathew Merasty in (a) an incorporation of hip-hop culture that co-exists within aboriginal culture, at least for the youth. A 'rhyming and dance' competition is brought up that sees hip-hop as playing an important and constructive role in the community of Moccasin Flats. Much the same way, however in direct opposition to the pro-social incorporation of hip-hop that is articulated through Redsky and Merasty, lies the problem that is Jonathan Bearclaw. Through pimping, excessive use of hard drugs, gang-banging and a focus on material possessions, Bearclaw represents (b); a negative, destructive incorporation of hip-hop onto Aboriginal youth identity. These articulations parallel each other and heighten the themes of the show. Indeed Ramsay (2010) mentions how both forms of hip-hop are used in the show to frame its dichotomous incorporation by both the antagonist and protagonist (Ramsay, 117). Thus, an ideological connection between community growth and prosperity as well as community despair and normative violence within hip-hop discourse are made.

One might ask, why would the creators of the show attempt to represent one of the characters in such a negative way? Would not this perpetuate a negative, damaging stereotype that may take hold in the mind of the viewer? However, in this episode Bearclaw is shown as having multiple sides to his personality that show him as something more than just a 'Bad Indian.' The way the

creators encode the articulation that is made is one that first constructs a representation of the quintessential modern aboriginal menace as being steeped in hip-hop signifiers, but then shows another side to Bearclaw as a loving father. Thus attempts to pin down the character as having on essentialized attribute always gives way to another facet, another multiplicity to his personality. Once again we can see this perpetual dance with notions of essentialization only to be refuted in later revelations that have everything to do with the complexity and fluidity of the character. The articulation begs the question for its own dismantling.

   The state of the community's youth as seen through the eyes of the elders (Joe Redsky and Betty Merasty) is addressed when Betty says, "Damn booze and drugs, stealing the young one's spirits." They may indirectly be referencing the ubiquity of hip-hop as a culture when they say that "Dillon used to be a great dancer and now all he does is play basketball." These two pieces of dialogue work between episodes of the program to promote the idea that the once traditional aboriginal community isn't the same for better or worse and that hip-hop culture is a substantial part of it, but is also a way to frame the overall struggle between contemporary and traditional issues that often co-exist in tandem with one another. Milliken explains,

   I think that is always an issue with everything we do because on one hand, you want to

   represent your community accurately, and on the other hand, you want to represent your

   community in a contemporary way and as real people not as artifacts or as caricatures of

   what people perceive us or our nations of people to be. So did we do dance and pow-wow?

   Of course we did. But did black people have hip-hop as originally part of their culture?

   You know what I mean, it's something that we all, our communities evolve, we all attach to

   certain developments in culture and pop culture and we, as anybody else evolved, and I

   think hip-hop was something that became important to a lot of marginalized communities;

it's a form of expression that they connected to and that Aboriginal youth connected to so it

was very important to have it (hip-hop) as part of the show; as were a lot of other

contemporary forms of expression within the show. And that's just where we are now and

for me it is an accurate representation of who Aboriginal people are, because that's all that I

ever knew. I didn't know what the common perception was, that's not how I lived or my

family lived. (Burrows 2011

The aura of authenticity presents itself in a common discursive struggle present in all

communities between the incorporation of new popular cultures and its bastardizing effect on

existing essentialized forms; however, the perpetual fluidity of culture is elucidated between the

constant amalgamation of these forms and indeed works to articulate a multiplicity of

motivations and paradoxes present in the characters. The question, hearkens back to Heidegger,

what is being concealed, in the creators attempts to reveal?

Episode 3- "Pursuit"

As the episode opens, rap music is playing in the background as Sarah walks aimlessly down

the street. This is juxtaposed to Redsky leaning against a tree, daydreaming about her. Merasty

gives Redsky three hundred dollars of the money to deposit in the bank. Dillon then accepts the

money and uses it to take Sarah out and 'pay for her time', although he only has innocent

intentions.

Betty Merasty inquires to Joe Redsky about the body of Reginald Thundercloud, accusing

him of knowing something. Bearclaw puts the pressure on his prostitutes to make more money,

due to his financial pressures. Later on, Bearclaw watches his severely handicapped son in the

playground with his baby's mother.

In his sleep, Redsky has been having nightmares; this is juxtaposed to the image of where Reginald Thundercloud's body was found. Redsky wakes up and the camera flashes to Bearclaw waking up from a similar dream in his house. Bearclaw then does a few massive hits of cocaine, to alleviate the trauma from the dream. The next day, Redsky promises his brother Nathan that he will play basketball with him; then, in the scene after, he encounters Sarah outside of a store and asks to take her to a movie that "he'll pay for." Merasty once again criticizes Redsky, stating: "Have you lost your mind, you're dating a hooker." Nathan is then waiting at an empty basketball court for his brother who never shows. Laura expresses her frustration to Strongeagle about the lack of progress in the "Cowboy Hat John" case, she breaks down in tears after revealing her own background as a sexually abused child.

Redsky goes on his "date" with Sarah, who looks to be falling for his romantic advances. After the date, Sarah is then violently confronted by Jonathon, who inquires that "He knows something is going down."

After being abandoned by his brother, Nathan then joins with his 'gangsta' friends who introduce him to pot. After being spooked by something in the bushes where Thundercloud's body was found, they scatter. Bearclaw finds out from Candy about Sarah's dealings with Redsky. Merasty likewise confronts Redsky about him spending their hard earned money on Sarah.

Episode 3: Semiotic Interpretation and Articulations Made

This episode elicits more of the same signifying codes, which Bearclaw negatively emanates in the performance of his identity. Part way through the episode, gangster rap music is playing in the background as Bearclaw opens a safe where he hides his money. Moments later, Candy gives money to Bearclaw, he counts it and says, "What the fuck is this? Bitches better pulling your

weight around here. Skanky ho." This is an example of how Bearclaw is using the hip-hop

lexicon to establish his attitude towards women, in the same way that much of everything he says

acts as verbal signifier of behaviour that establishes a particular type of idiolect to set up his

future behaviour. The audience can start to see that Bearclaw may use the *'gangsta'* persona to

hide something about his past that he does not want to deal with. 'Hip-hop' acts as a mask that

may both hide as well as anesthetise other existing tensions. This performance is as much an act

of 'concealing' as it simultaneously reveals that of the character, as all acts of enframing

subsequently do (Heidegger, 1977, 26). It is only in Bearclaw's enunciation of hip-hop as a

'performative weapon' (Milliken, See Burrows, 2011) can we see that it blatantly reveals that the

character is trying to know the world through some sort of mediated way.

Dillon Redsky's relationship with his brother Nathan is also heavily imbued with hip-hop

codes. Redsky tells Nathan that he will play basketball with him, and then does not show up to

the court to play with his brother. It may be a far stretch to say that, even within the built context

of the program, basketball is solely a hip-hop signifier; however, it does represent together with

rhyming and dancing an alternative approach to life than that taken by Bearclaw. In a scene

heavy with textual and social hip-hop codes, Nathan is smoking weed and wearing a bandanna

after his brother leaves him, with a gang of 'red soldiers' (Bearclaw's gang). This reaction taken

by Nathan to his abandonment by Dillon stresses that, once again, there are many ways in which

hip-hop social codes function to contextualize what happens in the scene as good or bad. In this

case, it is used as a dividing force that separates Nathan from his estranged brother.

This episode further solidifies the articulations made in the previous episode and takes the

processes of intervention and re-articulation one step further. However, both the articulations of

the 'good modern urban youth' as well the 'bad modern urban youth' are also dismantled. For

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one we can see how, as virtuous as Dillon Redsky appeared in the previous two episodes, he is also flawed in that he nonchalantly ditches his younger brother to pursue Sarah. Hip-hop has absolutely nothing to do with these turns of events; however, it does have broader implications on how the character may be read. For example as Milliken (Burrows, 2011) states, "... there are two very different people that consume those particular kinds of music…and I think those characters represent those kind of people that consume those different kinds of music as well. I think that hip-hop can also be a weapon and I think that it was Jonathan's kind of weapon in a way."

In the literature review, I stated how Aboriginal peoples have been trapped in a legacy of fictitious stereotypes for almost the hundred-year history of film. With the rise of Aboriginal produced mediums such as APTN, writers may create characters that are not always there to substantiate the white characters. Indeed, in the flaws of Dillon Redsky, we can see how the character is neither good nor bad, but exists in the liminal state between the two. I will offer that hip-hop on *Moccasin Flats* also operates on this same liminal space-existing in–between and throughout identities and cultures. In Bearclaw, we can see a self-realization in which he comes to know himself through constant extreme thresholds through normative violence, thus hip-hop for him is a haptic and liminal site that is incorporated in order to live his particular kind of life. The 'in-between-ness' in Bearclaw's case is a world that is chaotic, where anything can take place, and hip-hop can help to make this reality livable while molding and accentuating it. A new form of aboriginality is constructed, one that is not conducive to processes of essentialization, but still self-reflexively engages it. Rather than playing a basketball game with his brother, in Nathan Redsky, we see the notion of young Aboriginal youth being at risk to take part in 'gangsta' activities i.e. theft and smoking weed, the same as youth in every other community in

much of the world. A new anti-reductionist articulation emerges that sees the characters being actively re-articulated according to a multiplicity of situational determinations rather than race. The filmmakers are using their power to circulate, fix and subsequently intervene in a 'modern' day articulation of aboriginal youth, which both situates them in the contemporary world while not diminishing the role of their socio-historical situation; the reasons for the actions, motivations and circumstances of the characters, are due to a multiplicity of occurrences. The dismantling and re-articulation of the characters to proactively intervene on any such essentialized, stereotyped fixation in the mind of the viewer is enough to establish a new decoding practice in the history of Aboriginal representation.

Episode 4-"Deeper"

Once again, we are presented with a montage of scenes from the community of Moccasin Flats, this time with images of poverty as well as play. These images are presented with rap music playing in the background and contain mostly the youth of the community.

Redsky and his family (mother and grandfather), pick up Nathan at the police station. Constable Strongeagle states that he was acting as a watchdog for a "B and E", and next time he could be looking at a stint in juvenile hall. Redsky's mother informs Strongeagle that she saw Reginald Thundercloud, indicating that the skeleton that was dug up did not belong to him. She also indicates that Thundercloud was wearing a 'stupid cowboy hat'. Grandfather Joe looks concerned over this revelation.

Bearclaw is doing cocaine in his house when he reveals his true intentions to Danna. He commands her that "she gets her ass out on the street" and starts "making him some money." Meanwhile, Redsky and Sarah's relationship seems to be getting deeper as they both reveal personal information about themselves to each other. Redsky reveals that he "feels that he is letting everyone down" by leaving for the University of British Columbia.

Strongeagle tracks down a medical alert bracelet found on the skeleton as belonging to a Kenny Bearclaw, Jonathan's Uncle. Strongeagle then asks her contact Deb at the hospital for more information on the skeleton, including dental records. Candy finds out she is HIV positive and denies it to herself. Tensions continue to grow between Merasty and Redsky over Sarah and the misappropriation of funds. Nathan expresses his frustration to his grandfather over the lack of attention from his brother and mother. He then gets approached by Jonathan to join his gang, the 'Red Soldiers', where he can earn some "bling-bling." Nathan, with his bandanna-wearing friends, then robs a house and runs away with stereo equipment. Meanwhile, Bearclaw assaults Merasty to gain information on the location of Redsky and Sarah. Out of loyalty to his friend, Merasty does not give up any information on Redsky, the result being that Bearclaw and his gang leave him beaten and bloodied on the ground. Sarah then tries to break up with Redsky, indicating that it is too dangerous and she is "just a hooker." Sarah then calls Laura, saying that she wants to go to the safe house. Laura promises Redsky that she will take "good care of Sarah." At the end of the show we are left with an image of Merasty lying beaten on the ground, possibly dead.

Episode 4 – Semiotic Interpretation and Articulation

As in the previous episodes, the setting is established with rap music playing in the background over kids playing. It's interesting to see the choice of rap music to frame each scene

in the episode. Bearclaw is once again doing cocaine and listening to music, this time while under an exceeding amount of stress. This serves to frame the traditional hip-hop artefact of rap music with the intense negative vibe in Bearclaw's house, connoting it with all the emotional negativity associated with living a 'gangsta' lifestyle. The atmosphere in the house, framed by the music, sets up the signifying function in the next line of dialogue. Bearclaw says to Danna, "Get your ass on the street and make me some money, or I'll hunt you down and kill you." The previous line being a violently aggressive example of a firm establishment of an attitude toward other people as material possessions: the idea being that to Bearclaw certain women are exactly that. Hip-hop does not own the monopoly on misogyny and pimping, however, when these signifying codes are deciphered as being part of a sign function between content and expression, they are cultural units that can be put into context as being part and parcel to the discourse of hip-hop. This atmosphere is illustrated in contextualized shots of prostitutes smoking crack on the street.

Without directly engaging the time worn cliché that representations (re)present things that take place in reality, I will note how life in the actual area of Moccasin Flats, circa 2002, may indeed be very much like the narrative of the show (Milliken, 2002). However, what I will argue the show does is articulate variable aspects of life on the 'Flats together in a way that had not previously been done. Previous to this program, the outside viewer may have not been aware of the problems of prostitution in some urban Aboriginal communities. The program actively produces a reading that associates urban aboriginal women as being at risk of becoming prostitutes. In this way it situates the viewer into a new awareness of issues that they may have been ignorant of or only vaguely familiar with through objectifying news reports. These opinions, drawn on by the creators of the program by the community represented, are a

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constitutive feature of the representation of aboriginality on MF. However, the articulation does not rest, because it is also re-articulated that these women are extremely strong and can find a way out for themselves, as exemplified by Sarah's struggle. Through the character of the community worker Laura, we can also see how the community attempts to take responsibility for itself and that there are positive forces at work. A double articulation is subsequently circulated where a social ill (prostitution) is articulated out of the representation to link to urban aboriginal women; then, through the character's perseverance and struggle to escape from her trappings there is an intervention that belies the original articulation in favour of one that attempts to fix the representation in a positive manner, focusing on the variable aspects of the character, thus being representative of overall modern ideologies of self-sufficiency and community determination espoused by scholars like Bordewich (1996). Once again, there is a flirtation with essentialized notions of 'Indianess', only to be re-articulated in light of the complexity of the characters and community.

Bearclaw later taps into the overall drive for "bling-bling" by trying to entice Nathan Redsky into his gang, promising him riches. We can see that Jonathan has succeeded when Nathan robs a house wearing a red bandanna. The red bandanna indicates that he is now part of the gang "The Red Soldiers". It is the timeworn racist label of Aboriginal peoples; in this respect it serves a function as a traditional aboriginal code. Whereas using the colour red provides an inter-textual reference to South Central Los Angeles street gang 'The Bloods', this establishes not only a traditional hip-hop artefact of gang culture, but also connotes the behavioural code of stealing something as being part of the negative fulfillment of 'bad Indians' as placing themselves within the racist social imaginary of white people extensively espoused upon in the literature review.

This episode features the second self-reflexive engagement involving questions of race and entitlement, as previously stated when Bearclaw approaches Merasty to inquire about the whereabouts of Redsky. Bearclaw, breaks down the line drawn earlier, and asks him, "Where is he nigger?" To which Merasty replies, "You know you're Indian and not black right, like I'm pretty sure when we were kids you were Indian." Bearclaw and his gang respond to this by beating Merasty mercilessly. On one hand, you have Merasty, a known rhymer and hip-hop dancer, questioning what he believes to be a crisis in Bearclaw's identity; and on the other you have Bearclaw, who knows that he is not black, using a term, that although is incorporated as part of the discourse of hip-hop, has huge pejorative racial overtones. Thus we have a tension over the adoption and incorporation of aspects of the 'hip-hop' ethos, in other words in the context of the program there is such a thing as going too far with it. This establishes that there are subsequent parameters as to what can be considered an acceptable recycling of specific codes of hip-hop in the aboriginal community, exemplifying larger themes that are beyond the scope of this paper as to whether or not the essentialized notion of 'acting black' is conducive to the hip-hop lifestyle; 'Nigger', being an essentialized staple or kernel that resists recycling. More importantly, the function of the hip-hop codes in the questioning of identity is ideologically reflective of the taboo between *entitlement* and *blackness* within hip-hop discourse. The question of whether or not hip-hop performance is an 'authentic' kind of aboriginal identity is manifestly dealt with in the way the scene is self-reflexively framed; the articulation of Aboriginal Youth is built up only to be dissected and put under a self-critical gaze. Therefore there are discursive barriers as to what terms can be used to generate a constructed conjuncture of authenticity and what goes beyond mere recycling into a hackneyed borrowing of racial taboos.

Episode 5-"Worlds Collide"

The episode opens with Redsky running to Merasty's house. Merasty is in his room recovering with his grandmother Betty, and Joe laying traditional healing medicines on him. Redsky swears vengeance, but Merasty does not confess to his assailants names. Redsky assumes it was Bearclaw anyway and confronts him at his house. Constable Strongeagle shows up and gets Redsky to leave, before he accuses the police of doing nothing. Strongeagle asks Jonathan about his Uncle, Kenny Bearclaw, to which he responds that he "knows nothing." Inside Jonathan's house it becomes apparent that he is using Nathan Redsky as a drug-runner.

The disturbing dreams affecting both Redsky and Bearclaw continue to take place: a trophy is shown falling to the ground and two children running down the stairs. Strongeagle finds out from Laura about a drunken party that she was at with Kenny Bearclaw years earlier. It is revealed that both Jonathan and Dillon were there as children.

Merasty expresses frustration over not being in any condition to take part in this year's song and dance competition. Later, we see Jonathan watching his handicapped son playing at the park. He brings him a stuffed bear and carries him on a walk. Meanwhile, Danna is getting in the car of Reginald Thundercloud, 'The Cowboy Hat John'.

Later, in a flashback scene, Joe is giving the young Dillon Redsky and Jonathan Bearclaw a 'Bearclaw' for protection. Sarah leaves the respite home to try and protect Redsky from Bearclaw. While drunk, Redsky catches Nathan dealing drugs and hits him in the face. Sarah searches for Dillon and catches him drunk and receiving oral sex from Candy. At the end of the episode, outside of Jonathan's house, Sarah is conflicted as to whether or not to return to him.

Episode 5- Semiotic Interpretation and Articulation

The confrontation between Redsky and Bearclaw comes to a head at the beginning of the episode. Dillon challenges Jonathan to a fight outside of his house. Bearclaw sends his thugs out and mouths to himself "Fuckin' Pussy." This verbal code serves a definite function, because being tough and 'unwomanly', hence not a 'pussy', is a tremendous part of certain aspects of hip-hop discourse. Being able to one up your opponent, either through wordplay or through physicality, or even sexuality, is central to the performance of masculinity and a way to give oneself the illusion of control in a chaotic reality. Later, Bearclaw has in fact one upped Redsky by not only beating his friend Merasty, but also in appropriating his younger brother Nathan as part of his gang. Bearclaw tells Nathan, when sending him out on a drug run: "Don't get fucked over. Get the cash then you hand over the drugs". Drug-running, and the appropriation of young ones "into the game", is a common narrative theme and subsequent code in many hip-hop songs.

Up to this point, we can say that, as much of the same as any kind of cultural artefact, there are people that can use it to accomplish something pro-social and others who use it to accentuate an anti-social lifestyle. Whether or not this lifestyle acts as a bridge and in harmony to some other essentialized notion of identity is whether or not it can be seen as authentic in both the world of the show and the viewer. However, the characters may heavily rely on hip-hop signifiers to perform their identity, they are definitely not limited to it. Towards the end of the episode, Bearclaw is caught up in a life of crime beyond his control when what he really cares about his son. Thus the articulation cannot be reducible to any solitary incorporation of hip-hop. Hip-hop is neither good nor bad. This reflects the way the characters framed hip-hop lifestyle around their own views, as Podemski (Burrows, 2011) states:

Like everything in life, there is a negative and a positive. You can't have the dark without

the light, and I think that hip-hop was a part of our soundtrack and a part of the culture of our

characters. It didn't dictate which direction they were going, it only echoed it. And like in life

there are artists out there who are empowering who sing or rap, or rhyme about raising

people up, and then there are artists who sing about bringing each other down – that's life,

that's the balance of life. There's always going to be a positive way to see something or a

negative way to see something and I think that it is not specific to hip-hop, it's not specific

to the native community. I think that it is everywhere and in a drama series you can't

possibly take one side, you have to show the dichotomy.

The characters use hip-hop codes as a tool and a performance, much the same way the writers

do: to enunciate, frame and accentuate a reality that is beyond their control, yet is paradoxically

totally a result of their actions.

Episode 6- "Resting Place"

At the beginning of the episode, the camera pans the ground level of the landscape of

Moccasin Flats. The camera slowly leads up to Redsky, who is lying hungover on the ground

with his pants down below his ankles. Constable Strongeagle brings Dillon home to his family.

He then apologizes to his brother for having 'messed up'. Sarah calls Dillon and tells him she

needs to see him.

Strongeagle continues questioning people about the party that resulted in Kenny Bearclaw's

murder. Later, Sarah confesses that she saw Redsky with Candy, stating to Redsky that Candy is

HIV positive. Jonathan's path of drugs and self-destruction continues as he is still tortured by dreams.

It is then revealed to Betty, by Joe, that Jonathan was being sexually assaulted by his uncle when he was younger at the fateful party. Dillon caught them and smashed a trophy over Uncle Kenny's head. Grandfather Joe then buried the body to cover up the evidence of what the boys did. In the next scene, Joe reveals to Dillon what happened with Kenny Bearclaw. Redsky then confronts Jonathan and tells him what happened with his uncle. He then agrees to leave Nathan Redsky alone. Shortly thereafter, Candy discovers Danna's body, bruised and beaten by the 'Cowboy Hat John.'

Redsky then dances to Merasty's song at the hip-hop dance competition, wearing a ceremonial headdress. While Redsky dances, the camera flashes to Jonathan Bearclaw who is meeting his fate, as the gangsters come to collect the money owed to them at gun-point. Sarah takes a bus away from the 'Flats. Redsky finds out that his encounter with Candy has not left him HIV-positive. At the culmination of the season, Dillon Redsky packs his truck up and leaves to UBC, with Moccasin Flats behind him.

Episode 6 – Semiotic Analysis and Articulation

Half-way through the episode, Redsky returns to a basketball court to seek emotional refuge after finding out the truth about Kenny Bearclaw sexually assaulting Jonathan when the boys were younger. This shows how deeply basketball means to Dillon, as he finds solace and comfort in it once his identity is shattered. This is juxtaposed to the fact that shortly after, when Bearclaw finds out about his own abuse as a youngster, we see him without any hip-hop garb at all, stripped down at home without drugs or rap music, or prostitutes surrounding him. The fact that Redsky retreats to the basketball court and Bearclaw does not retreat to drugs and prostitution is

indicative of the performative nature that hip-hop signifying codes function in both their lives. Jonathan uses it to mask his past and articulate his present (the 'gangsta lifestyle), while Dillon uses it to articulate his past in tandem with his present (aboriginal identity plus modern youth). Nowhere is this better exemplified than in the season's final sequence (one which features a conglomeration of both traditional aboriginal codes and hip-hop artefacts). Dillon shows up to the rhyme and dance competition wearing a traditional Aboriginal headdress and ceremonial garb. He then performs an Aboriginal hip-hop dance to Merasty's rap lyrics over a local artist's beat. The rap song that is played is about life on Moccasin Flats, permanently entrenching the community in larger narratives of race, space and hip-hop (Forman, 2000). The chorus of the song rhymes, "It's destiny alone when you're on the 'the Flats." While this song is playing, the gangsters burst into Jonathan's house and point a gun at his head.

The articulative dynamic that makes the construction of *Moccasin Flats* seem like such an authentic place is primarily in its ability to continuously articulate and re-articulate characters. This may seem like a basic attribute of good television writing, however as Bird (2000) discovered, aboriginal peoples often feel like they are inscribed with two-dimensional attributes, as opposed to more 'fleshed out' white characters. *Moccasin Flats* represents modern urban youth as holistic and nuanced characters

In the end, much how Jonathan Bearclaw's authentic 'gangsta lifestyle' was shown to be as much a performance to mask the incestuous sexual abuse he received at the hand of his uncle; it was also a way to deal with the rough gritty life on the 'Flats. The ideology that the articulation leaves us with is one that sees the urban aboriginal youth as a survivor in the face of tremendous circumstances and the process of encoding an articulation itself is a kind of performance.

The dance sequence performed by Redsky at the culmination of the season is an articulation that sees aboriginal youth as both *here* and *modern*, a product of historical circumstance, but not reducible to those historical circumstances. Hip-hop is just one articulative frame to deal with a whole host of issues that affect not only aboriginal youth, but society in general. Much the same way as representation articulates hip-hop onto identity, so too does identity interpellate hip-hop for its own uses and gratifications. A new form of aboriginality has been articulated in representation, one that sees the creators of the show in active dialogue with the community they wish to represent. However, it is in the dynamic dispersal of hip-hop to deconstruct and reconstruct aspects of identity as a way to usurp traditional notions of essentialization as being a constitutive feature of what is discursively framed as 'authentic' that we will now turn to.

Rhizomic Analysis of Jonathan Bearclaw and Dillon Redsky

Deterritorializing and Reterritorializing Hip-hop

It is important to look at the rhizome as a perpetually incomplete process of identity, in which each unique experience can be subtracted from the multiplicity of lived affective incarnations. The characters on *Moccasin Flats* show how representation can flirt with notions of essentialization and 'authentic' realities, only to later deconstruct those realities. Indeed, by applying the Deleuzian concept of the rhizome to how the two main characters are constructed, we can see traditional notions of fixations are undercut in favour of creating characters with contradictions and paradoxes. When considering identity, a multiplicity is something that exists in a non-singular fashion, between two exterior parts; in other words a facet of identity that can be broken down into layers or strata. These layers can be both complementary as well as

paradoxical. These "multiplicities are defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 9). Thus the line of flight is that segment of identity that retreats from one multiplicity, subsequently deterritorializing from it, in order to reterritorialize on another facet of identity. This process of deterritiorialization and reterritorialization is crucial to an understanding of how one facet, one line of the rhizome can be used in a way to colour the heterogeneity of identity in a homogenous way. As Deleuze states,

> "The Pink Panther imitates nothing, it reproduces nothing it paints the world it's colour pink on pink; this is its becoming- world in such a way that becomes imperceptible itself, a signifying, makes its rupture, its own line of flight follow its "a parallel evolution"through the end." (1987, 11)

In this way the characters on the show use hip-hop to construct their "becoming world", a world that seems so natural that it is "imperceptible" to them. Indeed it does generate its own multiplicities, its own line of flight that does not follow a direct path, but rather becomes enunciated in a paradoxical fashion.

 Affect and The "Becoming World"

   It is my argument that Dillon Redsky and Jonathan Bearclaw use hip-hop to enunciate different aspects of their identity. Hip-hop is used not in imitation, but to "paint" portions of their becoming worlds. Following de B'béri's (2006) translation of Deleuze in the example of the nuptials that take place between the orchid and the bee:

  The orchid seems to cast the image of the bee, but at the same time there is a bee/orchid

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Becoming, an orchid/bee becoming, a double capture capture because what each of them become is less a changing of the one who is becoming. The bee becomes part of the genital organism of the orchid, at the same time the orchid becomes a sexual organism of the bee.   (Deleuze, De B'beri, 2006, 154-155)

 What we see in the identities of Redsky and Bearclaw is a virtual becoming, where hip-hop becomes a vital part of their identity as urban Aboriginal-Canadian youth, just as much as they are modern youth, and likewise they reciprocally become part of the discourse of hip-hop culture. They adapt to hip-hop culture as much as hip-hop culture adapts to them. This process is by no means a hybridity as much as literally (as exemplified by Redsky) a "ceremonial dance"; it is a paradoxically simplified yet complex response to constructing the reality in which the characters live. "To become is to become more and more restrained, more and more simple, more and more deserted and for that reason populated." (Parnet and Deleuze, 2002, 29). Thus the 'becoming' world is not an attempt of foolhardy imitation, a tribute or a postmodern performance, but as Braidotti (2002) suggests, it is a kind of machinic feature of the individual that is conducive to his/her connection to their environment and interpersonal relativity. She goes on to say that this subject is by no means completely evasive of molar power relations, but may strategically deterritorialize them and produce an observable shift into how they are incorporated into identity (Braidotti, 2002,213). This becoming world underpins different affects from these molar power relations which are constitutive of the intensities that the characters feel towards i) their socio-economic situation, ii) their cultural situation and iii) their personal situation.

   At the beginning of the season, Jonathan Bearclaw is a ruthless pimp, gang-leader and drug dealer. The ways that he treats the women he "owns" affect his disposition in a way that causes

anger and jealousy in him. In episode four, he commands Danna, telling her, "If you try to leave, I will kill you." This is one strata to his identity, that is part of a multiplicity that is formed as a direct result of the pleasurable state he gets from possessing, controlling, and commanding young women. However, rather than being represented as a two-dimensional or protoypical "bad Indian", we can see that Bearclaw is in fact drawing a 'line of flight' from another aspect of his identity, that is his relationship to his severely disabled son or even perhaps his rape as a child at the hands of his uncle. Both a product of his environment as much as constructor of his environment, Bearclaw evades as much as he reflects. We have multiple sides to Bearclaw, or a multiplicity that sees him as a ruthless pimp but then, by the same token, a loving father. What is different is this multiplicity, rather than situating the two aspects of his identity as diametrically opposed to one another, exist in a parallel manner with many other states of his identity: one does not exist in spite of the other but neither are they mutually exclusive (albeit they in themselves constitute other multiplicities). They co-exist in tandem with one another. This, I believe, is the same way that hip-hop is used to enunciate different multiplicities on the program and undercut traditional 'good/bad Indian' binaries.

The Parallel Enunciation of Hip-hop

A line of flight is drawn away from the misery of both Bearclaw's and Redsky's life on the 'Flats that uses hip-hop as a means to enunciate different aspects of their identity. This is why both characters are so entrenched in hip-hop signifiers. When we are first introduced to Redsky, he is talking about his friend Merasty participating in a rhyme and dance competition. Later in the episode, both Redsky's grandfather Joe as well as Merasty's grandmother Betty lament about how booze and drugs (a reference to gang culture) are taking the kids' spirits away. On the surface level, it might be said that both Merasty and Redsky are using hip-hop to draw a line of

flight enunciating an identity that distinguishes them away from traditional aspects of aboriginal identity. This belies the fact that what they are doing is living in a modern world where many cultures co-exist simultaneously. A possible way to express their re-articulation of aboriginal identity is that the line of flight that is drawn, re-territorializes using hip-hop through aboriginal identity, this is also reciprocated in the reverse. Redsky and Merasty are understood through hip-hop, but in a non-reductionist manner that sees culture as constantly re-establishing itself through identity, abolishing and any fixation or so-called 'authentic' fixtures.

The lines of flight that are drawn by the characters depart in what can be said to be a point of subjectification, a point where that character seeks to lay claim and experience reality on his own terms. This can be considered to be "a subject of enunciation issuing from the point of subjectification and a subject of the statement in a determinable relation to the first subject. There is no longer sign-sign circularity, but a linear proceeding into which the signs swept via subjects." (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 128) This is the same as saying the subject becomes part and parcel with the sign. In other words, the sign becomes part of their subjectification. The statement of enunciation, which makes both Redsky's and Bearclaw's identity apparent, is one that looks at the signs incorporated by them as an intricate part of their identity. This conforms to the dominant reality apparent in *Moccasin Flats,* the urban 'gangsta' world enunciated through the identity of the characters. "The subject of enunciation recoils into the subject of the statement, to the point that the subject of the statement resupplies the subject of enunciation from another proceeding." (129) When Bearclaw states something that is indicative of a verbal code of hip-hop, he is actually enunciating and framing another aspect of his identity. Bearclaw telling Danna that "He'll kill her if she leaves" makes reference to the fact that he is insecure about his position in the world. This makes reference to the fact that at the culmination of the season we

learn that Jonathon was sexually abused for "years" by his uncle as a child. Each statement is reflective of a multiplicity of affective articulations.

The signs incorporated in the subject of the statement, for example the hip-hop idiolect used by the characters, become indicative of something else (another line of flight), re-territorializing on another facet strata of the character's identity associated. The more a specific character obeys a dominant reality (such as a reality articulated through hip-hop discourse), the more in command he is as subject of enunciation in his/her mental reality. That is why there is such firm, violent, powerful hip-hop codes emanating from Jonathan, because within the character there is an intense demand to take control of his mental reality. The subject retreating into the statement of enunciation. This is why, on the surface level, Jonathan conforms to such a negative stereotype, conforming being an illusory form of mastery over one's identity.

The schism between the two characters is tantamount to them having two different, paradoxical dominant realities; the homeostasis of the character's mental realities is reflective of this schism. On one hand, you have Redsky obeying the reality that he lives in a world where he has to stay loyal to his family and his friends to survive; on the other, living in the area is Bearclaw who believes you have to fight and instill fear in people order to survive. Both realities seep into each other as the show goes on. Redsky briefly abandons his brother Nathan to pursue a love interest with a prostitute. Bearclaw needs to further denigrate and exploit the women that he "owns" in order to raise money for his sick child. At the culmination of the season, we can see their dominant realities fall apart. Everything their identities have articulated through a discourse of hip-hop - a parallel paradoxes in the constructions of their character – is shattered. Both characters are brought together in a final moment of enunciation that brings to light the tragic secrets of their past. This is what is referred to by Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 6) as a principle

of asignifying rupture in which a rhizome can be broken at a particular part only to re-start again on familiar territory.

What the characters of Dillon Redsky and Jonathan Bearclaw demonstrate is that by presenting characters that are complex, with multiple sides to them, it makes an anti-essentialist statement as to the state of Aboriginal culture, and indeed culture in general. New subjectivities of Aboriginality are represented. Rather than seeing the Aboriginal as a slave to the sign, we can see the opposite. The lines of flight drawn out by the characters lead to realms of possible articulations of identity previously unconceived. Jonathan Bearclaw the pimp exists in tandem with Jonathan Bearclaw the loving father, which exists with Jonathan Bearclaw the victim, and yet is articulated as Jonathan Bearclaw the survivor. The identity of the characters thrust, thwarts any permanent fixation on identity. The performance of his identity is enunciated through hip-hop, except when his rhizome breaks, in which case we can see that he is a multi-layered human non-reducible to his choice of lifestyle.

This chapter has provided a complete criteria of hip-hop semiotic codes have been utilized by the filmmakers in order to flirt with essentializing an aura of authenticity onto the representations of both Jonathan Bearclaw and Jonathan Bearclaw, the program's two main characters. By recycling elements of the urban hood genre as originally mentioned by Ramsay (2010),the program became accessible to a whole audience that up to this point would have been only vaguely familiar with some of the issues facing aboriginal youth. The producers of the show use hip-hop to elucidate a whole host of issues affecting aboriginal youth, an articulation is made that sees hip-hop as the performative armour that the characters use to deal with their complex reality. The articulation between hip-hop and urban aboriginal youth made by the filmmakers is one that first constructs, then engages self-reflexively, and finally deconstructs the stereotype.

These representations belie certain fixtations on authenticity by the fact that the characters are represented rhyzomically, being that they are made of multiplicities which are connected by lines of flight which are constantly in the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. In the end it is only though the perpetual striving of trying to come to terms and offset authentic representation, that we may come to terms with having one that can present people as paradoxical.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

Moccasin Flats and the establishment of a New Genre of Aboriginal Representation

By proactively intervening in articulations of aboriginal youth that would have been made anyway (take for example the plethora of representations following MF, associating hip-hop with aboriginal youth, i.e. *Renegade Press.com*), the show has forged a new path by Aboriginals engaging with issues and broader perceptions of themselves on their own terms. The incorporation of the neo-realist style by using young actors and actresses from the immediate area in and around North-Central Regina accomplishes three things (two of which have been inferred by Ramsay (2010) while a third that is unique to this project):

1.) Gives aboriginal youth the option and motivation to participate in a creative field (television production), previously out of their reach.

2.) Establishes a new genre which I will refer to as *Post-Modern Aboriginal Neo-Realism* by using elements from the geographic surrounding to narrow the gap between representation and reality

3.) Establishes a model that criticizes previous models of engaging with the Aboriginal community through stereotypes, while later deconstructing them in favour of a more nuanced understanding of the issues surrounding not only Aboriginal youth but youth in general.

The appropriation of the urban 'gangsta' genre by the creators of *Moccasin Flats*, as originally mentioned by Ramsay (2010, 107) not only provides an homage to the urban hood genre, but I assert, sutures the viewer into observing and interpreting a whole plethora of issues

that they would otherwise not have been introduced to. The subsequent effect of situating the program in this pre-established genre and merging it with the local community creates a new category of film which I will call *Post-Modern Aboriginal Neo-Realism.* The rationale for this is that it displaces current popular cultural discourses (hip-hop) and re-situates them in an Aboriginal context using amateur actors and actresses directly from the communities represented. The benefits of locating the show in a 'real' location with 'real' youth from that location is seen in the decision to incorporate hip-hop as a natural extension of Aboriginal life, as co-creator Podemski (Burrows, 2011) states;

It definitely wasn't conscious, well it was conscious once we started implementing the flavours of the show, but it was pretty obvious when we went to do this training program which then became *Moccasin Flats* 'the show'… that hip-hop has been huge in the Aboriginal community well before MF. So it was because our target market was youth, in terms of the audience, we had to portray the kind of music (that they listen too)…

Having aboriginal youth as predominantly their target market, it would be an appropriate outreach for the creators to implement the current codes and conventions associated with the hip-hop genre into the program. However, by implementing such a popular discourse to express their characters through, *Moccasin Flats* succeeded in branching off and appealing to young viewers nationwide; thus generating an interest and understanding by youth across the country into issues that discursively frame Aboriginal communities. This opens the door for a new level of engagement with Aboriginal media, in which the broader population looks to Aboriginal produced television programming for some semblance of understanding that they would otherwise not have access to. This is not unique to what the white audience did before, and

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previously the act of making value judgments on and about Aboriginal people through representations was extremely problematic. This raises a bigger question of whether *Moccasin Flats* only perpetuates damaging stereotypes, despite the findings of the data analysis of this research.

Indeed, in this research, I assert that *Moccasin Flats* engages to proactively create stereotypes that would have been created anyway, only to eventually deconstruct those stereotypes by showing the potential agency in the characters to do both right and wrong. Much of the literature review focused on the perpetuation of stereotypes by the white hegemonic film powers that be, and even their interpellation by Aboriginal viewers. As scholars such as Churchill (1998) and Bordewich (1996) exclaim, there is a direct link between the depredating, humiliating conditions that afflict Aboriginals here and now and the representations of them from the past. With this in mind, for example, does the negative caricature of Jonathan Bearclaw, despite being shown in a highly nuanced multi-faceted way, still create a damaging picture of Aboriginal Youth? The answer to this, I believe, lies in the fact that in having the program written and directed by Aboriginal filmmakers it creates a space for Aboriginal youth to self-reflexively reflect on issues that may afflict members of their community. So even if the characters were represented as two-dimensional caricatures that dwelled on negative and positive stereotypes to an assembly line cue, a self-reflexive self-appointed space would still be created to open up a discourse that was previously dictated by white studio moguls. Even shows created by the CBC such as *North of 60,* whose narratives frequently take the vantage point of a white protagonist, were not created by Aboriginals. The opening up of a discourse of Aboriginal produced representation in the television and film mediums allows for value judgments as to questions of verisimilitude that previously were made from outside the community. In dealing with issues such as poverty, rape,

incest, drug use, prostitution and especially (according to the co-creators) having a story line with a homosexual police officer, issues gain a self-determining voice they otherwise would not have:

> Some of the biggest criticisms we get is having a gay storyline, which I think is one of the strongest… And being gay on the reserve, in the Aboriginal community, is still very painful and it used to be a very sacred thing. Two 'spirited people' (gay people) used to be honoured, and they're not anymore. So some of the issues that we are facing are still very unreconciled and very rampant. We would have gone farther if we were… we were brave to go as far as we did. We had to start off somewhere I guess… (Milliken, 2011)

Whereas before *Moccasin Flats*, many issues that faced the reserve would have been the material dealt with at academic conferences and social work conventions, now the film medium itself becomes a site of discussion and intervention. Perhaps that also contributes to the aura of authenticity that the program perpetuates. The grittiness that is the reality of many Aboriginal communities also validates the depictions of normative violence on the program. Although it can be argued that it depicts their community on such a dangerous, precarious level and is only helping to frame the area as a particularly helpless corner of hell (especially when one of the main storyline's involves one of the characters leaving MF); the fact that this is really a place where people live helps construct a space of possible intervention. Imbuing MF as a place of normative violence makes both the Aboriginal nation as well as the rest of the country aware of the plight of what *Maclean's* magazine (2006) proclaimed to be the most dangerous area in the country, and henceforth able to make some sort of conscious or sub-conscious decision to concern themselves with the area. Another aspect illustrated in the second part of the data analysis is that the violence is shown not to be conducive and fixed to any said entity. All the

characters are shown to be a product of their circumstances and trying to escape those circumstances, albeit with temporary doubts of despairing nihilism; Sarah and her desire to escape prostitution, Jonathon and his desire to take care of his son. The normative violence is a part of the damage suffered by the racism, poverty and the objectifying glare of the white governing eye. The end ideology left by the show is simple: self-determination, including community self- policing will be the salvation to free such Aboriginal communities wrought with problems such as Moccasin Flats.

The commonalities found between hip-hop discourse and Aboriginal discourse may constitute a match made in discursive heaven. Both exonerate and uplift the marginalized, both rely on a subversive sense of community and self-determination beyond the creature comforts of that offered by white society. The fact is, the potential 'becoming' between the two discourses that I have illustrated demonstrates the fluidity of both cultures to begin with, being fluent entities themselves. This is contrary to the example of a 'synergy' (Ramsey, 2010) between the two cultures, suggesting a hybridity of two essentialized forms. As Milliken (2011) exclaims:

> Everywhere we would go kids were rapping or listening to hip-hop or dressing like hip hoppers and emulating their heroes, which were hip-hop stars and wanted to live that life and be gangsters, and we knew a lot of rappers and hip-hop performers…I think we were ahead of the curve with underscoring the show with originally created Aboriginal hip-hop music.

Aboriginal hip-hop culture is already well embedded into the fabric of popular culture and vice-versa; there is nothing new happening. Aboriginal culture evolves to digest popular discourses as much as other cultures. However because aboriginal representation had been previously dictated

by those with vested interests and ulterior motives, rather than Aboriginals themselves; by the time MF came around there had only been a few little scene documentaries on the phenomena. Indeed, it is possible to categorize the phenomena as not specific to aboriginal culture but to youth culture in general; such generalizations would be accurate enough, except that it ignores the perpetual dance or ceremonial 'pow-wow' that the two cultures have done with one another to produce a wider understanding that adds to the wider machinic-monster that is hip-hop discourse. The discourses around Aboriginal youth and hip-hop articulated together to frame a representation perpetually absorbing one another, in a moment of conjuncture (de B'béri, 2006), perhaps for only a brief time.

What this thesis has demonstrated is that when looking at the incorporation and superimposing of a complex discourse such as hip-hop into representations of a cultural group, one must go beyond surface level analyses and perform a step-by-step methodology of 1.) How that discourse is adopted by the creators of the representation; but more importantly 2.) Why it is incorporated into the said representation, and how that discourse functions to ameliorate or diminish the agency of the characters in that cultural representation. What I have called the 'aura of authenticity' may enunciate the functioning of codes within the discourse itself, i.e. the notion of authenticity being already a part of the discourse of hip-hop or 'representin'; but more importantly what hip-hop does to substantiate an identity that is both within and beyond discourse itself.

We can look at the observation of Jonathan Bearclaw using hip-hop as a weapon, or a virtual performative armor that he uses to enunciate certain aspects of his identity while concealing others. Bearclaw very much represents the discursively constructed quintessential menace that

plagues modern day Aboriginal society, and uses hip-hop signifiers to construct his identity around; but he also discursively represents the Aboriginal youth as a victim of tremendous historical crimes that have been committed both within the Aboriginal community as well as without. Thus holding up hip-hop signifiers as authentic is a kind of weapon and agent of concealment in and of itself. By incorporating hip-hop discourse into the construction of the characters and then self-reflexively opening it up as a point of contention, the creators prompt the audience to look beneath hip-hop, to see the other performances taking place. Therefore, the only way to understand the characters is by constantly looking beneath the performance, then beneath the performance ad infinitum, in what ends up as a perpetual paradoxical and dynamic construction of the character.

What, I will argue, the overall function of the sum total of all the hip-hop codes featured on the program does is elucidate and enframe problems that exist in the narrative of the show beyond questions of good and evil and accentuates problems that may indeed exist in reality.

The justification for using a rhizomic model for identity formation when looking at constructed characters on a television program lies in the fact that in understanding representations as complex and paradoxical, we can than understand people as enigmatic entities unto themselves. By showing how the aura of authenticity is enunciated and then deconstructed in favour of the complex fluidity of the character, the thesis serves as a model to look at other representations that have formed a legacy of fictitious and damaging stereotypes. We can no longer afford to tread dangerously close to using discourse alone as a means to enframe and encompass subjectivities, but rather look at how those subjectivities function dynamically within and throughout discourse, and indeed make it a slave to their agency rather than the historical

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precedent, which suggests the opposite. The notion of Aboriginal youth being dangerous and listening to hip-hop in menacing ways exists in tandem with Aboriginal youth as a victim and product of their circumstances, which does not exclude the fact that like everybody else they are just trying to survive in a world which is paradoxically both within and without them.

It could be argued that I am taking representation too seriously and that *MF* and the stories it portrays have absolutely zero impact on the lived lives of Aboriginal youth; however it has allowed at least the 'empowering' of aboriginal hip-hop artists featured on the soundtrack to showcase their work:

> We could make a whole soundtrack just from the music on the show, and everybody was clambering to get their music on the show and one thing I actually love is watching the credits and actually hearing the music that was created for us. And it's a source of pride for a lot of people who participated in that. It's very empowering for youth to hear that, to be asked to give us a song for the show, and to eagerly anticipate the broadcast, and I think it became a movement that became much larger than we ever thought it would be.
> (Burrows, 2011)

If some believe that the program has not demonstrated what I believe it has, and instead argues that the only philosophical truth represented is that Aboriginal youth are stuck in a violent self-defeating cycle and that hip-hop is a substantial part of it, then what they can't argue against is that the program has tapped into a need and a desire to showcase aboriginal hip-hop artists to the rest of the world. By doing this, it helps empower youth through hip-hop discourse.

Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to explain that hip-hop discourse is used on *Moccasin Flats* and achieves to ideologically articulate two previously exclusive discursive representations together (Aboriginal representation and hip-hop) in a way that successfully legitimates the reality on the show and subsequently creates an aura of authenticity. However, the aura of authenticity articulated is then deconstructed in favour of a more nuanced, paradoxical understanding of the characters and the reality represented. The creators have incorporated hip-hop discourse and the conventions of the gangster genre to create a representation that is entrenched in hip-hop values. Commonalities are found between the actual reality of the geographic space in Northern Regina known as Moccasin Flats and the codes that enframe understandings of hip-hop discourse. Semiotic codes function to make the city into a text where poverty and violence are normative. I have argued that enframing the program within an established genre makes it more accessible to the mainstream community that might not have access to this kind of reality. Hip-hop functions to accentuate and enframe the behaviours and identities of the characters, however those behaviours are not exclusive to hip-hop discourse. The codes are articulated in a way that sees a variable 'becoming' in which each code resembles another etc. in a way that establishes a new discourse that in all order, resembles itself. Traditional Aboriginal codes mimic traditional hip-hop codes and vice versa. Hip-hop is articulated as being both a negative and a positive force that accentuates the gritty reality represented on the program. The ideological views of the filmmakers that sees hip-hop as a ubiquitous cultural tool that can be fashioned by whoever uses it is reflected in the dichotomy of both Bearclaw and Redsky. Reflected in how the codes function to enunciate together different aspects of identities on the show, hip-hop discourse

functions as both the legitimate/illegitimate code of conduct in MF. These hip-hop codes and conventions work together to elucidate different problems within the community.

   Hip-hop is used as a performative weapon to anesthetize and conceal different aspects of identity, while enunciating others. Out of this we can see an active intervention and dismantling of articulations made in the past predominantly towards race, instead we can view them in favour of situational determinations. The door is then opened for a complex, more nuanced understanding of Aboriginal representation, which is in every way rhizomic. The characters use hip-hop to enunciate a 'becoming' world that seems natural to them. The affective articulations made between both their historical as well as their environmental determinations produce a world that they must construct in order to enunciate different aspects of their identities. A deterritorialization of one affective situation leads to a re-territorialization on another, all the while changing as both the characters change, and as we the viewer find out, more of what the characters are concealing. The autonomy of the subject arises from the line of flight that is drawn from their socio-cultural situation, where different multiplicities are enunciated and framed according to the affective destinations that the character arrives at. For example, we can see that Bearclaw the pimp co-exists in tandem with Bearclaw the loving father in an a parallel manner, that isn't as much of a paradox as it is a becoming of multiple facets on the rhizome of his identity. Indeed, hip-hop functions as an enunciative tool for the characters to circumscribe and take control of their dominant realities. Everything that Bearclaw and Redsky have fashioned their identities out of is deconstructed in the end once their rhizome breaks and they re-discover the tragedy of their shared past. In this way, hip-hop discourse belies the fact that there are deeper multiplicities, deeper similarities of which they must draw a line of flight from relying on the security of each other and the community, thus abandoning their performative armour.

Hearkening back to one of the main research questions posed at the outset of how a representation of hip-hop youth comes to be seen as 'authentic', I believe the answer is two-fold: 1.) Because the successful re-articulation of Aboriginal youth by both proactively constructing, engaging, and ultimately deconstructing stereotypes subsequently creates a new kind of aboriginality from the intervention of Aboriginal filmmakers and 2.) Allowing a self-reflexive space where Aboriginal identity can be debated. Therefore, as the second part of my analysis illuminates, the potential flux of the character as paradoxical and non-static also, illustrates how representation itself should be: paradoxical, and non-static.

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Appendix

Brendan Burrows

Moccasin Flats Interview with Laura Milliken and Jennifer Podemski

May 6th, 2011

JP: Hi I'm Jennifer Podemski and I am one of the creators, writers and actors of Moccasin Flats.

LM: Hi I am Laura Milliken and I am one of the co-creators of Moccasin Flats, producer and writer.

BB: As creators and producers of the show do you feel that you have an obligation to represent what you consider to be an "authentic" reality? If so how do you accomplish this?

JP: Well I think there is always a fine line between representing reality and creating intriguing drama when you're a drama writer and a drama producer. So we took an environment and we worked with youth in that environment to create a show that was accurate to what their perspectives were in the community and we dramatized it. It was not a documentary series so it wasn't like we were writing what we were seeing verbatim in the community; the show would have been a lot more devastating if we were to do that we took a very lite approach to a very harsh situation and harsh reality and tried to balance the portrayals of good and evil by telling a good story. Ultimately what we were creating was the first series produced by Aboriginal people and starring an Aboriginal cast. Yeah that was our goal.

LM: I concur.

BB: As transmitters and producers of Aboriginal culture how do you account for certain dynamics that aren't traditionally seen as part and parcel to ' Aboriginal culture'? For example this can be seen in the show when Redsky criticizes Bearclaw for 'acting black'; yet when he contributes to the hip-hop ceremonial dance competition the atmosphere is heavy in hip-hop tones and signifiers. "Traditionally" hip-hop isn't seen as part and parcel to Aboriginal culture.

LM: I think that is always an issue with everything we do because on one hand you want to represent your community accurately and on the other hand you want to represent your community in a contemporary way and as real people not as artifacts or as caricatures of what people perceive us or are nations of people to be. So did we do dance and pow wow, of course we did: but did not black people have hip-hop as originally part of their culture. …You know what I mean it's something that we all, our communities evolve, we all attach to certain

developments in culture and pop culture and we, as anybody else evolved, and I think hip-hop was something that became important to a lot of marginalized communities; it's a form of expression that they connected to and that Aboriginal youth connected to so it was very important to have it (hip-hop) as part of the show…as were a lot of other contemporary forms of expression within the show. And that's just where we are now and for me it is an accurate representation of who Aboriginal people are, because that's all that I ever knew. I didn't know what the common perception was, that's not how I lived or my family lived.

JP: Just to add to that….There was a question on 'portraying Aboriginal culture' that's definitely not what the show's about. We were simply taking a slice of the community and making a show that would appeal not just to the native community, and finally put native people on TV, but also appeal to the world. And unfortunately people take this show and say "Oh this is a native show so it must represent all native people on the planet", which it didn't and we never intended it to be.

BB: In the realm of representation which is not the same as the real but still has some affects on it…When you're not in an Aboriginal community you watch these show to gain some semblance of understanding …

LM: That's an issue we contend with in everything we do not just Moccasin Flats (Music Videos too), unless you're dealing with factual entertainment or with documentary point of view style programming, it's really, really hard for us to conform to what people's notions are or what they think they want to see. It's kind of like that MTV thing 'You think You know Me but you don't'. And I think it's our job to – there's other people out there that do documentary very, very well- but Jenn and I managed to take contemporary life and put it on the screen in a way that appeals to people but also shows another side that is a little bit shocking and also very, very real that we felt people had to see and needed to know what the reality was and that's kind of how it started. We were faced with this reality everytime we went out to work with kids in the community because that's what we started doing.

BB: On the DVD extras on the short film documentary, Justin Toto (Redsky) was saying that his brother was killed.

LM: And that's unfortunately a common occurrence. I have a girl working for me right now from the Blood tribe in Alberta; both her parents were shot, her brother was shot, her other brother is in a coma and they don't know how he got there he is only twenty-two years old…And that`s on a reserve, that`Ss not even in a city, but it happens everywhere and that's the reality.

JP: The only gang-unit in the country is in Hobema on a native reserve, that's the situation because the gang activity per capita is so bad-it's horrible.

BB: So although *Moccasin Flat's* tries to engage those issues, it doesn't come close to representing the actual fear and grittiness of reality.

LM: That's really true and I think if we tried to go there we would have met with a lot more resistance…

BB: Showcase would have been like no way.

LM: No I think they would have been okay with it. I think our community might have had a problem with it. Our community had a lot of problems with some of the stories that we told. Some of the biggest criticisms we get is having a gay storyline, which I think is one of the strongest…

BB: Between the two police officers…

LM: And being gay on the reserve, in the Aboriginal community is still very painful and it used to be a very sacred thing. Two 'spirited people' (gay people) used to be honoured and they're not anymore. Yeah so some of the issues that we are facing are still very unreconciled and very rampant. We would have gone farther if we were, we were brave to go as far as we did….we had to start off some where I guess…

JP: I think it just shows how we were, I won't say advanced, but we were way ahead of the curb in terms of saying things that need to be said about two and a half years earlier than *Macleans* published this whole editorial on the worst neighbourhood in Canada which was Moccasin Flats.

BB: Well what I find is you get this honesty about youth and their situation…Especially the first season I didn't see the show as objectively judging Bearclaw as a villain, it more set him up as a guy that's a product of his circumstances and took a particular option in his life because of what had transpired before and that Redsky and Bearclaw could have easily switched places in their life if a few things hadn't occurred that occurred.

BB: The third question is: What my study has attempted to show is that there is a becoming of the character that means the character is always becoming something else. He's never a static entity; for example, "This is Jonathon Bearclaw and this is what he is for the rest of his life." You always see him evolving into something else. You can see that in the first season involving his handicapped son that he cares for. On one hand he's a pimp-slapping, drug-taking, wheeling-dealing criminal and on the other he's doing this to get money so that his son can get treatment in the States. That's the kind of paradox that I think the show exemplifies. And taken into account previous representations of Aboriginal life-Aboriginal representation has a 100 year curse on it from the beginning of the 1900s where it could be called misrepresentation or just gross fiction-anyway I'm getting off topic. I see the characters as eluding any set type of stereotype, rather than constructing the stereotype, I see the process as engaging the stereotype and through the narrative of the show deconstructing these stereotypes. Do you agree or disagree with this?

LM: I do agree that we were trying to deconstruct those stereotypes, that's part of what we set out to do. I mean in a lot of respects we weren't even thinking about these things, we were just writing good stories, and writing stories which we thought needed to be told. I think, yes, that was totally something we had to do because I think viewers need to know and understand the characters and the people and the circumstances of why they ended up where they are. I think that can be said about any good antagonist or villain. I think Jonathon was a really good example of that. The whole Toney Soprano thing kept coming into play-how every good antagonist is tortured and isn't evil just because they are evil. Sometimes they are, but I think a good antagonist isn't so you really-to a certain degree- have to allow the viewer to make up their own mind and allow them to be smart about what they are watching- and we have to do without being blatantly contrived and I think we almost went there on a few occasions, but I think that's just good story-telling. But I think from an Aboriginal point-of-view that is going to be part of our job. And I always say that as an "Aboriginal producer" our job is almost like a social responsibility too…

BB: Do you feel burdened by that?

LM: I used to be but I don't anymore. Because now I feel that it is just what we do and it is sort of a social responsibility when you're representing people in any way, so we do have to take that seriously because by and large the producing community doesn't, so it is up to us to do that. So part of that thought process goes into building characters and deconstructing characters like Jonathon.

BB: Just of course for a minute-when you're doing the Project One Generation workshops , do you just say "This is how to make a film" and then foster that kind of growth or do you say that "As an Aboriginal youth you should feel that you have a responsibility to address certain issues" or if you're like, if you want to write *Old School* on a reserve than go ahead and do it.

LM: It's entirely up to them. Some are culturally related and some weren't – one was a science fiction thing and very funny and I don't really do much of this anymore. But back when we did, allowing the youth to say what they wanted to do was very important, that's their voice. And I don't think the social responsibility came into it very much unless we were having a frank discussion about the stories we wanted to tell and if it came into play. I think it is just something that we inherently feel. I don't know (turning to Jennifer) do you?

JP: I agree.

BB: I think anybody that is writing a story, as fantastical as it is, is writing from their particular experiences and opinions.

BB: Question number 4: Did you consciously have in mind a desire to deal with hip-hop and hip-hop lifestyle in Aboriginal communities when creating Moccasin Flats and by that I mean

that before MF hip-hop may have been very popular and inner urban communities like the actual are Moccasin Flats but the world didn't about hip-hop and Aboriginal youth and just how much they lived it until MF. In my view anyway, there may have been some other show out there and it probably existed…

JP: It definitely wasn't conscious, well it was conscious once we started implementing the flavours of the show, but it was pretty obvious when we went to do this training program which then became MF 'the show'….I was pretty obvious that hip-hop was a huge part of their life…We had done a series before that, a documentary series, and we profiled a lot of hip-hop people, not as many as there are today… but hip-hop has been huge in the Aboriginal community well before MF. So it was because are target market was youth, in terms of the audience, we had to portray the kind of music…

BB: Watching the show as an 18-19 year old what drew me to it was the hip-hop lifestyle…Did you consciously feel a need to engage that cultural phenomena and address it in your representation, rather than like, I've met many aboriginal youth that are ravers and live that culture – it seems to be that post Moccasin Flats – shows like Renegade Press seem to address youth and hip-hop.

JP: I don't think it's about addressing…A lot of what we do is marketing…as much as we want to address young people in our community and issues in our community-we have to market a show for people to watch it…so we're not going to put classical music in a show like MF because kids won't watch … so as producers we're also selling a product and in order to sell that product you have to make the market appealing and relatable…so we knew at the time that hip-hop – the way to get into the community and to reflect as accurately as possible this community we're talking about—was through music and that's where all of the other things came through. It also happened that one of our characters later on in the show was a hip-hop artist, he wrote all of our songs for us and that was just the natural progression of the show.

LM: I'd like to add to that. Everywhere we would go kids were rapping or listening to hip-hop or dressing like hip-hoppers and emulating their heroes which were hip-hop stars and wanted to live that life and be gangsters and we knew a lot of rappers and hip-hop performers…I think we were a head of the curve with underscoring the show with originally created Aboriginal hip-hop music. Kind of like 'The Hills' did with every new show they would have a new performer and put a name across the bottom and I think we kind of did that first…And I look at how many shows actually make music a very prevalent character now and it became as the seasons went by a much bigger character than what we originally intended because it just seemed, as Jenn said, something that really worked and that was relatable and our audiences really enjoyed…but it just added to the mood of the show and the style of the show and I think it became an entity unto itself. We could make a whole soundtrack just from the music on the show and everybody was clambering to get their music on the show and on thing I actually love is watching the credits and

actually hearing the music that was created for us. And it's a source of pride for a lot of people who participated in that. It's very empowering for youth to hear that, to be asked to give us a song for the show, and to eagerly anticipate the broadcast and I think it became a movement that became much larger than we ever thought it would be.

Question 5: Part of my study is to outline and map out how hip-hop can be seen as representing different paradoxical aspects of identity on the show. For example, when Redsky incorporates different aspects of the hip-hop lifestyle to further his ambitions of being a University student while Bearclaw uses elements of hip-hop to accentuate, subjectively, certain negative aspects of his character. Everytime we're introduced to Bearclaw, especially in that first few episodes, he's either riding in a low-rider or chopping coke in his apartment while listening to rap. This different, contradictory use of hip-hop as both positive and negative. Is this how you see hip-hop working in the realities of the communities you seek to represent, do they use it sometimes for negative, sometimes for positive or sometimes just because it is music and it doesn't have a huge effect on their life besides it just being music?

JP: Like everything in life there is a negative and a positive. You can't have the dark without the light and I think that hip-hop was a part of our soundtrack and a part of the culture of our characters it didn't dictate which direction they were going it only echoed it and like in life there are artists out there who are empowering who sing or rap, or rhyme about raising people up and then there are artists who sing about bringing each other down – that's life, that's the balance of life there's always going to be a positive way to see something or a negative way to see something and I think that it is not specific to hip-hop, it's not specific to the native community I think that it is everywhere and in a drama series you can't possibly take one side, you have to show the dichotomy.

BB: It's not really a paradox if you think about it though…

Question 6: So what I am seeing on the show is that hip-hop is both a hegemonic and a counter-hegemonic site of struggle. Redsky represents the consensus of furthering yourself in life, by desiring to leave his situation and make himself a productive University student and become a success by leaving the ghetto, the 'hood behind…and the counter hegemonic you can see through Bearclaw who totally does anti-social things and uses hip-hop to accentuated that particular lifestyle. And I think that can be seen in non-native communities too, somebody adoring hip-hop because it makes them feel a certain way and somebody with an entirely set of different values which could be seen as negative thinking that it takes them to another place where they want to go. Do you think there is something inherently different in Bearclaw and his use of hip-hop culture and say that of the character of Redsky?

LM: I think that some people just fashion it or us it in whatever way it suits them and for us designing the soundtrack for Jonathon it had to be part of his character. So we would always

characterize that music as 'gangsta rap' on the soundtrack to go with certain scenes. We needed positive songs on the soundtrack to go with certain uplifting scenes. It is a conscious decision but I think in the greater world there has been movements of different kinds of rap music that I think has done it a disservice and at the same time made it highly marketable and you can look at either character and wonder which form of hip-hop might be more appealing to the masses. I mean, I can't answer that, I'm not in that market but I think the music genre itself has become a little bit of a monster that way. It can create fear in you and her husband does hip-hop and it is uplifting and a very positive message and the market that consumes his music is very different than the market that consumes the gangster rap. So there are two very different people that consume those particular kinds of music…and I think those characters represent those kind of people that consume those different kinds of music as well. I think that hip-hop can also be a weapon and I think that it was Jonathon's kind of weapon in a way.

BB: In a lot of ways I see it as his armor, his performative armor that he uses to go out into the world and show them who "Jonathon Bearclaw" is.

LM: And I think that's the way for a lot of the creators of that kind of music , it is kind of an armor and defense. It's easier to push away than it is to say "come into my world and be a part of this wonderful thing"…It's easier to always be angry and push way to resist any kind of healing or positive growth…It's a lot easier to deflect and be part of a negative thing and that is something that happens a lot in the community. There's people that love a positive message in hip-hop music but there's a lot of people who crap all over it and think that it's ridiculous and think that it's funny and that's what we fight against all the time. It's part of our community and it's part of lots of communities too…It raised the voices of a lot of people in the community who previously went unheard and got a lot of people involved (local actors) who may not otherwise had an opportunity.